

Speech Delivered by Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru. M.K. Stalin, on September 7, 2024, at the American Tamils' Meeting held in Chicago, organized by the Chicago Tamil Association and the Chicago Tamil Sangams.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to be part of this joyous and emotionally enriching event organized by the Chicago Tamil community. I extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to:

- The esteemed Minister of Industries, Thiru. TRB Rajaa,
- The Deputy Consul of Chicago, Thiru. Somnath Ghosh,
- The President of the Overseas Tamils Welfare Association, Thiru. Karthikeyan Sivasenapathi,
- Government senior officials,
- Members of the Association,
- The organizers of this event from the Chicago Tamil Association and the Sangam officials,
- The administrators from 37 Tamil Sangams, including FETNA,

I would like to express my appreciation for the warm welcome and the outstanding cultural performances. Your efforts in making this event memorable are truly commendable.

Distinguished Guests including Thiru. Ramprasad,
Dear Tamil Friends living in America,

Greetings to all of you with my heartfelt affection. I feel that simply looking at your face is enough without the need for words.

When I participate in an event in Tamil Nadu as Chief Minister or as the leader of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the emotions are always intense, but I must say that the opportunity to participate in this event in Chicago, which is filled with more emotion, is truly special. I express my heartfelt thanks repeatedly to you all, who have made me feel as if I am in Tamil Nadu.

Although I visited the United Arab Emirates, Japan, Singapore, and Spain to attract investments after assuming office as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and came to America a bit late, you have welcomed me with and warmest reception. As Minister Thiru. T.R.B. Rajaa mentioned, there was a competition among regions to have me visit their region, and Chicago won that competition. I am delighted to meet you all in the city of Chicago that emerged victorious.

Our Muthamizh Arignar Thalaivar Kalaignar, had also visited America. After I accepted the invitation to this event, I read about his journey across America. On November 8, 1971, he

visited Washington and attended a cultural festival in Orlando. He wrote a poem inspired by the beautiful fountain there and sent it to Chennai. I read that poem in "Murasoli". It begins:

"In the city of Orlando, in a rare area,
I saw a beautiful fountain,
The water's flow dances gracefully,
With a rhythm that never falters –
What can I say about this water dancer's artistry!"

The poem was later translated into English and published. He also visited Chicago, where he spoke at a political forum at the University of Chicago. He then went to New York and started the New York Tamil Sangam. Just as Kalaignar visited during his tenure as Chief Minister, I too am here today as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

You must have heard about the progress Tamil Nadu has made since the Dravidian model government was established. Have you heard how it is progressing? (people applauding with joy). Thank you.

In terms of industrial development, wherever I go and meet heads of companies, I always highlight how Tamil Nadu leads the way in India and the unique features of Tamil Nadu, inviting them to start businesses there. This is why Tamil Nadu has earned the distinction of being the first address for investors.

Whenever I undertake an official visit to any country, my primary aim is to meet with our Tamils living there and connect with Tamil organizations. Although I have visited many countries and met Tamils, seeing you all in America, where Tamils are widely dispersed, makes me feel that I could simply stand and observe without speaking, such is the affection and love you have shown me.

At this moment, I recall the great leader of Tamil Nadu, Poet Thiruvalluvar, who lived a thousand years ago. He spoke about the greatness of Tamil people, and I am reminded of his words. He said, "Because a mother's womb cannot bear everyone, we are siblings born from different mothers." Even though we are born from different mothers, we all have a mother who nurtures this bond of affection - and that is Tamil Mother!

Ours is a grand tradition and an epic saga! The Tamil Mother is the light, the beauty, the nectar, the life, and the sweetness of our language! The Tamil Mother is the one who calls out to Tamil in all its glory.

Last week, I watched a debate on a private television channel. It was about the 'Searching for Roots' initiative implemented by the Tamil Nadu government. It featured young people who had come to reconnect with their cultural roots in Tamil Nadu. One of the participants, Radika from Myanmar, who had lost touch with her roots for many years, expressed her emotions deeply. She had reunited with her relatives and spoke about the lack of cultural ties despite the presence of culture there. This reflected the feelings of many overseas Tamils who long to reconnect with their homeland.

We are the descendants of a land known for its history and culture! We are natives of a land that has given the world a universal decree, transcending all distinctions of race, language,

country, caste, religion, gender, class, or color. We are the inheritors of the land that gave the world the famous Thiruvalluvar!

How does the world beyond our borders look? It was already expressed in ancient times by saying, 'Yaatum Oore Yavarum Kelir' (Everywhere is our home, and everyone is our kin). We are the ones who created literature with the idea of embracing all.

Through the discoveries at Keezhadi, we know that Tamil civilization advanced with writing and urbanization over four thousand years ago. That's why I continue to say that the history of the Indian subcontinent must begin from the Tamil land.

Today, Tamils are holding various high positions in many countries. This possibility has been made possible by the social justice and leaders who have fought for it in Tamil Nadu! This is the society for which leaders like Periyar, Anna, and Poet Kalaignar have strived. That's why, through the Justice Party's governance, the Kamaraj era, and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam rule, we continue to give priority to education in Tamil Nadu!

It was due to the emphasis Kalaignar placed on computer education that Tamil Nadu progressed in the IT sector. During his tenure, there was no other state with a significant development like Tidel Park. On that foundation, we attracted the world to Tamil Nadu, and Tamil Nadu was embraced by the world. You are proof of that!

Not only Tamils in Tamil Nadu but also Tamils around the world are protected by our Dravidian model government. We have created the 'Overseas Tamil Welfare Board' for expatriate Tamils. January 12 is celebrated as Overseas Tamil Day. Through this board, we have organized conferences on topics like 'Unite through Tamil', 'Tamil Worldwide', and 'Tamil Triumphs'.

We have established a toll-free assistance center for Tamils abroad. The 'My Village' initiative helps overseas Tamils improve their hometowns. The Kanian Poongundranar Award is given to expatriate Tamils.

We provide financial aid to the families of those who go abroad for work and face difficulties. We have rescued 1,524 students who went to Ukraine for education during the war. We have brought back 83 Tamils from Cambodia, Thailand, and Myanmar. We rescued 126 individuals from Israel who were unable to continue their education. In the past three years alone, we have rescued 2,398 people from abroad and different states.

Overall, the Dravidian Munnetra Kazhagam government has created a sense of assurance among Tamils worldwide that "Tamil Nadu is our homeland." The 'Searching for Roots' initiative is a meaningful scheme bringing our children back to Tamil Nadu. That's why I always say, "This is not a party government; it is a government for a race!"

The power to overcome caste and religious differences and unite everyone lies with Tamil people! We are those who believe that even if we fall, we will live as Tamils! This spirit was instilled by the Dravidian movement. Our Tamil race has a pride that no other race in the world has. We are those who have sacrificed ourselves to protect our mother tongue! I take pride in being a member of the Dravidian Munnetra Kazhagam that gave us those sacrifices!

Some of you might have come to this country out of choice, while others might have come due to circumstances or for work. You have reached high positions through your talents. Tamils are not like frogs in a well; you are the ones who make the skies your domain! Your success is a testament to Tamil capability.

I have one request for you. Do not allow any divisions among yourselves. Live as one family. Rely solely on your knowledge and hard work to continue your journey. I ask you to come to Tamil Nadu at least once a year with your children. Show them the grandeur of Thiruvalluvar. Show them the archaeological site at Keezhadi, places like Sivakali, Korakai, and Porunai. Contribute to Tamil Nadu in any way you can. Tell your children, "A member of our family is the Chief Minister here. He is Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin!"

Even after I return to Tamil Nadu, your enthusiasm and happy faces will always be in my memory!

Thank you!

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