

**REPUBLIC DAY ADDRESS BY THIRU. R.N. RAVI, HON'BLE GOVERNOR
OF TAMIL NADU**

My dear brothers and sisters of Tamil Nadu, Vanakkam. The Republic of Bharat has completed 75 years of her eventful journey. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to you.

I remember with profound gratitude all the martyrs and freedom fighters whose blood, toil, sweat and sacrifices gave us the freedom. My heartfelt thanks and immense gratitude to Baba Shaheb Ambedkar and the Honourable members of the Constituent Assembly for giving us a resilient and futuristic Constitution which has kept our democracy safe and vibrant. During these 75 years, we have seen collapse of democracies in several countries one after another including those in our neighbourhood, yet our democracy has grown more robust and mature with time. The spirit of democracy is inherent in the nature of our people. Bharat is the mother of democracy. Over one thousand years old inscriptions at Uttaramerur in Kancheepuram district bear witness to it.

On this day, I, with utmost reverence, bow my head to the Punya Bhoomi of Tamil, the land of Sage Agasthya, which for countless millennia has shaped and nursed the idea and identity of Bharat and guided Her destiny. A galaxy of divine poets, saints and siddhars of this land like – Thiruvalluvar, Thirumoolar, Sambandhar, Appar, Sundarar, Manickavasakar, Nayanmars, Alvars; great Kings like Pallavas, Pandyas and the great Cholas; spiritual leaders cum social reformers like Sri Ramanujacharya, Vallalar, Ayya Vaikundhar, Swami Sahajanand; trinity of Carnatic music – Thyagaraja,

Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri; great freedom fighters like V.O.Chidambaram Pillai; great revolutionary poet Subramania Bharati – they all have bequeathed us such a glorious spiritual, literary, cultural and civilizational heritage that fills the heart of every Indian with pride.

It is this Punya Tamil Bhoomi that gave national awakening to Swami Vivekananda at a time when the soul of our nation was being mercilessly crushed by the colonial rulers. It awakened and inspired in him to enlighten the world in Chicago in 1893 about the spiritual, cultural and civilizational glorious heritage of Bharat which kindled national awakening in our masses and fuelled the national freedom movement leading to our Independence.

Friends, Tamil linguistic, spiritual and cultural heritage is our national pride. We are proudly sharing it with the rest of the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives in setting up Thiruvalluvar Centres and Chairs in several cities and Universities of the world like Thiruvalluvar Chairs in the University of Malaya in Malaysia, University of Houston in the USA, Thiruvalluvar Centres in Singapore and Sri Lanka, installation of Thiruvalluvar statues in Cergy, France, appointment of Tamil teachers in the schools of Fiji are to spread the glory of Tamil across the world. A Subramania Bharathi Chair at the Banaras Hindu University and Tamil certificate courses in Guwahati University are measures to spread Tamil's glory all over the country. The entire country felt happy and proud when the sacred Sengol of this land, the cultural mark of the transfer of power from the British, was installed with full dignity and honour in the new Parliament of Bharat. The Kashi – Tamil Sangamam, an annual festival for the last three years, is rejuvenating the millennia old cultural connect of our Tami people with Kashi, the spiritual centre of gravity of Bharat.

Friends, It is the golden era of Bharat. It is the era of Her renaissance. From among the fragile five economies of the world until a decade ago, today we are the Fifth largest world economy poised soon to become the 3rd largest. We are the fastest growing large economy of the world. The country has shed the long festering mood of frustration, disappointment and despair and is dazzling the world with incredible creativity, innovations and enterprise. In a record time of one decade over 25 crores poor people of our country have been pulled out of poverty. Today our youth, women and farmers are confident and enterprising. Bharat's resounding presence is felt in every domain of human enterprise, be it space, cyber space, deep sea exploration, quantum and nano-technologies, sustainable technologies, digital public infrastructure, implementation of public welfare schemes or in the domain of conflict resolution and peace. Bharat is fast emerging as the manufacturing hub of the world. Foreign Multi-national companies are shifting their manufacturing to Bharat. We are building world - class infrastructures – roads, rails, ports and aviation. We are taking quantum jump in research and innovation. We are moving towards self-reliance in Defence. We are among the largest start-up ecosystems of the world. We are confidently striving to fulfil our national mission of self-reliance in every critical sector.

Friends, Our model of human centric, equitable and all-inclusive development is fast bridging the regional and sub-regional development gaps. Our aspirational districts which were long left behind are fast catching up with the most advanced districts. In order to make equitability more granular this has been extended to aspirational blocks and panchayats. It is bringing equity and restoring dignity to our less fortunate brothers and sisters living in the remote rural areas.

Our all-inclusive development model does not leave out even the smallest communities who are often left out in the competitive electoral politics. It is a matter of concern that so far our brothers and sisters belonging to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups scattered across the country could not get their share of developmental benefits. Some 10 lakhs of them are in our State. I have seen their pitiable plights in Jawadhu Hills, Kalvarayan Hills, Nilgiri Hills and other places. Several thousands of them do not have even the basic documents to prove their existence. Prime Minister Modi launched PM JAN-MAN with allocation of adequate resources to bring the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups at par with others, restore them their dignity and pull them out of their pitiable plight on priority.

Friends, Thanks to our peoples' enterprise that our State is among the top few States in MSME sector. In sectors like textile, leather, automobiles, engineering components and pharmaceuticals, our State is among the leading States. Our farmers are quick to adopt modern technologies and scientific methods of farming. I congratulate the educated youth who are joining the farm sector and transforming it with their innovative ideas and enterprise. I am happy that more and more farmers are going for millet cultivation, adopting natural farming and shunning the use of chemical fertilizers or pesticide.

Friends, Our mothers and sisters specially from rural and semi-urban background are highly enterprising. Of the nearly One Crore Fifty Lakhs Mudra Loan beneficiaries in Tamil Nadu about half are women. I had the opportunity to meet quite a few of them during my visits to rural districts. I am deeply impressed with their enthusiasm, enterprise and innovative mind. They give me the confidence to assert that our enterprising mothers and sisters in

rural and semi-urban areas are the silent revolutionaries transforming our nation and economy.

I thank our sports men and women who have made the State and the country proud with their stellar performance at the national and international level.

I thank the countless number of unsung heroes who are individually and collectively doing yeoman service to the society and helping with compassion the less fortunate among us like those suffering from physical or mental disabilities, poor and abandoned and providing them needed care and support.

Friends, We have taken a solemn pledge to make our country self-reliant and fully developed by 2047. It was the dream of our fore-fathers. It was the dream of countless martyrs who gave their life and blood for our Independence from foreign rule. It was the dream of V.O.Chidambaranar and Mahakavi Bharati. This national mission is non-negotiable. It is our duty to make it happen.

In this national mission our State Tamil Nadu has a big role to play. Given the rich potential it can be the engine of our nation's growth. For this, our State must develop to its optimal potential. However, it does not seem to be happening. Status of key – indicators are worrisome. Unfortunately, our State is on a declining curve.

Our most precious resource is our youth. They are our future. For Tamil Nadu to grow it is imperative that our youth receive the best possible

education and skill. It is a matter of great satisfaction that in respect of Gross Enrolment Ratio, Tamil Nadu is among the top few States. However, in terms of learning outcome of students especially in schools, it is among the bottom few States. The Annual Status of Education Reports for the last some years on the status of learning in our Government schools reveal a very disturbing truth. About 75% of our high school students in Government schools cannot read even second standard text books nor can they recognise all the two digit numbers between 11 and 99. They cannot do simple two-digit addition and subtractions. Since Government schools cater largely to the economically poor, steep decline in standards of learning in Government schools further jeopardises the future of the poor and accentuates long term social and economic injustice to them.

Friends, In respect of Higher Education scenario is no better. About 25 lakh students are enrolled in our 20 State Universities. Most of the Universities are starved of funds. They are in dire financial crisis not even able to pay salary to the teachers. They have not received their due shares of fund from the State Government for the last some years. As a result, many are functioning with less than 50% of teachers strength. Universities have no money to recruit teachers. In Madras University, which used to be our nation's pride, 66% teachers' posts are vacant. Due to continuous non-receipt of Government funds, some Universities have begun filing their Income Tax returns declaring themselves non-state University. As many as 10 Universities are without Registrar and Controller of Examination for several years. They are being run on ad-hoc basis. Autonomy of Universities have been severely eroded to such an extent that it is not the University syndicates but the State Secretariat runs them. In the matter of framing curriculum and syllabus which are statutorily under the domain of the Academic Council of the University,

Universities are compelled to follow a common sub-standard syllabus prepared by the State Government Council for Higher Education. Upright and Honest University officials are framed in false and fabricated cases and subjected to humiliating police harassment. Absence of Vice-Chancellors practically brings an University under direct control of the Government because the Secretary, Higher Education, acts as the de-facto Vice-Chancellor. Not allowing appointment of Vice-Chancellors on untenable concocted flimsy grounds is a devious way to erode the autonomy of the University through back door. The net result is steep decline in quality of education. Due to such decline more and more graduates are jobless as majority are un-employable. General standards of research is very low. Of the over Six thousand PhDs that our Universities produce every year not even Five percent could qualify for NET/JRF – minimum eligibility standard for research. Future of millions of students are in jeopardy.

Friends, Increasing menace of illicit drugs in and around the campuses is a serious concern. There are reports of powerful drug syndicates linked with international drug cartels operating in our State. While the foot soldiers of crime who peddle drugs to the youth are sometimes caught by the enforcement agencies, big wigs who run the drug cartels remain untouched. If the kingpins of drug cartels are not arrested and punished, the increasing drug menace will destroy our future generation.

Friends, Our heart sinks and head hangs in shame when almost every other day we read reports of de-humanising social discrimination against our Dalit brothers and sisters. They are not allowed to walk the village streets wearing their footwear, they are denied access to public spaces. When some among them dares to challenge the discrimination, they are brutally assaulted,

urinated upon and at times even killed. Dalit students are segregated in school class rooms and if a Dalit student academically performs better, he is physically assaulted. An elected Dalit Panchayat President is not allowed to function and not even allowed to sit in the chair during official meetings. Crimes against Dalits especially sexual assaults on Dalit women are steadily increasing in Tamil Nadu. On the one hand heinous crimes against Dalits are increasing, on the other justice is denied to the victims. The rate of conviction of culprits in crimes against Dalits is half the national average. The two successive years 2023 and 2024, the State was shocked by massive hooch tragedies. About 100 people died and several hundred families were devastated by spurious liquor. The victims were largely poor Dalits. The barons of illicit liquor who profit from the death and devastation of the poor are still at large while some lowly pawns have been nabbed. Such atrocities against Dalits are happening in the State which is proud of having tall Dalit leaders like Rettamalai Srinivasan and M.C. Rajah who dedicated their life to uphold social justice.

Friends, Until some years back our State used to be the most favoured destination for private investment. However, today investors are shying away from Tamil Nadu and going to other States. In the financial year 2021-22 Tamil Nadu was the fourth largest recipient of FDI among the States and received US \$ 3bn investment. In the year 2023-24 our State dropped to the 6th position with less than US \$ 2.4bn investment. At the same time Karnataka attracted US \$ 6.5bn, Gujarat US \$ 7.3bn and Maharashtra US \$ 15bn investment. Telangana and Haryana were once behind us, however, now they are leaving our State behind. Dwindling private investment has slowed down the industry and the service sectors. It has adverse consequences on the

State's economy and employment opportunities. We must remove the causes which are scaring away the investors.

Friends, Status of suicide in a society is a measure of its social and economic distress. Tamil Nadu has the highest suicide rate in the country. The national average is 12 suicides per one lakh population. In our State Tamil Nadu, it is more than 26 suicides per one lakh population. It is more than double the national average. Some 20 Thousand of our people commit suicide every year in our State. Data analysts call Tamil Nadu the suicide capital of India. Victims are mostly the youth and the poor. An environment of severe social and economic distress is hostile to growth and justice. It calls for urgent comprehensive intervention.

Friends, The NIA, the Central Counter Terror Agency has been unearthing and neutralising, from time to time, several modules and sleeper cells of terrorist networks operating in various parts of our State. Some of these terror modules are linked with international terror networks operating in Afghanistan, Middle East and West Asia. This is a very very serious national security concern. It is vitiating our social harmony and has potential to severely disrupt our economy. I urge the people to remain vigilant and the enforcement agencies to aggressively root them out.

Friends, While our nation is confidently marching ahead towards becoming a developed Bharat by 2047, there are vested interests and inimical forces within and outside the country who are trying to disrupt the pace of our progress. They are trying to divide and fragment the society in the names of race, religion, language and castes. They are trying to weaken the morale of our people by spreading false and negative narratives. Through blatantly false

narratives they are trying to undermine our people's confidence in our Constitution and Constitutionally established institutions. I urge you all to remain vigilant against all such anti-national elements.

Friends, We are celebrating 75 years of adoption of the Constitution of Bharat. It is an year long celebration. I urge you all to take active part in it. Our dreams, our ideals and our goals are in the Constitution. Our rights and duties are in the Constitution. Our destination and directions are in the Constitution. It is the holiest of all books for every Indian. It belongs to we the people of India. Let us reclaim it and celebrate it with zest and enthusiasm.

I once again extend my best wishes to you all.

Vazhga Tamil,

Vazhga Bharata Mata.

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Raj Bhavan, Chennai-22

Date: 25.01.2025

Released by:-

Public Relations Office