

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF CIVIC RECEPTION AT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Thiruvananthapuram, March 17, 2023

I convey to all the people of Kerala, my appreciation for your contribution in the overall development of the country and enhancing its image in the world.

This is my first visit to Kerala since my assuming the office of the President of India. Memories of the warmth and affection expressed by all of you are going to stay with me forever.

I appreciate the Governor of Kerala, Shri Arif Mohammed Khan Sahab and the Chief Minister of Kerala, Shri Pinarayi Vijayan Ji for taking Kerala forward in its journey of progress and prosperity. I am thankful to both of you for inviting me and organising this civic reception on behalf of the people of Kerala.

I feel fortunate to be in the abode of Lord Vishnu – Thiruvananthapuram. Kerala's lush green forests, beautiful beaches and back waters, fascinating hills, lovely lakes, ambling rivers, swaying coconut trees and rich biodiversity do make it 'God's Own Country'. That is why, Kerala is one of the most attractive tourist destinations. It is also a major hub of health resorts, specially those based on nature-cure and Ayurveda. The talented and hard-working people of Kerala have earned global respect for their sincerity, skills, and enterprise. I compliment the people of Kerala for spreading the glory of India through the highly respected Malayali diaspora.

The cosmopolitan outlook of the people of Kerala is worth emulating. In Kerala, people of all faiths and religions have been living together in harmony, bound by the language and culture of this beautiful State.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Kerala is the land of Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya. Different streams of spirituality and inclusion have been flowing in Kerala, inspired by sages and reformers like Sri Narayana Guru, Chattambi Swamikal, Ayyankali, Poykayil Appachchan and V.T. Bhattatiripad.

Kerala has produced a galaxy of stalwarts. The late Shri K.R. Narayanan, my distinguished predecessor in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, was a son of Kerala. The rich political legacy of Kerala includes the late Shri E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Shri R. Shankar, Shri C. Achutha Menon, Shri K. Karunakaran, Shri E.K. Nayanar and Smt. K.R. Gowri Amma.

Modern Indian literature has been enriched by greats like G. Shankara Kurup, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, S.K. Pottekat, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, O.V. Vijayan, O.N.V. Kurup and Akkitham Achuthan Namboodiri.

Kerala is home to many state-of-the-art facilities for scientific research and development. 'Metro Man' Shri E. Sreedharan, 'Missile Woman' Smt. Tessy Thomas and eminent physicist Shri Thanu Padmanabhan are shining examples of excellence in the fields of science and technology.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every segment of the social fabric of Kerala has shining ideals of women empowerment in different periods of history. Unniyarcha, had set a stirring example of self-help through martial arts. She is immortalized in Kerala's folklore. Nangeli sacrificed her life protesting against unfair practices imposed upon Dalit women, including their personal clothing. She continues to inspire generations of those who fight for social dignity and justice.

In our Constituent Assembly, there were 15 women members. Out of them, as many as three were from Kerala alone. Ammu Swaminathan,

Dakshayani Velayudhan and Annie Mascarene were much ahead of their times. Dakshayani Velayudhan was the only Dalit woman to be elected to the Constituent Assembly.

The first lady to become a High Court judge in India was Justice Anna Chandy. She became a judge in the High Court of Kerala in 1956, much before Dame Elizabeth Lane became the first woman judge of the High Court in Britain in 1965. Justice M. Fathima Beevi created legal history by becoming the first lady judge in the Supreme Court of India. Karthyayani Amma has become a national icon by attaining the first rank under the Akshar-Laksham Scheme at the age of 96 in 2018. Amma inspires everyone with her message that it is never too late to learn. I had the good fortune of presenting the National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer to Nanchiyamma. As a tribal woman, Nanchiyamma has inspired every single woman in the country, especially those from the under-privileged segments of our society. I was very impressed watching this year's Republic Day Tableau of Kerala, which displayed 'Nari-Shakti'. 'Payyoli Express' P.T. Usha has been an inspiration for later generations of girls to take up sports as a career and bring glory to India.

Sex-ratio in Kerala is by far the best in the country. Kerala also has the highest literacy rate including women's literacy. On the parameters of promoting maternal health and preventing infant mortality, Kerala's performance is the best in the country. I believe that when women are given important role in any society, it results in overall betterment of that society. In Kerala, women have been more educated and empowered which reflects in Kerala's better performance on several Human Development Indices.

In keeping with the lofty traditions of women empowerment in Kerala, 'Kudumbashree' has become one of the largest women's self-help networks in the world. I thank the Government of Kerala for organizing

the inauguration of the silver jubilee celebration of Kudumbashree in this civic reception. It is an occasion to gratefully remember the vision and sensitivity of Bharat-Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji who had launched Kudumbashree in 1998, when he was the Prime Minister.

I am glad to be associated with 'Unnathi', the program launched here for the development of residents of Kerala belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. 'Unnathi' or 'Kerala Empowerment Society' seeks to create opportunities for employment and self-employment, among the youth belonging to SC and ST communities. I wish the initiative all success in its efforts for inclusive growth. I am happy to note that welfare of SCs and STs is given high priority in the State with helpful initiatives in the areas of housing, health, education, livelihoods, and infrastructure-development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe that Indian languages can be more helpful mediums for knowledge creation. That is why I am very happy that the recommendation under the National Education Policy, 2020, for encouraging education in Indian languages is being implemented by governments at the Centre and States, and educational institutions. In this context, I appreciate the release of the first batch of technical, engineering and diploma books translated into Malayalam. This re-orientation to education through Indian languages is a welcome change. I am sure that in the near future, original books for professional and vocational education will be written in Malayalam.

Thrissur and Nilambur are two of the three Indian cities in UNESCO's Global Network of Learning. It is in keeping with Kerala's proven commitment to inclusive and quality education.

I am sure that the educated and dedicated youth of Kerala will make a huge contribution in making India a developed country during the 'Amrit-

Kaal'. With this faith in the golden future of Kerala and India, I conclude my address.

Thank you!

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!