

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ALL INDIA RADIO: MADRAS

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PRIME MINISTER SHRI CHARAN SINGH WHILE  
UNVEILING THE PORTRAIT OF SHRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM, FORMER CHIEF  
MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU ON 24-11-1979 AT KALA IVANAR ARANGAM,  
MADRAS

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Friends & Gentleman,

I feel greatly honoured in having unveiled the portrait of a great patriot, a great servant of the Indian people, and more than this a great believer in the Gandhian values. I have never had the occasion of making a personal acquaintance with Mr. Bhaktavatsalam except perhaps once in a meeting of the National Development Council held in 1967. I have during the course of my recent tour in various States, been drawn attention of the people to certain hard facts of our economic life viz., increasing poverty, not merely poverty, but increasing poverty, increasing unemployment, increasing inequality between the incomes of one man and another or between the incomes of one class and another, fourthly increasing corruption not only in administration but in public life of the country and fifthly to the tragedy that today there are no leaders left in this country whom the young generation would like to follow. During my days, when I was a young man I had passed my Matriculation in 1919 from a Government High School in the District of Meerut which adjoins Delhi. The district itself is situated in Uttar Pradesh. Then during these days men of my generation had so many outstanding examples, so many saints in the public life of India, which perhaps no country and I believe perhaps no Indian ever witnessed before. We had the example of Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji, Lokmanya Tilak, Pandit Malaviya, Sher-e Punjab Lala Lajpat Rai, Sardar Patel, C.R. Das, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and several other persons of high stature and above them all, the leader of leaders Mahatma Gandhi. Then we and our youth tried to follow their example to the extent we possibly could. Also not much before in this country had lived three saints, Swami Dayanand, Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. So what I wanted to say was that we had the good fortune of seeing these people of great stature, of great

intelligence, great patriotism etc. with our eyes. But today there are no such examples left. Is there any ideal man left in our country which our young generation would like to follow? Perhaps none, But I think the young man of your State, Tamil Nadu, are fortunate enough in having an example of this kind in the person of Mr. Bhaktavatsalam in their own life. No nation can survive unless its youth are inspired by some idealism, inspired by higher considerations. Well, those men, just as I have said, have disappeared from the scene. There is a law of nature that when an organism is in danger, whether it be an insect, an animal or a man - and a nation too is an organism - so when an organism is in danger, then it puts out its very best to encounter that danger. So many have produced great men in all walks of life, not only in public life, but journalism, art, literature, religion, social reform etc., because then the organism of the Indian nation was in danger under foreign domination and so it had to struggle under that foreign domination. So our people, our nation, just produced great men. Now that danger is over. Now so has descended upon this country an age of small people, small men in almost every walk of life, of course, subject to certain exceptions, but very rare exceptions. I don't know much about the work that Mr. Bhaktavatsalam has put in. I have very some faint remembrances of having read an article or two about his life. I am told that he had been a Minister for the State of Tamil Nadu for quite a long time and had an occasion of serving as Chief Minister only for two years. But it is not office that counts. It is the man himself, the ideals, his own life that matters. In that way I again repeat the Madrasi people of Tamil Nadu are fortunate. I will not take long. I will end up by saying that I pay tribute to him and pray to God that he may be spared to us till he reaches a Century.

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