

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF ANNUAL TAMIL
DRAMA AWARDS - BEST OF 2018 ORGANISED BY THE MYLAPORE
ACADEMY AT NARADA GANA SABHA, ALWARPET, CHENNAI
ON 07.08.2019 AT 6.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Justice Thiru. S. Jagadeesan,
President, The Mylapore Academy

Dr. R. Natraj, M.L.A.,
D.G.P. (Retd.)

Thiru. V. Vaidhyanathan,
Chairman, The Mylapore Academy

Thiru. Nalli Kuppuswami Chetty,
Vice- President, The Mylapore Academy

Thiru. T. D. Sadasivam,
Hon. Secretary, The Mylapore Academy

Thiru.A.R.Srinivasan,
Member, The Mylapore Academy

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here at the function organised by The Mylapore Academy on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Annual Tamil Drama Awards.

Drama in the west originated in classical Greece. Therefore, the term “drama” comes from a Greek word meaning “action”. It is recorded that the theatre culture of the city-state of Athens produced three genres of drama: tragedy, comedy and satire. Following the expansion of the Roman Republic, theatre spread west across Europe, around the Mediterranean and reached England; Roman theatre was more varied, extensive and sophisticated.

While Greek drama continued to be performed throughout the Roman period, the year 240 BC marks the beginning of regular Roman drama. Gradually, interest in full-length drama declined in favour of a broader variety of theatrical entertainments.

Drama flowered again in England around the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and many of the plays were written in verse. In addition to Shakespeare, personalities such as Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, and Ben Jonson were prominent playwrights during this period.

Drama in India is as old as the hills. Early Buddhist literature provides the earliest evidence for the existence of Indian theatre. The

Mahabhasya by Patanjali contains the earliest reference to what may have been the seeds of Sanskrit drama. This treatise on grammar provides details about the beginnings of theatre in India. Kalidasa in the 4th-5th century was one of ancient India's greatest Sanskrit dramatists. Other later famous Sanskrit dramatists include Bhasa, Asvaghosa and Bhavabuti.

From times immemorial, drama formed one of the three components of Tamil expression. There is evidence in ancient Tamil literature for specifications about the physical dimensions of the stage. The drama was in existence when the Thirukkural was written is seen from the kural where Thiruvalluvar has referred to the analogy of

people thronging to the stage and disappearing as soon as the dance is over, when explaining the fleeting nature of wealth.

The stage was used for dance drama mainly in those days and the dancers for whom stage acting was a hereditary avocation are referred to by Ilango Adigal also. The singers who accompanied them on stage are also referred to as 'Paanar'. During the period of the Bhakthi Movement in the later part of the first millennium dance dramas were performed on stage on the puranas and in the form of offering thanks to God Almighty for the bountiful gifts of Nature.

This tradition continued till the 18th century. With the arrival of the Europeans into the Indian

subcontinent, the definition of 'stage' began to assume a different meaning. Thamizh authors began to imitate English poets such as Shakespeare and Sheridan in writing plays in verses involving fictional themes and characters.

The break from this practice and the rejuvenation of Tamil drama was brought about by Sankaradas Swamigal and Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar. During this period, drama troupes were mainly run with young boys called the “Boys Companies”. These boys stayed permanently in the Troupe’s Quarters in the typical “Gurukulavasam” style. They were given training in acting, voice modulation, singing etc. The contribution of these ‘Boys Companies’ to the

entertainment sector of Tamil Nadu is indeed praiseworthy. It is important to recall that the two legendary actors of the film world Thiru. M.G.Ramachandran and Thiru. Sivaji Ganesan honed their acting skills initially for many years in such drama companies.

The first superstar on the stage was the singing sensation S.G.Kittappa, who teamed with K.B.Sundarambal to create Theatre History. The crowds who thronged his plays were so huge that the then British Government ran special trains called “Kittappa Specials” to enable the public to go to various towns where his plays were staged!

Apart from entertainment, the part played by the Tamil Theatre is mobilizing the people for the

freedom struggle deserves special mention. A note worthy theatre personality of those times “Viswanath Das” who after he met Shri Mahatma Gandhiji, had all his costumes made of Khadi. He was arrested frequently for his nationalistic plays and subjected to third degree treatment often. Consequently, his health started deteriorating and one evening at the Royal Theatre, Madras, while he was playing the role of Lord Muruga, he died on stage while being seated on the peacock.

Around the 1950s a new crop of amateurs came into Theatre Activities with full vigor taking advantage of the nation having become free from British rule. Popular artistes like YGP, Cho Ramaswamy, Pattu, K.Balachander,

V.S.Raghavan and others staged outstanding plays during this period. It is worth recalling that artistes like Shivaji Ganesan, Manohar, S.V.Sahasranamam, Nagesh, Major Sunderrajan and Sowcar Janaki who commenced their acting careers with Stage plays continued their association with drama even when they were at the top of the profession in the film world.

Dr.C.N. Annadurai the legendary Tamil leader and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu was a prolific writer and an actor. He acted in plays to propagate and highlight the principles of his party. His first drama was "Chandrodayam". He formed a troupe in Kanchi along with his comrades C. V. Rajagopal, K. Subramaniam and Ezhathu Adigal.

His "Nallathambi" and "Velaikkari" went on to become film hits. It is said that "Velaikkari" and "One night" with K. R. Ramasami in the lead were so popular that in Thanjavur alone the drama was patronized by the people for many months. Anna's dialogues were superb, magnetic and effective that the great writer Kalki Krishnamoorthy compared him to Bernard Shaw and Ibsen.

I am mentioning all this to show how Tamil drama has a great literary and hoary tradition comparable to the best in the world. You, who have received the awards today, are the flag bearers of the great legacy. You are indeed the true successors of Nawab Rajamanickam Pillai, TKS brothers and Kanniah Naidu to mention a few

of the illustrious greats of the past. I wish you all well and may your services to the Tamil stage continue with unblemished vigour and shine forth like stars on the firmament of the entertainment world.

I congratulate the Mylapore Academy who have been taking special efforts to invigorate Tamil drama by honouring the veteran artistes through their Awards year after year. Noble initiatives such as these for the cause of Nataka Tamizh will be remembered for ever for they are contributions to uphold our culture and carry them forward for one benefit of succeeding generations. I extend my best wishes and greetings to the office bearers and members of this prestigious Mylapore

Academy. May success greet you all at every step
along the way.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Tamil Nadu....

Jai Hind...