

**PADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE SEMINAR ON "STATUS OF SENIOR CITIZENS OF TAMIL  
NADU" ORGANISED BY FEDERATION OF SENIOR CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS  
OF TAMIL NADU (FOSCATAN) AT AUDITORIUM OF INDIAN OFFICERS  
ASSOCIATION, ROYAPETTAH, CHENNAI ON 24.03.2019 AT 10.30 A.M**

**Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. D. N. Chapke,**  
President,  
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**Thiru. A.M. Swaminathan, I.A.S. (Retd.,)**

**Thiru. D. Rajasekaran,**  
President,  
FOSCATAN

**Thiru. R.T. Namasivayam,**  
Vice-President,  
FOSCATAN

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me pleasure to be here today at the seminar on the “Status of Senior Citizens in Tamil Nadu” being organised by the Federation of Senior Citizens Associations of Tamil Nadu.

I am informed that this federation has under its umbrella 20 other senior citizens organizations spread across the state.

We all know that one of the important emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that of an ageing population.

That this is occurring simultaneously with technology growth makes the challenge more ominous. On the one hand physical human capabilities are being rendered more and more redundant, with the advancement of technology

and on the other hand more and more citizens, especially senior citizens are continuing to stay on as a part of the economy, owing to increase in longevity. The emergence of a divided and dispirited society which is not able to realise happiness through material progress is therefore a distinct possibility. Avoiding such a possibility tactfully is the need of the hour.

Today there are 0.9 billion senior citizens in the world who account for nearly 12.3% of the total population. Tamil Nadu which contributes the second highest percentage of senior citizens among the states of the country comes close to this figure with 11.4%.

In a UN funded study the report of which has been published countries have been ranked according to the well being of the elders inhabiting them. 96 countries which could be sampled for this assessment have been thus ranked by experts. It is disappointing to see that many South Asian countries did not find respectable positions in this list.

This would appear surprising considering that these nations have a traditional cultural and social requirement of looking after the elderly. But there could also be some truth in this. It is quite possible that the changes brought about by economic trends such as migration occasioned by globalisation are evading solutions at the social

and cultural level thus resulting in reduced levels of attention paid to the elderly, weak and suffering.

Japan at position 8 was judged to be the friendliest country for the Old in Asia. It is a hyper-ageing country, with 33% of its population now over 60. This is expected to grow to more than 42% in 2050, the highest in the World. Japan has set an example as to how an ageing population should be taken care of and converted into an instrument of progress.

For this, almost 50 years ago, Japan adopted a comprehensive welfare policy, introduced universal health care, a universal social pension, and a plan for income redistribution, low unemployment and progressive taxation. This

investment has paid off with a healthier labour force and increased longevity. As a result, Japan is not just the oldest, but also one of the healthiest and wealthiest countries of the world.

The key domains which were studied to work out the above comparative rankings were factors relevant for the well being of senior citizens such as physical security, health status, provision of basic facilities, and an enabling environment that provides avenues for them to contribute to society.

Health status is measured by three indicators: life expectancy at 60, access to quality health care, and psychological wellbeing, These are often not available in full measure to all categories of

older persons and need to be given careful attention.

Another important point that we must emphasize are the issues of physical security and property security of senior citizens. According to a survey 12% seniors in India live alone or with their spouse. They need to be given targeted protection, so that they do not become victim to anti social elements.

The provision of basic facilities such as old age home accommodation, Community Centres, Help line Nursing and Respite Homes, Palliative Care Homes, Day Care Centers etc. is essential and this needs to be available comprehensively and liberally.

It was in 1999 that the Union Government under Atal Behari Vajpayeeji formulated a national policy for the aged and day care centres were proposed as a part of that policy.

This Policy was way ahead of the Madrid International Plan on Ageing and demonstrated a commitment to ensure that people are able to age and live with dignity from a human rights perspective.

The Policy envisaged State support to ensure financial and food security, health care, shelter and other needs of older persons, equitable share in development, protection against abuse and exploitation, and availability of services to improve the quality of their lives. It also covered issues like



social security, intergenerational bonding, family as the primary caretaker, role of Non-Governmental Organizations, training of manpower, research and training.

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act was subsequently enacted in 2007 for providing effective legal provisions for maintenance and welfare of senior citizens. This is a central enactment and Tamil Nadu which has adopted this Act has also notified the rules for its implementation. Notifications appointing RDOs as the Tribunals and the Collectors as the Appellate Tribunals have been issued.

According to this law, the senior citizen is entitled to apply for maintenance if he is unable to

maintain himself from his own earnings or out of the property owned by him. The obligation of the children to maintain his or her parent extends to the needs of such parent either father or mother or both, as the case may be, so that such parent may lead a normal life.

To conclude on a note of optimism, let me say that old age need not be a period to be feared. There is an ancient saying which says, "For the ignorant, old age is winter; for the wise, old age is the harvest".

Experts in Geriatrics, the branch of medicine dealing with the health and care of the old, speak of active aging. This implies that through proper management of issues related to aging, old age

can be made to become a productive period in a person's life. The invaluable experience that has been gained by old people over many decades enables them to know what is right and what is wrong. They can detect if something is planned against the family or society since they have vast stores of memory about similar occurrences of the past. Most importantly old aged people are more selfless since they have less years to live for. So it is important for any intelligent society to find a method to utilize the talents, knowledge and experience of the elderly for its benefit. I am sure that the deliberations of this seminar will throw more light on this and pave the way for meaningful solutions.

I congratulate the Federation of Senior Citizens Associations of Tamil Nadu for the painstaking efforts taken by them to organize this seminar. May success visit them in all their endeavours and may acceptable solutions be found to productively utilise the abilities of aged persons while giving them the dignity and space to live a life of comfort at the same time.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Hind....