

Speech delivered by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at the Diamond Jubilee Celebration of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly on 30.11.2012

This year has seen the celebration of the 300th year of the City of Madras, the celebration of the 150th year of the High Court of Madras, and now the celebration of the 60th year of the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu.

The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly is the sole House of the unicameral Tamil Nadu Legislature. It has a strength of 235 Members of whom 234 are democratically elected and one is nominated from the Anglo-Indian Community.

The evolution of the Legislature was a slow and steady process, ground and refined through various Acts.

Tamil Nadu was part of the Madras Presidency. Each Presidency had a Governor. By the 'Regulating Act, 1773', the Governor of Bengal was designated as the Governor-General and was the supreme head of all the 3 Presidencies. Simultaneously, the legislative power in the Presidencies was also conceded.

The succeeding 'Charter Act of 1833' concentrated all legislative powers in the Governor-General-in Council and deprived the Presidencies of their power of independent legislation.

The Charter Act, 1853, by enlarging the Governor-in-Council to 12 Members, paved the way for establishing the first legislative body in India.

The Indian Councils Act of 1861 constituted a great landmark in the growth of the Legislatures. The Act restored the power taken away by the Charter of 1833. The Legislative Council of the Madras Presidency was given the power to make laws for 'peace and good government'.

In 1892, the Indian Councils Act enlarged the functions of the Council. They could discuss the annual financial statement and ask questions. Members were to hold office for two years.

The Act of 1909 (Minto-Morely Reforms) among many other stipulations, increased the strength of the Madras Council from 20 to a maximum of 50.

The Government of India Act of 1919, which was comprised of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, was the inevitable sequel to the long chapter of previous Parliamentary Legislation on the introduction of Representative Government in India.

The Madras Legislative Council was set up under this Act. The Second and Third Councils were formed in 1923 and 1926. The Fourth Council met for the first time in 1930 and its life was extended till the Government of India Act of 1935 came into operation.

The first Madras Legislative Assembly, under the Government of India Act passed in 1935, was constituted in July, 1937, after the General Elections. The Congress Party which formed the Government resigned in 1939 due to the proclamation of emergency in view of World War II.

The Indian Independence Act, 1947, crystallized the origin and growth of the Indian Legislatures from modest expansions of Executive Councils of the Governor General and the Governors to individual sovereign legislative bodies.

The first Legislature of the erstwhile Madras State under the Constitution of India was constituted on 1st March, 1952, after the first General Elections held in January 1952.

The current State was formed in 1956. Madras State was renamed as Tamil Nadu in 1969 and the Assembly came to be called "The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly".

The present 14th Legislative Assembly was constituted on 16th May, 2011, consequent to the Assembly Elections of 2011 and the AIADMK which won a spectacular majority formed the Government.

The building now housing the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu is the Fort St. George around which the City of Chennai grew. The core of the present Secretariat Building still has parts surviving from 1693 when the original Fort House was pulled down and the complex metamorphosed into the Fort St. George.

Fort St. George has historically been the seat of the Government since colonial times. During the period between 1921 to 1933, the Madras Legislative Council, the forerunner of the Assembly, met at the Council Chambers within the Fort. In between, temporarily, the Assembly met at the Senate House of the Madras University and in the Banquet Hall (Rajaji Hall) in Mount Road. During the period between 1946 to 1952, it moved back to the Fort St. George. From December 1956 till 2010, the Fort was home to the Assembly. For an extremely brief period, the Assembly functioned in the Omanthurar Government Estate. After the AIADMK's victory in 2011, the Assembly shifted back to Fort St. George.

The Assembly hall is unsurpassed in its grandeur and dignity. This House has resonated with the wit, brilliance and magnanimity of its earlier incumbents.

Many historic unanimous resolutions have been passed in this House. This Assembly has been graced by stalwarts who steered the course of history. It also has a long list of illustrious Speakers who helped preserve the sanctity of the traditions of the House.

The Chair of the Speaker that lends a unique charm to this hall was presented by Lord Willingdon, the Governor of the Madras Presidency, and his wife Lady Willingdon as a personal gift in 1922. Interestingly, Lord Willingdon was the grandson of Speaker Brand of the House of Commons.

The virtues of this beloved Assembly cannot be extolled in a capsule. Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.

This historic function, graced by Your Excellency, the President of India, Your Excellency the Governor and the other dignitaries here, will go down in history as another mile-stone in the saga of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

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