

Address Of Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS-HRD (HE)

At The 16th

Telugu Association Of North America (Tana)

Held In The City Of Washington D.C

On The 5th – 7th July, 2007.

Friends, I deem it a rare privilege and honour to have been invited to attend the 16th TANA conference here in Washington D.C which is being held between 5th –7th July, 2007. It is a matter of great pleasure to know that the celebration of the TANA conference is so arranged as to synchronize with American Independence Day week end every year. As you are all aware the U.S.A, which is admittedly the most powerful democracy in the world, became independent on the 4th July, 1776 casting aside the shackles of colonial rule and since then she has never looked back. I am extremely delighted to know that this great Democracy is home to a large number of Telugu speaking people who have come from various parts of Andhra Pradesh and have made their marks in diverse professions – medicine, entrepreneurship, Engineering and computer science and information technology.

I am also glad that the members of Telugu Community who have permanently settled in North America have organized themselves and formed a nodal body – TANA to articulate their problems and safeguard their interests in an effective manner. I

further understand that one of the avowed objective of TANA is to preserve, disseminate and enrich the Telugu cultural heritage and to maintain the identity of people of Telugu origin by providing a forum for Telugu literary, cultural, educational and social interaction among its members. This is a very laudable objective because Andhra Pradesh has a rich heritage and legacy. It is one of the front-ranking States of the Indian Union with all round effective contribution to the development of our country in various sectors including politics, science, education, sports etc. The modern political history of the Telugu people dates back to Kakatiya in Warangal in the 11th and 12th centuries. Who is not aware of the glorious achievements of the rulers of the Vijayanagar Kingdom whose names are written in golden letters in Indian History and who are our illustrious ancestors? As a part of the composite Madras Presidency during the British rule, Andhra Pradesh played an effective role in all developmental activities and we have been on the vanguard of the country's freedom movement against the British. Presently the State is marching forward in rapid strides towards attaining all round development in the wake of the challenges and opportunities of globalisation and liberalization. Our Telugu Language is a very rich and well-developed language and one of the biggest linguistic units in India and fulfills some of the major criteria for attaining a heritage status. I am sure that the glorious past of the Telugus and our ongoing determined efforts for an all round development in India would give a further fillip to your various activities. On behalf of all Telugu people in India and on behalf of my own, I wish you full measure of success in your grand endeavour.

When we speak of the development of modern Andhra Pradesh, the account will be incomplete if I do not make a reference to two bright sons of Andhra who have rendered yeoman's service to the development of AP. First is late Potti Sriramulu. His name conjures up in our mind a picture of a man whose life was a saga of complete sacrifice and who literally gave himself up for a noble and sublime cause and which led to the creation of Andhra Pradesh. If Potti Sriramulu was responsible for the birth of AP, it was left to late Dr.N.T.Rama Rao to inject and instill distinct identity and individuality in every Teluguite. Dr.Rama Rao made his debut during one of the worst period in the recent history of Andhra Pradesh when the dignified existence and individuality of the average Telugu citizen was at stake. In that deteriorating scenario of moral degeneration, Dr.Rama Rao, who was then in an ascending heights of success and fame in the world of celluloid's, gave up his professional career to stand by the people of AP and to provide them the moral booster in their fight against widespread affront on their prestige and honorable existence. He made every Teluguite realize the virtues of *swabhiman* so that they could stand erect in all situations in life adverse or favourable. In his eternal prayer to the Eternity, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore implored that **“our country might awake into that heaven of freedom where the mind is without fear and the head is held high”**

Dr.Rama Rao precisely sought to achieve this quality of mind for his people and I would request every Teluguite, whether in India or abroad, to live up to this ideal standard and there should never be

any compromise with the qualities of dignity, self-respect and individuality.

It is not easy to forget your motherland which has nurtured you in the early part of your life and has provided education and upbringing and made you, to stand on your legs. In Indian tradition we assign to mother and motherland a position superior to heaven, as the following adage goes:

“Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi” our love for our motherland and patriotism are unquestionable. However to us, India is not a mere geographical expression but a concept, an idealism which represents the high watermark of an ancient culture and civilization. In this context, Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore’s words are worth quoting:

“I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, nor because I have had the chance to be born in her soil but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones”.

We in India share this noble sentiment of the great poet.

However in spite of this staunch patriotism which is ingrained in every right - thinking Indian, our civilization does not encourage or

foster exclusiveness. Indian society is a vast ocean into which numerous streams have come down through the ages from time

immemorial. It is a pluralistic, multi –faceted, multi - polar society which has always been open to good idea wherever they come from. The message of the Rig Veda is clear AA NO BHADRAHA KRITAVO YANTU VISHATAHA – “Let noble thoughts pervade and permeate us from all directions”. Our seers and saints dedicated themselves to this philosophy inspite of great upheavals in history. They inspired our society towards a global feeling. These thoughts, developed into a magnificent philosophy where is the world is one family and one home. This philosophy has been nurtured by tolerance, compassion and dignity of human life without discrimination of big or small. Therefore, we have been able to re- adapt, re- articulate and re- interpret our social values from age to age. In fact, with every new challenge that has been thrown up, there has been a creative interaction and response from our society, which have helped us to develop resilience so that we could stand erect without being swept off our feet in the wake of the dazzling glammers of the Western Civilization. But our civilization never promoted or encouraged exclusiveness but emphasized unity and solidarity of the universe.

Those of you who have visited Parliament House in New Delhi through its main gate might have observed that the following Sanskrit adage is inscribed on the main dome of the Central Hall:

Ayam Nija Param Veti Ganana Laghuchetasam;

Udaracharitanam Tu Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

It means: A small mind quarrels over mine and thine ; but to a large-hearted, the whole world is but one family. This simple adage represents in a nutshell the quintessence of India's philosophy of cultural universalism and her openness to the outside world. India's achievements in diverse fields are a result of her heritage of inter-active openness with the outside world. It is this openness of our culture and our heritage, inclusive openness and interactive openness to give to and take from the outside world which is our inherent strength. As Prof. Amartya Sen says: "India's real strength lies in her cultural universalism and not in cultural nationalism"

The concept of globalization flows from this spirit of universalisation and so it is easily acceptable to the India psyche. Long before the breakthroughs in Information and satellite technologies, our seers and sages could realize that in the ultimate analysis, the human race was one casting aside all barriers and differences. Globalization is thus nothing new and nothing startling for us. It is, in a way, in built in the structure and texture of Indian thought. Therefore, we find it easy to come to terms with the concept of one world in economic terms. We should develop our economy step by step and make it competitive with the rest of the world. This is our response to the new challenge of globalization.

From the concept of the world as a family; and the concept of the essential unity of mankind, we finally come to the concept of

welfare of all human beings, **Bahujana sukhaya, bahujana hithaya**. The message of the Upanishads is clear: “Let all walk together, eat together and work together so that we all shine and prosper”. What a

noble thought! Indian philosophy never looks at the world with a divided or fragmented vision. It has bestowed love and wisdom on the entire humanity and its pursuit of truth continues.

Our prayers are never for ourselves alone but for all living creatures including animals trees and forests. Let all beings be happy; let the nature be in harmony with human beings and human beings be in harmony with nature. So, whether it is a question of globalization, or whether it is a question of protection of environment, we have within the Indian tradition these powerful concepts which are essential for sustainable development and existence. These are concepts which are becoming increasingly relevant and a part of our mindset as we go on.

Before I end, I would like to emphasize that the people and the Government of India share a number of basic values with the people and Government of the USA. Both of us were under colonial rule of the British Government and had to fight hard for our freedom. The USA is as, of today, the richest and most powerful democracy in the world whereas we form the largest democracy moving in rapid strides towards the goal of higher growth rate. We both have full faith in the democratic system of Government and there has been so far no deviation from the democratic norms. This is a quite creditable

achievement considering the fact that many countries in various parts of the southern hemisphere which started as democracies were overtaken sooner or later by military dictatorship while the light of popular democracy is still burning bright in the Indian sub-continent. The Constitutions of both India and USA are federal in character following broadly the

division of powers between the Federal Government and federative units which are sovereign in their respective field of governance. In both the countries, the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and the three wings of the government Executive, Legislative and Judiciary being the creatures of the Constitution with demarcated spheres of responsibility and power. Both the countries allow free flow of information and knowledge, foster the norms of open society and open educational system unfettered by any restrictions by the Government instrumentalities. Both the countries have secular credentials and we do not encourage fundamentalism or any dogma. Last but not the least, both the countries are the victims of common attacks of global terrorism and have to fight against it on a common strategy from a common platform. It is, therefore, meet and proper that there should be greater cooperation not only at the Government level but also closer camaraderie between the peoples and Governments of the two great countries for our survival and sustenance and to ensure that the world is made free from terrorism, fundamentalism and extremism .

It is a matter of great pleasure that the NRIs from India have of late started taking greater interest in the development of their

motherland which they left years back. One reason for this I suppose, is that the Western World has started recognizing India as a rising power, and the global superpower, the U.S.A., has recently cultivated her as a nuclear partner. This is a tremendous challenge and an opportunity for all of us including the non resident Indians. You should no longer consider yourselves as impoverished immigrants fleeing a poor country but regard yourselves as new bonds bringing emerging India closer to the developed world, by hastening the process of India's growth and development. Your land of opportunity now, is indeed, India. Her growth potential is limitless, with a billion consumers thirsting for good life, with a booming economy showering riches on entrepreneurs, and with a vast market capable of sustaining even the most developed nation of the world. A vast majority of the NRIs in different parts of the world, it appears, have started realizing this and so instead of clamoring for green cards many NRIs are applying for residency permits in India. I welcome this change in the attitude of the NRIs and hope that in the years to come they will take a more pro- active role in the development of their original motherland which reared them up and equipped them with the basic qualification without which their desire to go to foreign land for career advancement would have remained an unfulfilled and a distant dream.

In his address to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 Swami Vivekananda made a moving speech and declared:

“I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.”

He regretted that the sectarianism bigotry and fanaticism had possessed the beautiful earth and filled it with violence, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. He therefore gave a clarion call to the nations of the World to realize that ..

“..... holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church of the World and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.”

This cultural and religious liberalism which has been the very foundation of Indian thought and psyche, from the beginning is still relevant today. I call upon each of you to bring home, both in an individual and a collective capacity, to the people of this great country this golden message of essential unity of mankind and universality of brotherhood which Swami Vivekananda had delivered to the “sisters and brothers of America more than a century back. I think the time has come that we must re-invent ourselves in the light of the Swamiji’s message for our fulfillment and fruition a fore-runner in achieving global peace and fraternity.

With these words I have great pleasure in inaugurating this celebration of the TANA. I wish your conference a grand success.

JAI HIND