

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE FUNCTION "DEDICATION OF REJUVENATED TEERTHAMS
TO THE NATION" ORGANSIED BY GREEN RAMESWARAM AT GOSWAMI MUTT,
RAMESWARAM ON 12.01.2019 AT 10.30 AM**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

Dr. M. Manikandan,
Minister for Information Technology

Thiru. Veera Raghava Rao, I.A.S.,
District Collector, Ramanathapuram

Thiru. Balakrishnan,
Vice President, Vivekananda Kendra

Thiru. Vasudeo,
Secretary, Green Rameswaram

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here at the function organized by the 'Green Rameswaram' project group for the dedication of the rejuvenated theerthams to the nation.

Rameswaram is a very sacred place for millions of Indians. A pilgrimage to Varanasi is considered to be incomplete without a pilgrimage to Rameswaram. The town along with the Ramanathaswamy temple is one of the holiest Hindu Char Dham (four divine sites) sites, the other three being Badrinath, Puri and Dwaraka.

Rameswara means "One who is lord of Rama" an epithet of Shiva, the presiding deity of the Ramanathaswamy Temple. According to the

Ramayana, Rama prayed to Shiva here at Rameswaram. For the worship of Shiva, Rama wanted to have a lingam and directed Hanuman to bring it from the Himalayas. Since it took longer to bring the lingam, Sita created one lingam from the Sands of the shores. This account is provided in the original Ramayana authored by Valmiki. There are a number of holy theerthams here at Rameswaram, many of which are connected with the Ramayana. The act of having a dip in the Teerthas is a sacred act – which reinforces the right way of living.

Today's programme is linked to two great personalities of India -- Swami Vivekananda and Dr. Abdul kalam.

Dr. Abdul Kalam was born in Rameswaram. Rising from humble beginnings he attained the distinction of being world class scientist. He became the president of India in 2003 and during his tenure in Rashtrapathi initiated a number of measures to prevent environmental degradation. Rameswaram is also linked with Swami Vivekananda for the reason that Swamiji first set foot on Indian soil in Rameswaram when he returned after a successful tour of USA and Europe where he had been eminently successful in propounding the greatness of Indian culture and spirituality.

The Project Green Rameswaram was inaugurated by Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at a public

function in 2014 with the objective of creating examples for the nation (i) water management, (ii) waste management, (iii). renewable energy, (iv) new merchandise and livelihoods, (v). landscaping and beautification, (vi). green health, (vii) heritage, (viii) eco-tourism & green transport and ix. marine biodiversity.

Vivekananda Kendra which is engaged in the mission of propagating the life and message of Swami Vivekananda has brought the stakeholders of the island-government organizations, community and civil society organizations together through networking to join hands in the task of rejuvenating the theerthams. Shri. Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime

Minister of India, during his visit to Rameswaram on 22 July 2017 commended the district administration, Vivekananda Kendra and other partner organizations for the work done so far under the Project. During the event, the Prime Minister unveiled the 'Blueprint of Green Rameswaram' - a goal setting document for making Rameswaram Green.

The Ministry of Water And Resources Development, Government of India under its mission programme has stressed the need for renovating Water bodies to address the challenges of scarce water resource .

The Tamilnadu Government in its Vision 2023 had also called for nurturing our heritage and preserving the ecology. Environment preservation which encompasses conserving ground water and other water bodies, protection of coastal zones is thus an important area of focus.

I have seen the work of Green Rameswaram and Island Development Committee for the rejuvenation of theerthams and appreciate them for the efforts taken.

Mahatma Gandhi, in his writings mentioned, “Nature has enough to satisfy every man’s need but not enough to satisfy every man’s greed”. The earth gives us the air we breathe, the water we drink, the

sun light we enjoy, the fire that helps us in cooking our food, the trees that give shade and oxygen, etc. These are examples of Mother Nature's blessings to mankind. It is important that we recognize this and take steps to carry forward these blessings of Nature to our succeeding generations.

Our ancestors knew the practice of sustainable development. That is the reason India has had a continuing civilisation for more than 5000 years. The agricultural practices were sustainable. The needs of the people were limited and contentment was the principle that was admired, appreciated and propagated. The Tamil proverb "pothumendra

maname pon seyyum marundhu” bears ample testimony to this.

In the last 200 years, we have had many technological innovations that have improved the standard of living. The use of electricity, use of vehicles for transportation and the use of gadgets to improve communication have definitely helped to make our living conditions better. But it is important to draw the line so that we do not exceed limits.

Today the use of petrol and petroleum products, the use of plastics and the mindless dependence on artificial chemicals have resulted in serious environmental damage. That is why the nations of the world met at Paris in 12th December 2015 to

control carbon emissions. Global warming is emerging as a major problem and threatens to wipe out large populations if left uncontrolled.

The greatness of a civilisation lies not in what people enjoy but it lies in what people can provide for the betterment of mankind and continued civilisation in a sustained manner. Mere enjoyment and economic prosperity without sustainable development will be short-lived and short-sighted.

The answer to all these problems lies in simple living and high thinking, I wish to conclude by calling upon Vivekananda Kendra and all other like minded organization to redouble their efforts to achieve

greater heights in undertaking measures aimed at environmental protection and cultural preservation.

I congratulate the office bearers of the Vivekananda Kendra who have invested their selfless efforts for achieving these twin ends. May they be greeted with success in all their endeavors. I extend my best wishes and greetings to all of you for a happy and prosperous new year.

Nandri

Vanakkam