

WELCOME ADDRESS

BY

SHRI K. RADHAKRISHNAN,

SPEAKER

KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Hon'ble Chairman, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great pleasure and proud privilege to extend a hearty welcome to the Hon'ble Chairman and other Hon'ble guests to this Conference of Presiding Officers, which is being held in Trivandrum. It gives me immense pleasure to state that you have given us an opportunity to host this conference for the third occasion in the capital of the southernmost State, which is now popular as 'Gods own Country'. Sir, this is the most auspicious and memorable day in the history of this State and in the history of the Kerala Legislative Assembly since we are honoured with the great assembly of eminent parliamentarians and most exalted dignitaries. You symbolize the dignity, and direction of the House, as well as the urges and the aspirations of the masses. This occasion has special importance on account of the fact that this conference is being held during the period the Kerala Legislative Assembly is celebrating its Golden Jubilee Year with various programmes.

Since the first Presiding Officers Conference held in 1921, the conference has been acting as an august forum for all the Presiding Officers of the Legislatures to assemble and discuss the matters relating to Parliamentary Practices and Procedures, to evolve new definitions and

devices, in consonance with the changing socio-economic trends emerging in the world over and its resonance in our country and to help transact the business of the House more meticulously and with great perceptual qualities.

Sir, as all of you know, this State came into existence with the state reorganization on 1st November 1956. This State has a glorious past with rich culture and heritage. The unique history of art, culture, Architecture and Martial arts which are all traditional in nature, keeping its original form and ethnicity are being properly nurtured and promoted by this State.

Most of the classical dance and theatre art forms such as Kathakali, Koodiyattaom, Thullal and Theyyam are now being promoted and performed with much enthusiasm. The Kerala model of architecture based on vasthu vidya is now being popularised without losing its style and splendour. The ancient martial art form Kalaripayattu which was practised for physical fitness and rejuvenation has its roots in this region of the country. This is the State where the traditional treatment system of Ayurveda is being practised without eroding its original methods of application to cure ailments and as a remedy for rejuvenation of body and mind.

Sir, to continue about our State, this State has been generously gifted by mother nature with lush rain forests, vast expanses of tea gardens and hill resorts with eye catching greeneries with cool and refreshing climate, a vast beautiful coastline stretching from the pristine Kovalam beach to the Bekal Fort covering numerous silver sand beaches and cliffs and the rare backwaters making the State a tourists' paradise in India. About the people of Kerala, I am forced to make a mention at this occasion that the people in general are very generous and hospitable as they still follow the old tradition of 'Adidhi Devo Bhawa'.

Sir, this State has given birth to so many freedom fighters, social reformers, poets, political thinkers, eminent diplomats and other literary luminaries, whose selfless lifetime achievements had enriched the nation

and the world. Pazhassiraja, the lion of Kerala was a great warrior who resisted the British colonialism during that period. The great philosopher Adisankara, born in Kalady in Kerala, has kindled the spiritual enlightenment of the people as a whole by his philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. The great social reformer Sree Narayana Guru with his teachings and philosophy, waged a war against the existing caste based social order prevailed in the State, resulted in the dawn of a new social revolution in the state. Ayyankali was another great social reformer who devoted his life for the upliftment and the welfare of the people belonged to the lower caste.

I think, this is the apt occasion to remember other great personalities who hailed from this State. They include the former Indian Union president K. R. Narayanan and A. K. Gopalan, Leader of Opposition in the first Lok Sabha and the great Parliamentarian and international diplomat V. K. Krishna Menon. There are so many other statesmen of Par excellence also hailed from this State. We have Gyanapeetam awardees, world renowned poets, prolific writers and filmmakers, who made big name to this tiny State.

Though the first elected Government after the formation of Kerala was formed in April 5, 1957, the legislative bodies in Kerala had a glorious history of nearly 119 years. Among the three regions such as Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the seed of a legislative body was sown in Travancore when the regulation was passed on 30th March 1886, creating Legislative Council, consisting of 8 members of whom 5 were to be officials and two non officials. The inaugural meeting of the Legislative Council was held on 23rd August 1888. Guided by the intention to widen the opportunities for increased association of the people with administration, Sree Mulam Popular Assembly of Travancore was formed on 1st October, 1904.

On October 28, 1932, a momentous structural addition was made by the Travancore Legislative Regulation. An Upper House called Sree Chithra State Council and Lower House called Sree Mulam Assembly were formed. The bicameral setup was established on January 1, 1933.

A new Assembly building was opened at the northern side of the Secretariat as on 9th February 1939. After independence, a 120 member Assembly called 'Representative Body' was elected on the basis of adult franchise and the Assembly held its first sitting on March 20, 1948.

In Cochin, the first Legislative Council with 45 members was constituted on April 1925. In 1938, under the Government of Cochin Act, dyarchy was introduced. A member of Legislature was appointed as Minister to administer certain transferred subjects.

The merger of Travancore and Cochin was realised on July 1, 1949 and this fresh Travancore Cochin Legislative Assembly consisted of 178 members.

Malabar, which was a district of Madras province under the British rule, had representatives in Madras Legislative Assembly from the 1920's. An integrated state of Kerala emerged from the fusion on linguistic grounds, demolishing the walls of provincial separation on November 1, 1956.

The first communist Government came into power through ballot for the first time in the history of India was in Kerala on 5-4-1957 under the Chief Ministership of E.M.S. Namboothiripad. In 1959, that communist Government was dismissed under Article 356 of the Constitution, the first such instance in independent India. During the period from the first Kerala Legislative Assembly to the 12th Kerala Legislative Assembly, this Assembly had an eventful history.

The present Assembly, the 12th one was constituted on 13th May 2006 with the strength of 141 members including one nominated member. The present Left Democratic Front Government headed by Shri V. S. Achuthanandan was formed on 18-5-2006.

As in many fields Kerala has been a role model in the Legislative history of the Assembly also. It has enacted several progressive Legislations, which had far reaching consequences in the existing socio-economic scenario of the State. By passing of the Land Reforms Act, the feudal system was abolished and the surplus land was distributed among the landless agricultural workers.

In the education sector, primary education has been made compulsory and universal and education up to +2 (Plus Two) has made free. Kerala is the first State, which achieved total literacy in India. In the fields of social security and social welfare, numerous welfare acts have been enacted and implemented. Achievements made in the health sector are also commendable.

Sir, the parliamentary form of Govt. that owes its origin and power of the people at large, who still believes in the definition “Democracy is by the people of the people and for the people”. The elected representatives are the custodians of the rights of the people who voted for them and for that reason itself it is their avowed duty to assure that the will of the people must be given due importance. The election manifesto underlying the verdict must be ruthlessly followed into reality before the expiry of the term of elected Governments. The deeds of the elected representatives and the Governments should not be felt as a mockery to the educated and rationally thinking public, who elects their leaders with trust and with expectations in terms of development, redressal of various grievances and lending a helping hand in their distress.

It is also pertinent to mention that Kerala is the first state to experiment a coalition form of Government in India. The coalition form of Government which is now in existence not only States but also in the centre, has many advantages as well as disadvantages. There is a lack of fine-tuning between our social base, politics and various instruments of authority, besides lack of consensus on issues, which are of vital importance to us. Economic soundness of policies seldom gets priority while framing policies. Hence the policies need not meet the real needs of the electorate for whose welfare and upliftment for which this great democratic system of governance has been striving since the last 60 years.

We cannot keep a blind eye to the stark realities around us. About 20% of our people are still living under the poverty line. We have around 15 crores of educated and uneducated unemployed youth. Our country has the largest number of illiterate people. Added to these are the perennial problems of exploitation, denial of equal opportunities, caste discrimination, untouchability and subordination of the weaker sections of the community.

Sir, this is the time for introspection by us as to how much targets we have achieved and much is yet to be accomplished. In the process of achieving the above goals, the presiding officers, being the guardians and the conscience keepers of parliamentary democracy have to think and speak simultaneously with great prudence and perception to make sure that all the business transacted in the Legislature are smoothly and impartially conducted in keeping with the verdict and welfare of the people. In the present socio-political scenario, the Presiding Officers have a very crucial role to contribute much for the effective functioning of the House with the interpretation of the rules, norms and conventions so far established on the basis of human values and national ethics to be maintained vigilantly and nurtured for further strengthening of our great democratic set up. In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru “ The Speaker represents the House, He represents the dignity of the House, the freedom of the House and because the House represents the nation in a particular way, the Speaker becomes a symbol of the nation’s freedom and liberty”. His words are very relevant in the present day world.

Here lies the significance of the convention of holding this conference all over the country every year for exchange of various new ideas, different experiences and to evolve new parliamentary definitions and dialects, which may prove beneficial for the effective conduct of Legislative process in its truest and finest form.

I am sure the distinguished delegates will appreciate these cross-currents and emerging imperatives and will provide vision and wisdom where the modus operandi of parliamentary system becomes more smooth, more purposeful, more dignified, inspiring confidence to the mute masses for their peace and prosperity and in sorting out their problems.

I hope the discussion and speeches being delivered during the conference would provide more light on these points.

Before I conclude, I extend my gratitude to the help and services being rendered by all quarters of the Govt. of Kerala in organizing this mega event. I extend my thanks to the Hon. Chief Minister, all Ministers and Leader of Opposition, All Members of the Legislative Assembly, Officers and Staff of Legislature Secretariat and all help from all others who have assured me of every possible assistance for making this prestigious event a great and grand success.

We have tried our best to make your sojourn comfortable and enjoyable despite various shortcomings and constraints. However, if there be any shortcomings or discomforts in any respect, please bear with us.

I sincerely hope and believe that all of you will carry with you a sweet and happy memory of this auspicious meet.

Once again I welcome you all.

Thank You.