

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR
OF TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF PHOTO & DIGITAL EXHIBITION
ON "MAHATMA GANDHI – LIFE HISTORY" ON THE OCCASION OF MAHATMA
GANDHI'S 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY AT PURATCHTHALARIVAR DR.M.G.R.
BUS TERMINUS, KOYEMBEDU, CHENNAI ON 13.03.2019 AT 5.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Thiru. R.Rajagopal, I.A.S.,
Additional Chief Secretary to Governor

Thiru. E. Mariappan, IIS,
Additional Director General,
Regional Outreach Bureau,
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,
Government of India

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be here today for inaugurating the Photo and Digital Exhibition on “Mahatma Gandhi – A Life History” organised by the Regional Outreach Bureau of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The exhibition has been organised on the occasion of the celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th Birth Anniversary.

The aim of the exhibition is to create awareness and disseminate details about the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhiji the Father of the Nation who led the Indian people during the freedom struggle that resulted in the termination of British rule is an inspiration for all of us. There are so many facets of his contribution to the nation which need

elaboration. Millions of peoples know him as the person who brought freedom to India. A greater number is aware that the path of truth and non-violence that he practised was unique. In world history this spiritual path of virtue was never traversed before. It was a path of goodness – a path to which the common people could easily relate – a path that ensured success and above all a path that shines as a beacon light for the whole world.

For Gandhiji, truth was God and his prayer meetings were meant to bring out the inner strength in an individual. To him the spinning wheel stood for dignity and freedom from the rule of merchandise.

How did Gandhiji get interested in the spinning wheel or the charkhas as it is better known?

The story is that in 1917, a well – to-do widow, Gangabehn Majumdar, accustomed to riding from one village to another on horseback, found an ancient wheel in the lumber room in Vijapur in Baroda. It was cleaned up and presented to Gandhiji who set about finding sliver and yarn. The first slivers were obtained from a mill and the spinning wheel was set in Gandhiji's study.

Gandhiji began spinning so as not to depend on foreign material for clothing. Thus began the 'Khadi' or swadeshi' movement, to fight the British.

By reviving the spinning wheel Gandhiji hoped to encourage village industry and reduce import of British Cloth.

Sarvodaya or Sarva-Udaya means 'universal uplift' or 'progress of all'. The term was used by Mahatma Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. In this context let me narrate to you an interesting anecdote.

Gandhiji received a copy of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* from a British friend, Mr. Henry Polak, while working as a lawyer in South Africa in 1904. On a twenty-four-hour train ride to Durban he first read the book and was so much in the grip of Ruskin's ideas that he could not sleep at all. He wrote and I

quote: "I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book." Thus was born Sarvodaya.

Tamil Nadu was always close to Gandhiji's heart. It is important to recall that when Gandhiji started the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, in which there were initially 25 inmates, 13 of them were Tamilians. People in the audience may know that Gandhi visited Tamil Nadu 20 times between 1896 and 1946. During his first visit in 1896 he tried to learn Tamil and bought 9 Tamil books for the purpose. During a subsequent visit in 1921, when in Madurai, Gandhiji made a change from donning the typical elaborate attire to wearing the simple dhoti and upper cloth that clothed him for

the remaining years of his life. About this he himself has written and I quote,

“All the alterations I have made in the course of my life have been effected by momentous occasions. Such a radical alteration in my dress I effected in Madurai.”

Gandhiji’s contribution to India is immeasurable. Gandhiji’s contribution to the world is also immeasurable, for leaders like Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela followed in the footsteps of Gandhiji to bring emancipation to their followers who were otherwise oppressed and enslaved. Gandhiji’s message of ahimsa is a powerful signal to mankind that stockpiling of

nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles will only lead to destruction.

Coming to India, Gandhiji brought about social cohesion among the people of India by vigorously working against untouchability. His economic philosophy focused on self-sufficiency at the village level. He propagated the concept of trusteeship and wanted people to abhor the accumulation of wealth for themselves and their families. All these were the outpourings of the wisdom of Gandhiji which went beyond the political spectrum. His thoughts and deeds encompassed the whole gamut of activities of human existence.

He often used to say “My life is my message”. It is important for us to try and practise the ideals of Gandhiji in our life.

Gandhiji’s life and message will be remembered and will serve as a guide for millions of people for several thousands of years in the future.

We are all privileged that we lived in the times of Gandhiji. Some of us have had a firsthand experience of association with Gandhiji. This is a rare privilege and the accounts of those people who were associated with Gandhiji, will serve as a guiding light for several generations in the coming centuries.

I request the common public to visit the exhibition in large numbers and share the experience gained by the visit with your friends and near ones so as to ensure better dissemination of the lofty values and exemplary ideals that Gandhiji stood for. Let us all come together in this effort to propagate his values in society.

I conclude by expressing my best wishes and greetings to the Regional Outreach Bureau – Chennai and congratulate them for the excellent display of exhibits for the benefit of the public. May this exhibition be a trend setter and the precursor for many more such exhibitions this year.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Hind....