

**HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF TAMIL NADU THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT,  
INAUGURATED SRI AYYAPPA DHARMA PRACHARA RATHA YATHRA.**

Thiru.Banwarilal Purohit, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu participated as Chief Guest at the inauguration of Sri Ayyappa Dharma Prachara Ratha Yathra organised by Sabarimala Ayyappa Seva Samajam at Asthika Samajam, Alwarpet, Chennai today (11.9.2019) and addressed the gathering.

Hon'ble Governor said "It gives me great happiness to be here today at the inauguration of Sri Ayyappa Dharma Prachara Ratha Yathra organised by Sabarimala Ayyapa Seva Samajam. The Sabarimala Ayyapa Seva Samajam was established in 2008 by Sugumaran Nambiyar to bring together devotees of Swami Ayyappan who throng in large numbers every year at Sabarimala.

This shrine of Swami Ayyappan at Sabarimala is of ancient origin. It is one of the five Sastha temples founded by Lord Parasurama, the avatar of Lord Vishnu. The other Sastha temples in this group of five are the Ayyappan Temples at Kulathupuzha, Aryankavu, Achankovil and Ponambala Medu.

The Sabarimala temple complex includes the Pampa Ganapathi temple, Nilakal Mahadeva temple and Palliyara Bhagavathi temple. The Nilakal Mahadeva temple and Palliyara Bhagavathi temple are as old as the Sastha temple. The Sabari Peedam has a temple of Rama and Hanuman also.

Harivaranam is recited before closing the temple door every night. The Harivaranam prayer, which is sung at Sabarimala is a Urakkupattu and the rendition is by K.J.Yesudoss in the Madhyamavathi raga. It was composed by Kulathur Srinivasa Iyer in Sanskrit. It is said that Srinivasa Iyer used to recite the

composition every day without fail, after the Puja, standing in front of the shrine of Ayyappa in the main temple. In course of time it was came to be accepted as the lullaby for the lord.

The Neyyabhishekam ritual involves pouring sacred ghee brought by pilgrims in their Irumudi on the idol of Lord Ayyappa. It symbolically means the merging of Jeevatma with the Paramatma.

It is also believed that Lord Rama and his brother Lakshmana met Sabari, a tribal devotee, at Sabarimala who offered them fruits which they accepted gladly and ate whole-heartedly. It was then that they saw a divine person doing tapasya at Sabari malai. Rama asked Sabari who it was and she said it was Shasta. As Rama walked towards him. Shasta stood up and welcomed the Prince of Ayodhya. The anniversary of this incident is celebrated on the day of Makara Vilakku. It is believed that on that day Lord Dharmashasta stops his tapasya to bless his devotees.

An important message written at the temple facade is from the Advaita of Adi Sankara. It reads "Tat Tvam Asi". This translates to "Thou Art That" the principal philosophy that governs the temple and the pilgrimage. Thus the Sabarimala temple and the Advaita of Adi Sanakaracharya are inextricably linked.

The deity of Swami Ayyappan combines in himself the qualities, the powers and virtues of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. The trek to Sabarimala for a disciple is a lesson in discipline, a test of dedication and a display of bhakthi and devotion. It is estimated that nearly 3 crore people come to the shrine annually. The desire of the Ayyappa Seva Samajam is to raise the number of devotees and also make them permanent devotees i.e., Nithya devotees who will come to Sabarimala year after year.

Undoubtedly the shrine is unique and His Grace will certainly permeate the universe and draw in the pure hearted in greater numbers.

The Rath Yathra which is being flagged off today is bound to be a great success.

The most famous festival of Puri which is one of the Char Dhams is also the Rath Yathra. During the festival the Rathas which are built anew every year are pulled by the devotees to take the deities of Jagannatha, Balarama and Subhadra along the main street of Puri to another temple a few kilometer away.

The Rath Yathra there symbolises the return of Krishna along with His brother and sister from Dwarka to Vrindavan.

Today as we celebrate the festival of Onam we recall with devotion the Vamana avatar of the Lord. As I mentioned before Sabarimala is closely associated with the avatars of Rama and Parashurama. The Rath Yathra links up with the Krishna and Balarama avatars of the Lord. The special day of Pradosha also marks the occasion of worship of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Hence, today, as we attempt to steer people to the path of virtue in the Kali Yuga the blessings of so many avatars of Lord Vishnu and the blessings of Lord Shiva who are manifest in Swami Ayyappan are certain to enable us to achieve phenomenal success.

Our history teaches us that dharma is the pivotal axis around which life in India revolves, contributing to the sustainability of our civilization. Dharma teaches us to make the right choices and to lead a righteous life.

The Gita also teaches us to have unflinching faith in God it says,

“Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, and a predominant rise of irreligion at that time I descend Myself. I order to deliver the

pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of Dharma, I advent Myself era after era.

The Yathra is for the noble cause of 6 noble concepts

- 1) My village,
  - 2) My Temple,
  - 3) My Dharma,
  - 4) My River,
  - 5) My Soil,
- and
- 6) My family.

The details of the concepts are going to be explained during the Yathra.

During the Yathras 5 types of Seva activities in various fields viz

- 1) Education (Vidyalaya) conducting free Tuition centers or help poor students for their study,

- 2) Medical Camps, Eye Donation, Blood Donation etc.,

- 3) Conducting Bhajans in temples,

- 4) Annadanam

and

- 5) Encouraging the reading of books through libraries will be promoted.

It is learned that, through this Ratha Yathra 4320 places will be covered. Nearly 30 to 40 lakhs people in Tamil Nadu are expected to be contacted through the Ratha Yathra. Tamil Nadu is indeed God's place. The majesty of the temples, the millions of devotees and the mesmerizing philosophies of Saiva Siddhantam, Shakti devotion, Vaishnavite worship and Muruga Bhakthi are indeed unrivalled in their magnitude and their intensity.

I extend my greetings and best wishes to the The Sabarimala Ayyapa Seva Samajam for this noble initiative. May spiritual orientation be the watchword and India's cultural inheritance be the guiding spirit behind the activities of the Samajam. I am sure that the efforts being taken by them will continue to grow to illuminate the path for several succeeding generations. The banner of the Sabarimala Ayyapa Seva Samajam and all such spiritually inclined institutions should continue to fly with grandeur and majesty not only in India but also all over the world. May success visit them all in bountiful measure in all their endeavours”

On this occasion, Pujyasri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal, Dr.V.Saroja, Hon'ble Minister for Social Welfare and Nutritious Noon Meals Programme, Thiru. K. Pandiarajan, Hon'ble Minister for Tamil Official Language, Tamil Culture and Archacology, Thiru. Sevr.S.Ramachandran, Hon'ble Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Thiru.Durai Shankar, National Joint General Secretary, Sabarimala Ayyapa Seva Samajam, Dr. Thiru. Kumaraswamy, RSS President, North Tamil Nadu and other dignitaries participated.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai -22

Sd/-

Date: 11.9.2019

Joint Director (PR)