

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF "WORKSHOP ON SANSKRIT  
INSCRIPTION OF INDIA" ORGANISED BY INDRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE  
FOR THE ARTS, NEW DELHI AND KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION, CHENNAI AT  
RUKMINI ARANGAM, KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION, CHENNAI  
ON 02.06.2019 AT 6.45 P.M**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Jagadguru Shri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal,**  
Sankaracharya of Kanchi

**Dr. N. Gopaldaswami,**  
Chairman,  
Kalashetra Foundation

**Dr.Sachchidanand Joshi,**  
Member Secretary,  
Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts

**Dr. R. Nagaswamy,**  
Former Vice Chancellor,  
Kanchipuram University

**Distinguished Invitees  
Ladies & Gentlemen**

I am delighted to be here at the inauguration of "Workshop on Sanskrit Inscriptions of India" organised by the Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi and Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai. The workshop which will be held for 5 days promises to be an eye opener for new vistas of knowledge, lying undiscovered hitherto.

Pursuit of knowledge has been a matter of faith for Indians for several generations. The Aitareya Upanishad raises the pursuit of knowledge to the level of God when it says- प्रज्ञानम् ब्रह्मम्. There can be no other better description of the natural desire to pursue knowledge that has been existent in India, than the name for India mentioned in our Constitution, Bharat. Bharath means "the vehicle of knowledge".

An authentic history of a nation is written with verifiable records. Records etched on metal and stones and written on palm-leaves, from the time of the Maurya king Asoka, in 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE provide us with an elaborate authentic version of history for long periods of time in the last 2300 years. From such written records it is

clear that our society was dynamic intellectual and welfare oriented. The core values of life, as are evident from Ashoka's inscriptions place emphasis on adherence to a simple and truthful life, which is called, "Dharma". Ashoka declared in his edicts that all people should inculcate these "dharma gunas", which are Satyam Vada- (speak the truth), Dharamam cara (observe disciplined life), Matr devo bhava (worship the mother as god), Pitr devo bhava (worship the father as god), Acarya devo bhava (worshipping teacher ) and so on. These are universal truths, he declared. For the propagation of these values he appointed special officers called Dharma Mahamatras.

After Ashoka, Indian epigraphy became more widespread during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, with engravings on the faces of cliffs, on pillars, on tablets of stone and on rocks, etc. Later they were also inscribed on palm leaves, coins, Indian copper plate inscriptions, and on temple walls.

Of the over 1,00,000 inscriptions found by the Archaeological Survey of India, about 60,000 were in Tamil Nadu; of these 60,000 inscriptions, about 5 per cent were in other languages such as Telugu, Kannada, Sanskrit and Marathi; the rest were in Tamil.

Important inscriptions include the 33 inscriptions of emperor Ashoka on the Pillars of Ashoka, the Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, the Besnagar pillar inscription of Heliodorus, the Junagadh rock inscription of Rudradaman I, the Nasik cave inscriptions, the Rabatak inscription, the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudragupta, the Aihole inscription of Pulakesi II (634 CE), the Kannada Halmidi inscription, and the Tamil copper-plate inscriptions.

Ancient India was a land of villages and such inscription records were available in almost every village. Scholars who began the study of these inscriptions in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have discovered enormous information about the history of India.

One of the historic records showing India's contact with foreign countries dates back to first century. It is found in Vidisa, near Sanchi and refers to the erection of a famous Garuda Pillar which was a dhvajastambha of Vasudeva by Heliodoras - a Greek ambassador from Taksila in 113 B.C. and stands to this day for the past 2200 years.

A fine example of Indian Kings paying attention to large lakes and tanks, comes from Junaghad, Gujarat, in the reign of King Rudradaman. A beautiful tadaga

named “Sudarsana” which was damaged in a torrential rain looked like a spread of ocean.

It had been originally dug in the time of Chandragupta Maurya and had later gone into disuse. King Rudradaman wanted to repair but the damage was so vast, his ministers were against the undertaking because of the enormous expenditure. The King ordered, that it should be done, from his own personal funds and entrusted the work to one of his trusted ministers and the tadaga was repaired beautifully several hundred years after its original construction. The detail given in the inscriptions about structural technique has received the admiration of historians.

We may take another example of village lakes found in the inscriptions of Tamil Nadu. The inscription is in both Tamil and Sanskrit. An irrigation tank was excavated by a Chola ruler, Parantaka Chola in and around 920 CE and was named after one of his queens Tribhuvana Mahadevi. It was in active use for centuries. A 13<sup>th</sup> century inscription about damages and repair of tanks refers to 4 categories of works

- 1) Desilting
- 2) Tank bund cracks
- 3) Sluice repair and
- 4) Surplus weir repair.

It records that granite stones were used to strengthen the tank bund. The details in the inscription indicate the extent to which Kings paid attention to water management.

The language of Sanskrit is home to many religious, scientific and literary compositions. There is hence a huge treasure of knowledge still waiting to be tapped from Sanskrit sources. A mathematics professor, David Pingree of Brown University, has created a five volume work called “Census of Exact Sciences in Sanskrit” which showcases the enormous scientific knowledge that is present in Sanskrit literature.

William Jones who is known for his scholarly contributions about ancient India had this to say about Sanskrit after his study of palm leaf manuscripts and inscriptions, “The Sanskrit language, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed.

In Prof. K.V. Sharma's work of research "Science texts in Sanskrit in the Manuscript repositories of Kerala and Tamil Nadu" it has been stated that there are about a lakh and half manuscripts of Sanskrit in public repositories and in private collections in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Of them 12,250 manuscripts are related to science. Of these 3,500 are major treatises on science.

Taking the case of Mathematics as an example, the contribution of Sanskrit has been priceless. The concept of Zero was invented in India. Aryabhata, Varahamihira, Bhaskara, Brahmagupta and others have documented their brilliant exposition of mathematical rules more than a thousand years ago in Sanskrit. It will be enlightening for the people of the current generation to know that Trigonometry and Geometry also derive their origin from Sanskrit.

Another example which comes to my mind is medicine. Sushruta, Jivaka Kumarabhacca, and Charaka were famous medical experts who wrote their treatises in Sanskrit to show the world how to treat diseases and illnesses. At a time when surgeries in England were done primitively, the most complex surgeries were being performed in India by well trained surgeons.

It is not just in the field of mathematics and medicine but also in various other fields that one finds treatises and discoveries that make us marvel at the brilliance of our ancestors and the manner in which they have expressed themselves in Sanskrit.

I congratulate the Indra Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi for organizing this national workshop and also appreciate the painstaking efforts taken by Kalakshetra foundation for the success of the workshop.

May these two great national institutions of India continue to keep the banner of our culture flying high in the coming years. I extend my best wishes and greetings to them. May they be visited with success in all their endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Tamil Nadu....

Jai Hind....