

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE 67<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL ART FESTIVAL  
ORGANISED BY KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION AT BHARATA KALAKSHETRA  
AUDITORIUM, CHENNAI ON 21.12.2020 AT 5.30 P.M**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Tmt. Revathi Ramachandran,**  
Director,  
Kalakshetra Foundation

**Dr. K. Natarajan,**  
Deputy Director,  
Kalakshetra Foundation

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

It gives me immense pleasure in inaugurating the 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Art Festival of Kalakshetra Foundation. I am happy to be in the company of the eminent artists, scholars and students of art.

Kalakshetra Foundation was established in 1936 by the legendary cultural ambassador Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale as an academy for the preservation and promotion of traditional values in dance, music, crafts and visual arts. After the demise of the Founder, recognizing the importance of Kalakshetra and its role in sustaining the cultural heritage of our country; the Government of

India declared the institution as one of 'National Importance'. The foundation is now functioning as an autonomous body under Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

The teaching and learning of Bharatanatyam was started at Kalakshetra Foundation with great expectations and has become synonymous with the institution. The need for holistic learning necessitated a good knowledge of study of music, musical instruments, visual arts, languages, heritage and history of India. These subjects are also taught in the campus.

On this occasion, I recall the contribution of Rukmini Devi, founder of this great Institute and pioneer in many fields. She was the first dancer honoured by the Government of India which nominated her to Rajya Sabha. She contributed greatly to the rejuvenation of Indian Art. She revived Bharatanatyam from decay and inspired a cultural movement. She was a cultural revolutionary. She established weaving department, dye research laboratory, Kalamkaari unit and a Library to preserve rare Tamil manuscripts. The U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer library still stands in the campus as a testimony to her objective of preserving old Tamil literature for posterity. The library functioning is being supported by the Tamil Nadu Government.

Traditional fine arts of India suffered neglect during the British rule. There was a cultural vacuum and a characterless

hybridization between East and West. Rukmini Devi was stirred to seek a solution to this cultural crisis. She could not see the artistic heritage of India suffer a slow death. Destiny gave Rukmini Devi the responsibility of bringing music, literature and dance out of the shadow of decay into fresh air and sunshine of the Theatre arts. In doing so she was doubtless the instrument of Destiny and her founding of Kalakshetra at a young age of 32 marked the turning point in India's cultural history.

You may agree with me that art transcends time, race and religious barriers. However, I call upon all the gurus in bringing art closer to the common man. Art should not only enrich our mundane life, but it should also contribute to spread social messages on issues such as "Swachh Bhaarat". The current pandemic has vastly changed the lifestyle of everyone. Art is more equipped to spread awareness as it has greater appeal than spoken words. Any art on the issues of sanitation, cleanliness, pollution control, water conservation which affect each and every citizen of the country will have greater appeal and complement Government's efforts.

Our art forms are our rich cultural heritage and it is the duty and responsibility of all citizens in preserving those for the coming generations. The well-off and the corporate world should contribute to the cause of art to supplement the efforts of the

Government. Art should not be entirely dependent on the Government for support and funding. However, it is the responsibility of the Government to recognize and honour artists. The Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu have many schemes which are benefitting the artists and art world.

We can surely agree that good music and good dancing are holistic and usher in a happy state of mind. Health is a state of mind and fitness is a way of life. A fit body is a temple for a healthy mind. Dance aligns the mind, body and spirit. Especially in rare situations such as this Music and dance provide solace and entertainment that creates a sense of peace and provide entertainment that is enriching the mind and soul. Dance is a holistic hobby where one learns, enjoys and makes body fit at the same time.

In creating Kalakshetra, Rukmini Devi was looking to create a village where artists along different lines may live. It was her dream to create not a mere Academy for the arts but a great community such as in olden days.

Several Doyens in the field of arts who were principal contributors to lay a strong artistic foundation for Kalakshetra have to be mentioned here. To mention a few: Paapanaasam Sivan, Tiger Varadaachaariyaar, Mylapore Gowri Amma, Veenaa

Krishnamaachaariyaar, Aasaan Ambu Panikkar, Aasaan Chandu Panikkar, Mysore Vasudevaachaariar, Veenai Sambasiva Iyer, Budaloor Krishnamoorthy Saastrigal, Pandanalloor Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and so on.

I would like to add “A True Artist is not one who is inspired, but one who inspires others”.

Appreciating Art itself is an art and our younger generations should inculcate the “Art of appreciating Art”. Our children should be taken to Art galleries and Art performances as Art will add value to the quality of their life. Without Art, life will be mediocre and will be soulless.

I appeal to Younger artists to draw inspiration from them. It is your continued practice and dedication that will help you to excel.

Martha Graham said “Great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion”.

Chennai is known for the December Music and Dance festival and the city has been a great patron of performing arts and fine arts since very many years and Chennai has that why recognized as City of Music in the creative cities Network by UNESCO.

Kalakshetra Foundation has been conducting the Annual Festival every year for the last 66 years and this year in spite of the pandemic, an 11-day festival that will be an enriching

experience for the audience is being presented. The festival brings together artists from different parts of India and also will feature the unique productions choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi.

I conclude with the words of Dr. Rukmani Devi Arundale, “When you hear the sound of music or see the colours in a beautiful picture, you not only hear the music or see the picture; you see into the very soul of the artists and even more you see the soul of art itself”. This is the beauty of real art and artists.

I congratulate the Chairman, the Director and the teams of Kalakshetra Foundation in organizing the Festival year after year. My best wishes to all the Artists who will be performing in this festival. I am sure that Art Festivals such as this will draw youth in great numbers and kindle interest in them to take up the mantle of protecting our art traditions. I wish a grand success to this Festival.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Hind...

Jai Tamil Nadu....