

**Address by  
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**At The Function To Felicitate Dr. M. Karunanidhi on His Completing 50 Years of his  
Association with The Legislative Bodies in Tamil Nadu.**

**Chennai, 12 May 2007**

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu; Hon'ble Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly;  
Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble Members of the Assembly; Ladies and Gentleman:

*Ellarukkum Vanakkam,*

It is a matter of great pleasure and an honour for me to have the opportunity to associate myself with this function organised to felicitate Kalaingar Dr. M. Karunanidhi on his long and eventful association with the Legislative Bodies of Tamil Nadu. At the very outset, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my distinguished friend Dr. Karunanidhi on this rare accomplishment.

Friends, it is undoubtedly a momentous occasion in the life of the outstanding leader who has played and continues to play a very significant role in the State of Tamil Nadu as also in our national politics. Dr. Karunanidhi has the unique distinction of having been elected to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly as many as 11 times. This is besides, his membership of the State Legislative Council in the mid 1980s. To be a member of a Legislature for such a long period of time is, indeed, a remarkable achievement, testifying to the high esteem in which the people hold him, which conclusively establishes Thiru Karunanidhi's popularity amongst the people of this progressive State and his great contribution for its speedy development.

His popularity and reach is not limited to any particular region or Constituency as such. In fact, the whole State and, in a larger measure, the whole country has been his stage. His own electoral records reveal that whichever Constituency he chose to contest from, the people have expressed their confidence in him and have extended him unhesitatingly the honour to represent them in the Assembly.

During his long innings in the Legislature, he has had the privilege of seeing the temper and tide of the House both from the Treasury and the Opposition Benches. He has held the august office of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu five times which in itself is a record for the State and he has almost touched the record of his good friend Shri Jyothi Basu in this. He has thus had rich and varied experience as a member of the Legislature, as a Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition, as the Chief Minister and, above all, as the unquestioned leader of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Party he co-founded with some other great leaders, way back in 1949 and passionately nurtured ever since. And it adds lustre to his public life that he has discharged these varied responsibilities with great distinction.

As elected representatives of a progressive State and of a very dynamic and highly industrious people, the legislators of the State of Tamil Nadu have onerous responsibilities to shoulder. In Thiru Karunanidhi, they had and have a great leader and pathfinder to emulate. During his distinguished public life and as a member and leader of the State Legislature, Dr. Karunanidhi

has earned tremendous goodwill and enormous support of the people and his constituents. He has overcome, time and again, all hurdles in retaining the trust and faith of the people, which eloquently speaks of his charisma and public appeal.

Thiru Karunanidhi's life and times is a shining example of the great virtues of service, of dedication and commitment, always remaining accessible to the people, sharing their sorrows and joys and in being pro-active in addressing their grievances. Even at the pinnacle of his political career and success, he has not lost touch with the man on the street - he continues to be in close communion with grass-root workers, always fighting for their cause, particularly of those belonging to the weaker and the vulnerable sections of society.

The record of his performance over the past nearly four decades, as the President of the Party, has indeed been most commendable. He is the true link between the leaders and the workers of his generation and those belonging to the present generation. All these years, he has, in fact, been a source of inspiration for generations of public-spirited people, young and old alike, in involving themselves in public affairs. The high level of political awareness, and the healthy political culture that the people of Tamil Nadu have been demonstrating can be attributed equally to the ceaseless and committed efforts of leaders like Dr. Karunanidhi and to the wisdom, maturity and to the sense of responsibility of the people of the State. Under such enlightened leadership, the people of this State have been making significant contributions towards the development of the State and to nation-building.

As a charismatic mass leader, Dr. Karunanidhi occupies a special place in the hearts and minds of the people of Tamil Nadu. A man of compassion, and commitment to public causes, he is among those select few who have always remained wedded to certain principles and ideals and ever ready to make any sacrifice for defending them against onslaught of any kind. The saga of his life symbolizes a spirit of sacrifice, of courage of conviction and a rare sensitivity to the cause of the poor and the deprived. As the Chief Minister, five times in the past nearly three and a half decades, he has not only spearheaded a socio-economic revolution in the State, but also laid a firm foundation for a modern Tamil Nadu, by introducing many path-breaking schemes and enacting pioneering legislative measures. It is known that it was Thiru Karunanidhi who constituted a Backward Classes Commission in the State, the first of its kind anywhere in India. He has always given special attention to the problems being faced by the deprived and the downtrodden and he set up a separate Ministry for specially looking into their matters way back in 1989. It is his farsightedness and sagacity which have enabled the State of Tamil Nadu to produce commendable results on various developmental parameters in recent decades.

Deeply committed to secularism, a progressive social order, and other larger national values, Dr. Karunanidhi's model of development has been an all inclusive one. He views politics as a means for social transformation and as a potent instrument for development and growth. He believes that the State has a moral obligation to uplift the vulnerable sections of society and that they cannot be left alone to protect themselves. He has initiated several progressive measures for their uplift. His initiative to provide spectacles to the needy among the poor strata of society, for free surgeries in hospitals, for the abolition of hand-pulled rickshaws and for the free distribution of cycle rickshaws, for providing developed land free of cost to the landless agricultural families, legislation for equal property rights for women, for free education for the girl child, marriage-grant for poor girls, among others, are just a few examples of his empathy with the poor, the women and the downtrodden. Homes for the homeless, highly subsidized food-grains to the poor, television sets and cooking gas connections and gas stoves to the poor households which do not have these facilities, rehabilitation of beggars, etc.,

are some of the issues which he has proactively addressed and has found solutions, always in favour of the vulnerable sections of the society.

As a crusader for the welfare of the weaker sections, Thiru Karunanidhi has made seminal contributions for their socio-economic empowerment, both as a legislator and as an administrator. Needless to say, such affirmative action is a pre-requisite for building an equitable, egalitarian and inclusive society. As a tireless champion of the Dravidian identity, he has very adroitly used his oratorical and literary excellence to disseminate the egalitarian and rationalist ideals of the Dravidian movement, as articulated by the great leader, the legendary Annadurai. Thiru Karunanidhi held aloft the torch of social empowerment with great zeal and commitment all these years. As a socially sensitive leader, he ensured that men belonging to all castes could become priests in the Hindu temples. In a way, indeed, he has been a great social reformer too, whose contributions in facilitating a classless and casteless society will always be remembered.

Dr. Karunanidhi has also contributed significantly to the success of both coalition governance and cooperative federalism in the country. He firmly believes that only a union of strong States can make a strong Union. At the national level, he has been contributing immensely for the strengthening of the federal polity by fighting for the rightful place of the States of the Union without compromising with national unity and integrity. For him, decentralization is both a political and an economic necessity in a diverse society like ours. It is worth recalling what he said about decentralization, while speaking at the National Development Council meeting in May 1972 and I quote:

Decentralization is particularly necessary if a large country like ours is to cope with the problems of a modern economy. It is in this sense that our demand for State autonomy should be understood - as a request for more efficient management of the country's resources, as a means to enable the Centre to be strong in areas of vital national concern, as a method of enabling the minimum demands of our people to be met in the quickest time and in the most efficient manner.

Indeed, these views show his great statesmanship and his efforts to Strengthen the federal structure of our country. Dr. Karunanidhi is totally committed to national unity and integrity. His poetic observations in the State Legislative Assembly on 16 April 1974, while articulating his Government's views on the Rajamannar Committee appointed by the Tamil Nadu Government on the issue of State autonomy, are equally eloquent, I quote:

The National Flag of India flutters in the glittering sun. We lift our eyes to the high skies beyond the clouds in our attempt to enjoy the majesty of the Flag. We hear the National Anthem composed by Tagore, the golden voice of Bengal. The sweet melody of the Anthem rings in our ears like the soft music of the Courtallam Falls. Yes! Our country has awoken from its slavery liberating itself from foreign domination. The epic story of our heroic struggle for liberation of India from which we emerged, holding our heads high, is writ large in the history of the world.

Dr. Karunanidhi is verily a versatile personality, who encompasses in his repertoire the supreme attributes of an eminent litterateur, a prolific scriptwriter, and a consummate orator known for his quick wit and repartee. His contribution to Tamil literature covers a wide canvass covering poetry, drama, fiction, short stories and cinema. Through his sensitive writings, Dr. Karunanidhi has used literature as a potent weapon against the exploitative social order and to articulate the cause of the poor and the deprived. In fact, after I took over as the Speaker of Lok Sabha, I have had the honour of writing the Foreword to the English translation of Thiru Karunanidhi's poetic version in Tamil of Maxim

Gorky's eternal classic *Mother* and later I had the honour to release the book here in August 2005. Going through this work was, I must say, a very rewarding experience indeed.

Dr. Karunanidhi's mastery over language and literature has also had its impact on his oratorical brilliance, enabling him to strike the right chord with the people. I am given to understand that so far he has addressed more than ten thousand public meetings, special meetings, seminars and conferences. I am sure the Chambers of the Tamil Nadu Legislature will always resonate and reverberate with the masterly speeches, on many issues of the times, delivered by Dr. Karunanidhi.

The numerous awards and the honorific titles he has earned over the years speak volumes about his learning, scholarship and the love and respect that he enjoys in the country. But beyond these awards and honours stand the man who is Thiru Karunanidhi, 'Kalaigarnar' to his people, a leader of the masses, a champion of the poor and the working class, an eloquent articulator and defender of the larger national values, an advocate of inclusive development and one who commands immense respect across political ideologies and party manifestoes in the country.

Being a legislator is at once a privilege and an honour, which also brings with it certain rights as well as responsibilities. It is through the elected representatives that the sovereign will of the people finds expression in our Legislative Bodies. The trust and faith which the people have reposed in us need to be justified with sincerity and commitment to their welfare. As people's representatives, we all are entrusted with the challenging task of keeping the flame of democracy burning bright. And Thiru Karunanidhi's legislative career has been a shining example of such commitment to the people, which should be a beacon for legislators everywhere.

The Parliamentary System of governance for our country was decided upon by the Founding Fathers of our Constitution as the most suitable method for the progress and development of our people. In this system the legislative bodies are the most important institutions which the people elect and expect that their representatives will discharge their duties with commitment, sincerity and probity. It is a matter of greatest concern that, of late, the people are getting disillusioned, if not cynical, about the way the different legislatures are functioning in our country, which is greatly weakening the foundations of our polity and indeed our whole political structure itself. I urge upon the legislators in our country, with all humility, to introspect and see whether they are contributing towards strengthening the system or not and whether they are honouring their electors or not, as they are the real masters. Dr. Karunanidhi's life provides a shining example of a legislator's conduct and behaviour which can be properly emulated.

Friends, Thiru Karunanidhi is respected and revered for his many accomplishments and for his sterling public service by the people of Tamil Nadu and is held in high esteem by the nation. His many splendoured contributions to our national life have made him a legend in his own life time. More than anything else, he is truly a people's leader who has brilliantly used the hall of the Tamil Nadu Legislature to effectively articulate the concerns, aspirations and urges of the people whom he represents in an exemplary manner. I join all of you in felicitating this outstanding leader of the masses on this momentous occasion.

With these words, I wish Thiru Karunanidhi the best of health and many more years of service to the nation.

Thank you.