

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR  
OF TAMIL NADU AT THE LOUIS BRAILLE DAY CELEBRATIONS ORGANISED BY  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND, TAMIL NADU STATE BRANCH  
AT HOTEL SEVERA, MYLAPORE, CHENNAI ON 04.01.2019 AT 4.30 P.M**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. S.Ramakrishnan,**  
Tamil Writer

**Ms. Nina Reddy,**  
President, National Association for the Blind

**Ms. Rajashree,**  
Katha on Ratha

**Ms. Dipti Bhatia**  
Hony. Secretary,  
National Association for the Blind

**Thiru. M. Ezhil,**  
Hony. General Secretary,  
National Association for the Blind

**Thiru. P. Chandrasekar,**  
Hony. Secretary,  
National Association for the Blind

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to be here today on the occasion of the Braille Day celebrations being organised by the Tamil Nadu chapter of the National Association for the Blind. The day marks the birth anniversary of Louis Braille who provided and still provides inspiration in the minds of the visually impaired that they like all others, can lead their lives with dignity in society.

Louis Braille who was born in 1809 was a French educator and inventor of the system of reading and writing for use by the visually impaired. His system remains virtually unchanged to this day, and is known as braille.

Blinded in both eyes as a result of an early childhood accident, Braille mastered his disability while still a boy and excelled in his early studies for which he received a scholarship to France's Royal Institute for Blind Youth.

The handcrafted Hauy books at the Institute came in uncomfortable sizes for children. They were also very fragile, and expensive to obtain.

Braille was determined to invent a system of reading and writing that could bridge the gap in communication between the sighted and the blind. He wrote and I quote "Access to communication in the widest sense is access to knowledge, and that is vitally important for us if we [the blind] are not to go

on being despised or patronized by condescending sighted people. We do not need pity, nor do we need to be reminded we are vulnerable. We must be treated as equals – and communication is the way this can be brought about”.

In 1821, Braille learned of a communication system devised by Captain Charles Barbier of the French Army. Barbier willingly shared his invention called "night writing" which was a code of dots and dashes impressed into thick paper. These impressions could be interpreted entirely by the fingers, letting soldiers share information on the battlefield without having light or needing to speak. This inspired Braille to develop a system of his own.

Braille worked tirelessly on his ideas, and his system was largely completed by 1824, when he was fifteen years old. From Barbier's night writing, he innovated by simplifying its form and maximizing its efficiency. He made uniform columns for each letter, and he reduced the twelve raised dots to six. He published his system in 1829, and by the second edition in 1837 he had discarded the dashes because they were too difficult to read.

It bears the stamp of genius" wrote Dr. Richard Slating French, former director of the California School for the Blind.

Braille produced several written works about braille and for general education for the blind.

Method of Writing Words, Music, and Plain Songs... was a book written in 1829, his mathematics guide, Little Synopsis of Arithmetic for Beginners, came into use in 1838 and his monograph "New Method for Representing by Dots the Form of Letters, Maps, Geometric Figures, Musical Symbols" was published in 1839.

By 1839 Braille developed Decapoint, which combined his method of dot-punching with a new specialized grill which Braille devised to overlay the paper. When used with an associated number table, the grill could permit a blind writer to faithfully reproduce the standard alphabet, thus enabling

sighted people to read the letters written by the blind.

After the introduction of decapoint, Braille gave assistance to his friend Pierre-François-Victor Foucault, who was working on the development of his Raphigraphe, a device that could emboss letters in the manner of a typewriter. Foucault's machine was hailed as a great success.

Braille's system was adopted for universal usage in 1854. In 1873, the cause of braille was championed by Dr. Thomas Rhodes Armitage and thereafter its international use increased rapidly. By 1882, Dr. Armitage was able to report that "There is

now probably no institution in the civilized world where braille is not used.

In India, Miss Annie Sharp, a Christian missionary from England, who founded the first school for the blind in Amritsar in 1887 adopted the Braille code for education in the English Medium.

The absence of a common Braille Code for Indian languages posed a problem in the rapid expansion of education for the visually impaired. About 10 different Codes were then being used by schools in different parts of the country. It was in November 1950, after independence that Bharati Braille came to be accepted as the National Code.

Further, there was no national organization of or for the blind in the country in the pre-independence days. The National Institute for the Visually Handicapped (NIVH) was set up on 2nd July 1979 at Dehradun.

Apart from providing education it is important to empower the visually impaired for them to live a normal life in society. It is for this that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 has been legislated. The new law not only enhances the Rights and Entitlements of Disabled but also provides an effective mechanism for ensuring their empowerment and inclusion in Society with dignity.

Reservation in jobs has been increased to 5% for persons with disabilities according to the new act. In addition, loans from public sector banks, assistance from National Handicapped Finance and development Corporation... help in creating employment opportunities for the Differently Abled.

The Government has also instituted a number of scholarship schemes for visually impaired students besides providing Readers allowance and scribe allowance to enable students to continue their education with ease.

It is fully recognized that there is a need for greater efforts by society towards empowerment and

inclusion, if the visually impaired are to fully integrated.

It is our responsibility to accept this reality and try to create a truly egalitarian society in an environment in which not only the blind and the visually impaired but all those who are impaired in some form or the other, live and experience life as equals along with the others who are not so.

Towards this end, National Association for the Blind has been rendering dedicated support to the visually impaired community through its projects and programs for 60 years.

I congratulate NAB for printing and publishing the Braille books authored by Thiru S Ramakrishnan

the Sahitya Academy winner. I am happy to know that NAB is also working on a reading program called Katha On Ratha and is promoting early literacy with the support of the Chetna Trust.

The NAB has taken the initiative along with other organizations to conduct a state-wide Braille competition for school children. The ability and skills of these wonderful children who have won prizes today deserve our fullest praise.

There should be more of such initiatives across the State, which give an opportunity for all children to grow and learn together.

I call upon and all those assembled here and all other like-minded organizations to redouble their

efforts and expand the coverage of their operations as much as possible so as to reach out generously all over India. I am sure that many more well-intentioned philanthropists will come forward to support such an initiative.

I thank the Tamil Nadu chapter of the National Association for the Blind for this opportunity given to me to address all of you. May they be greeted with success in all their endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Hind...