

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR  
OF TAMIL NADU AT WOMAN ICONS INDIA GLOBAL AWARDS FUNCTION  
ORGANISED BY MASTERMIND FOUNDATION AT CHINMAYA HERITAGE  
CENTER, HARRINGTON ROAD, CHETPET, CHENNAI  
ON 02.03.2019 AT 6.30 P.M**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Dr. Lakshmi,**  
Founder,  
Mastermind Foundation

**Thiru. V. Kalyanam,**  
Personal Secretary to Mahatma Gandhi

**Dr. Latha Rajendran,**  
Founder, Correspondent,  
MGR Janaki College of Arts & Sciences

**Dr. M. Sarada Menon,**  
Founder, SCARF India

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great happiness to be here at the Woman Icons India Global Awards function being organised by the Master Mind Foundation.

Spreading the message of peace and providing service to humanity have been the chief objectives of the Master Mind Foundation. Towards that end, the organization is engaged in a variety of activities including educational projects, tree plantation initiatives, wellness workshops for the army, police and students etc. The conferment of honours on women achievers which is the thrust of today's function is a bold and inspirational step on the onward march towards the greater empowerment of women.

India is a nation with people of various faiths living in harmony. All our religions teach us to respect our women. We salute and respect our nation as Bharat Mata and Mother India. Vande Mataram was the inspiring war cry which drove out the British and brought freedom to India. Geographically also, the northernmost state of India is Jammu & Kashmir which has the famous shrine of Vaishno Devi. The southernmost State of India is Tamil Nadu which has the great temple of Kanyakumari to which I had gone a few days back. Hence culturally speaking India worships the Mother goddess, in all its regions from the north to the south.

We believe in the concept of Nari Shakthi or Women Power. The concept of Durga as the protector of the human race is embodied in the celebrations of Navarathri, on which day we narrate hymns on her victory over the evil forces. Navarathri is celebrated all over India and in Nagpur from where I hail, the celebrations of Vijayadasami the tenth day of victory, are organized on a grand scale.

While there have been leading women achievers all through history it is important to keep in mind that hundreds of years of foreign rule in India starting from the beginning of 13 Century till almost the middle of the 20th Century have created a number of factors in society that

suppressed women and kept them confined within closed doors. Hence, India witnessed disparities in development which affected women adversely. After Independence there has been an improvement in the conditions of women in a gradual manner.

The share of women as a percentage of the population is going up. Based on the Census report the sex ratio which is the number of females for every 1000 males has grown up from 933 in 2001 to 940 in 2011 for the whole of India. The Statistics for Tamil Nadu are even more encouraging for they indicate an increase in the sex ratio from 987 in 2001 to 995 in 2011. Similarly

female literacy rates in Tamil Nadu went up from 64.43% to 73.86% between 2001 and 2011.

Empowerment of women is an issue on which the Central and State Governments are fully focused upon.

The Government of India and State Governments are therefore implementing many programmes and schemes for women. Some of the schemes of the Government of India include.

- a) Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)
- b) Pradhan mantra Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme
- c) Schemes for improving nutritional status of Adolescents in the age group 11-18

d) National Creche Scheme

and

e) Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) a micro credit scheme for poor women.

The schemes of the State Government to mention a few, include

a. Marriage Assistance Schemes

b. Maternity Assistance Schemes

c. Livelihood Assistance Schemes

d. Hostels for Working Women

and

e. The setting up of All Women Police stations.

This function has been organised to celebrate the contributions of Women Icons. Let me at this juncture mention a few women icons, both global

and local who have been game changers for the state of Tamil Nadu.

All of us know about Mahakavi Bharathiar, the famous patriotic poet of Tamil Nadu. But it is important to know that it was Sister Nivedita who served as a guru to Mahakavi Bharathiar. When Mahakavi Bharathiar met Sister Nivedita at her residence in Calcutta in 1905, Sister Nivedita explained to Mahakavi Bharathiar that India cannot progress as long as the women of India, who represent 50% of the population, do not progress. This word of wisdom set Mahakavi Bharathiar thinking. Through introspection he realised the importance of emancipation and empowerment of women. That is how the concept of 'pudumai

penn' was born in the poems of Mahakavi Bharathiar.

Dr. Muthulakshmi is another inspiring role model for all women. She was the first woman doctor in India and the first woman vice president of any legislative council in the world.

In 1926 when she was nominated to the madras legislature as a member she enjoyed the distinction of being the first woman member of a legislature in India.

Many were the reforms that this pioneer from Pudukottai brought about in her life time, the foremost of them being the abolition of the Devadasi system.

You are all aware that Dr. Annie Besant was one of our foremost freedom fighters and won recognition as the Woman President of the Indian National Congress, to which office she was elected in 1917. The Theosophical Society and the Gokhale Hall till today continue to narrate the tales of her association with Chennai.

The Nightingale of India Dr. Sarojini Naidu had this to say of Dr. Besant “She was a combination of Parvathi, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. Had it not been for her enthusiasm, one could not have seen Mahatma Gandhi leading the cause of Indian freedom today. It was Dr. Annie Besant who laid the foundations of modern India”.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to know that the women receiving the awards today are following in their footsteps to serve as an inspiration for the present generation.

1. Padmabhushan Dr.M.Sarada Menon is the first woman psychiatrist in India and the Founder of SCARF India. She has given through her services lit up the lives of many suffering from deficiencies in mental health.

2. Dr. Reshmy Krishnan is an expert on computer programming.

3. Mrs. Archana Mahesh who established the Professional Dancer for more than twenty years. She established Gyanamudhra Academy has dedicated her life for Bharatanatyam.

4. Dr. Neela Bhattacharya has made a name for herself by providing free surgical care for poor children suffering from Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate.

5. Ms. Jaya Vaidhyanathan an expert on Information Technology serves as the President of Bahwan CyberTek

6. Dr. Prerna Kohli is a Clinical Psychologist who has received multiple honors, including the 100 Women Achievers Award works towards making the workplace safer for women.

7. Miss Aishwarya Sridhar is a Writer, Poet, Wildlife photographer and film-maker and the youngest recipient of the prestigious Sanctuary Asia "Young Naturalist Award".

8. Mrs. Komathi from the Indian Revenue Service is a motivational speaker who has provided a ray of hope in the lives of many through her speeches.

9. Ms. Saroj Kumari is a IPS Officer who has been working tirelessly against sexual harassment of children.

10. Miss Sathiyamoorthy Pamini is award winning lyricist.

and

Miss Umaiyal Meyyemmai is a child prodigy who is well versed in Thirukural and devotional kathas and gives motivational lectures to college students for community well being.

The list is long. It is important to remember that "Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility."

I wish to conclude by informing this august assembly that International Women's Day is drawing near. At Raj Bhavan the Day was celebrated last year for the first time with great enthusiasm. 120 venerable women above the age of 100 years were invited and felicitated with shawls and gifts by me at the Darbar Hall. Lunch was also served for them at the same venue along with Cabinet Ministers and senior officers.

The mood of the society is changing and is aimed at bringing about complete equality between men and women.

I am therefore certain that the efforts of the Master Mind Foundation will reap greater benefits in the coming years and that the opportunities for women in India will match those that are available in men in every field of progress. I wish the Master Mind Foundation all success in their endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Hind....