

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF 'THOL ISAI KALANJIYAM' A
MUSEUM OF ANCIENT MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ORGANISED BY
TAMIL ISAI SANGAM AT RAJA ANNAMALAI MANDRAM,
CHENNAI ON 17.02.2019 AT 7.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Thiru. K. Pandiarajan,
Hon'ble Minister for Tamil Official Language,
Tamil Culture and Archaeology

Justice P.R. Gokulakrishnan,
President, Tamil Isai Sangam,

Thiru. A.C. Muthiah,
Honorary Secretary, Tamil Isai Sangam

Thirumathi Valli Arun,
Trustee, Tamil Isai Sangam

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be here for the inauguration of Thol Isai Kalanjiyam (தொல் இசை கலாஜியம்) – a Museum of Ancient Musical Instruments organised by the Tamil Isai Sangam. The Museum is the result of the praiseworthy restoration process undertaken by the Tamil Isai Sangam to ensure the continuance of the rich legacy of Tamil Isai to succeeding generations.

The Tamil Isai Sangam was established in Chennai on 23rd December 1943 and was given its name by Thiru. C. Rajagopalachari, India's First Indian Governor General.

To go back in history a little further, let me say that the development of Tamil Isai in a formal structured sense started in 1929 when the

Music College was set up in Chidambaram by Dr. Annamalai Chettiar, ably supported by Thiru. R. K. Shanmugam Chettiar, Thiru. T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, Thiru. Kalki and Thiru. Rajaji.

Music in Tamil literature is referred to, as 'Pann'. It is not a matter of mere coincidence that the Tamil word for culture is Pann Paadu. Paadu refers to singing. This only means that if you sing and propagate Tamil music, you are actually upholding the very essence of Tamil Culture. I am informed that the Tamil Isai College under whose auspices this museum is being set up, conducts systematic Pann research, the findings of which are reviewed annually with all the experts. This

exercise should be encouraged to the maximum extent since research is certain to bring to light many more glorious facts of Tamil Culture that have remained hidden for a long period of time.

The tradition of Tamil music goes back to the ancient era of Tamil history. There are various references to this found in the ancient Sangam books such as Ettuthokai (एट्टु तोकै) and Pathupattu (पत्तु पाट्टु). The ancient grammatical work Tholkappiyam (तोल्काप्पियम) mentions the various musical expressions pertaining to the five landscapes of the Sangam literature. The five landscapes such as Neithal, Marutham etc. were associated with a particular theme and to give

colour to those themes, each had a musical mood, a stringed instrument and a percussion instrument attached to it.

The lute and the flute were the most popular musical instruments during the Sangam period. One of the Pathupattu (पत्तु पाट्टु) anthologies describes the process of making the flute and as to how the holes in the bamboo tube were to be bored using red-hot embers.

The Murasu (मुरसु), or the drum was the most popular percussion instrument. During festivals, the sound of Murasu (मुरसु) conveyed joy and gaiety. The drum was also used during wars for calling people to fight the enemy. Another well-

known percussion instrument was the mridangam (mathangam). This was to accompany the Veena and the flute among other instruments, in a musical concert.

In the post-Sangam period, Tamil music evolved to a different level of sophistication. The Cilappatikaram (चिलपतिकारम) describes music based on logical, systematic and scientific calculations in the arrangement of the dancers on stage to represent the notes and tunes. The Cilappatikaram (चिलपतिकारम) contains several chapters dedicated to music and dance, of which the most famous is the duet between Kovalan and Madavi.

The Thirukkural which is probably the greatest and simplest poetic offering in Tamil focuses almost on all aspects of life. It is loaded with nuggets of wisdom on good governance, planning, specialization, merit selection, placement, communication, equality, time management, financial management, water management, etc. These valuable pearls of wisdom are relevant to present day living.

That is why Poetess Avvaiyar observed, “Thiruvalluvar pierced an atom and injected in it the seven seas and compressed it into what we have today as the Thirukkural.”

Mahathma Gandhi after reading a translation of Thirukkural remarked “The maxims of

Thiruvalluvar have touched my heart and soul. There is none who has given such a treasure of wisdom like him.”

One is reminded of a poem by Namakkal Ramalingam Pillai in this regard. He calls the Thirukkural a dictionary of ethics for all humanity to live a life of happiness. He goes on to add that the Ramayana as presented by Kambar, illustrates through the narrative of Rama’s life all the great values embodied in the Thirukkural. This shows the extent of the massive influence of the Thirukkural on later works in Tamil!

The Periyapuram another great composition is a poetic account of the lives of the sixty three Nayanmars. It is said that Sekkizhar composed the

Periyapuram in the 1000 pillared hall of the temple of Nataraja at Chidambaram. The first Verse came as a divine revelation to Sekkizhar as he sat at the temple not knowing how to begin his composition. Periyapuram is seen as the epitome of high standards of the Chola Culture because of the high order of the literary style that is practiced. It is therefore considered to be a masterpiece in Tamil literature. That the composition provides a realistic and lofty account of all the Nayanmars without any discrimination on the basis of caste makes it even more praise worthy.

The high evolution of Tamil language to attain the literary style found in the Periyapuram is

proof of the antiquity and versatility of the language. No wonder the classical greatness of Tamil has been a matter of praise all through history. The patriotic poet Bharathi says this of Tamil “Among all the languages known to me the Tamil language is undoubtedly the sweetest”.

The compositions of the Tamil Saivite saints such as Appar and the Vaishnavite saints such as Perialvar between the sixth and the tenth centuries CE set to music are being sung in temples even today. The musical poet Arunagirinathar further embellished the Tamil musical tradition through his compositions of Tamil hymns.

The Tamil Trinity of Muthu Thandavar, Arunachala Kavi and Marimutthu Pillai have

hundreds of devotional songs in Tamil to their credit and these songs have immensely helped in the evolution of the Tamil Classical Music tradition.

Music and dance sound the sweetest when they find expression in a language known to the listener. In that respect, I should compliment the Tamil Isai Sangam for the initiative taken by them to promote Tamil music.

It gives me satisfaction to know that several ancient musical instruments have been restored for display at the Tamil Isai Sangam.

The restoration and its exhibition surely will give the visitors, especially students, a glimpse of the glorious past.

I learn that most of these instruments were used and donated by stalwarts in the field of music. I also understand that there are videos made which explain the process of making musical instruments like Nadhaswaram.

I am sure this museum which has a unique collection of ancient traditional musical instruments is a veritable treasure house and truly representative of the rich Tamil Cultural heritage.

I appreciate the Tamil Isai Sangam for the excellent job done in fostering and nurturing Tamil music and I am sure that they will continue their work with the same devotion and zeal in the future

as well. I wish them success in all their endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Hind....