

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE THYAGI G S LAXMANA IYER STATUE OPENING  
CEREMONY, 102<sup>ND</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AT SRI D S RAMAN  
& SAROJINIDEVI HOSTEL CAMPUS, VAIKAL ROAD, GOBICHETTIPALAYAM,  
ERODE ON 29.08.2018 AT 10.00 AM**

**Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. K.A.Sengottaiyan  
Minister for School Education**

**Prof. Sankar Kumar Sanyal  
President, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Delhi**

**Dr. S. Prabhakar, I.A.S.,  
Collector of Erode District**

**Thiru. P.Maruthi**

**Thiru K.M. Venkateshwaran**

**Thiru. A.K.Arumugam**

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

I am delighted to be here at the 102<sup>nd</sup> Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Thiyagi G.S.Laxmana Iyer at Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya School in Gopichettipalayam for unveiling the statue of Thiru. Laxmana Iyer. Thiru Laxman was a true Gandhian who not only followed the path of Sathyagraha during the freedom struggle, but also practised and propagated the ideals

of Gandhiji in his day to day life. He is therefore being remembered by the people of Gobichettipalayam with affection and respect.

Very few people are aware that Gobichettipalayam Municipality was the first Municipality in the country to ban manual scavenging. And this was done more than 60 years ago when Thiru. Laxman was the Chairman of Gobichettipalayam Municipality.

He hailed from a well to do family of farmers who owned nearly 650 acres of fertile land. But it was the thirst for fighting for India's freedom that drove Thiru Srinivasa Iyer i.e., Thiru Laxman's father into the freedom struggle. Gradually the family was drawn towards the Gandhian Ideals of simple living and high thinking. In 1928 Gandhiji announced a movement against untouchability focussing on Samabanthi Bhojan. Thiru. Srinivasan, in response to the call of Mahatma Gandhi invited people belonging to those families for Sambandhi Bhojan at his house and also invited them to take water from the well in his house. As a result his family was ostracized and declared as outcaste with two other families. Infact Mrs. Ananthalakshmi i.e.,

Thiru Laxman's sister and Thiru. Srinivasan's daughter was sent back by her in laws after marriage, to live with her parents for eight long years only because of this. The family had to endure many more hardships. But their devotion to Gandhian ideals was much stronger and was able to overcome the resentment they had to experience in their locality of residence. When Thiru. Laxman was 16 years old, his parents were searching for a suitable bride. Since, no one in Gobichettipalayam and the neighbouring areas came forward to give their daughter in marriage, a Congress Volunteer and an advocate Thiru. Sundaram Iyer and Alamelu from Palani were approached and they agreed to get their daughter Lakshmi married to him.

Thiru. Laxman involved his wife in the Freedom Struggle. She also showed keen interest in the Satyagraha Movement and this resulted in both being jailed by the British.

When he was arrested, Thiru. Laxman was asked to prepare food for about 600 inmates of the prison. In Bellary prison he himself voluntarily undertook the job of cleaning the latrines. Such were the menial jobs that stalwarts like Thiru.

Laxman who belonged to the upper caste rich land owning class, performed for bringing about a social awakening.

In 1942 after his release, Thiru. Laxman met Gandhiji. And this motivated him to work tirelessly for social reform such as removal of untouchability, temple entry movement, education for the girl child etc. Almost his entire wealth was dedicated to the promotion of these ideals. Thousands of people have benefitted from the institutions set up by Thiru. Laxman. Among these institutions are the D.S.Raman and Sarojini Devi hostels which were set up in 1935 and which have done yeoman service to promote the cause of education.

The primary school functioning here is aptly named as the Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya Shri. Thakkar Bapa was a qualified engineer. After seeing the difficulties of the people who were working in the scavenging profession, he started helping them in his own humble way. Recognizing his services, Mahatma Gandhi picked him up as the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be associated with this institution which has had such great people such as Thakkar Bapa and Thiru. Laxmana Iyer associated with it.

India is now proudly emerging as one of the leaders of the international community. For that to happen, faster, it is necessary that the country is strong, economically prosperous, culturally vibrant and socially united. It is the ideals inculcated in schools that remain with a person all his life and enable him to chart out his path in a manner that is useful to his family, his society and his nation.

Education is the basic requirement for a person to make himself economically and socially useful to society. Education brings out the best skills available within a person, hones them and enables him to achieve perfection in the field of his aptitude. It moulds his personality and gives him an identity. That is why Swami Vivekananda said

"We need education through which character is formed, strength of mind is increased and the intellect is expanded by which one can stand on his own feet". Institutions such as the Thakkar Bapa Vidyalaya and the D.S.Raman and Sarojini Devi

hostels are actually engaged in promoting this type of education.

Laxmana Iyer did what he did because he could never disown the word that he had given to Gandhiji that he would serve the people who suffered the scourge of untouchability.

Such was his life and thinking that he performed so many extraordinary things which are being rightly celebrated by the Harijan Sevak Sangh by putting up a statue.

I wish to congratulate the Harijan Sevak Sangh for having organised this function in honour of Thiru. Laxmana Iyer who followed the path of the Mahatma. I join them in paying my respects to these great souls and I am sure that functions such as this will help to transform the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi into reality for the present and succeeding generations.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind