

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF INTERACTION WITH WOMEN SELF HELP GROUPS**

Tura, January 16, 2024

I am delighted to participate in this programme and interact with the women of self-help groups of Meghalaya today. During my visits to various states and union territories, I have met and interacted with many SHGs of women. During these interactions, I have noted that they all are happier and more satisfied in their lives after they started earning and contributing economically to their families. The women of rural and remote areas have discovered a new version of themselves by joining such self-help groups.

I have witnessed the same confidence and energy among all women present here today. I would like to compliment Smt. Wadlynti, a resident of Umkrem Village who has done an exemplary work in adoption and promotion of Natural Farming practices. She has not only undertaken such activities herself but motivated and helped many other farmers of her region to adopt eco-friendly practices in agriculture. I also appreciate the women of other self help groups of Meghalaya who are earning livelihoods through bakery and other activities and are contributing to the region's economic growth through new initiatives. You are an inspiration for the people of your region.

I am told that 'Lakhpati Didi' entrepreneurs are also present here today. The Lakhpati Didi initiative aims to transform the rural economy and improve quality of life of rural people by promoting women entrepreneurship. I am happy to know that National Rural Livelihood Mission is bringing about a positive change in the lives of members of SHGs, their families and the rural areas as a whole. Their growth journeys will inspire other women of the state and the region to come forward and become entrepreneurs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Government of India is making every possible effort to ensure that women contribute actively and in large numbers in the socio-economic development of the country. Several steps have been taken to improve women's participation in the work-force. Many protective and supportive provisions have been included in labour laws. The government has launched many schemes which have proved helpful in raising the standard of living of women.

The government has not only taken several steps for the social and economic development of women, but has also taken major steps towards ensuring their political participation. The 'Nari Shakti Vandan Act' has provisions to reserve one-third seats for women in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies.

However, there is still a long way to go in the direction of women empowerment. Sometimes, women struggle to find their rightful place in their own families. It is high time that people start recognizing the value and qualities of the women around them and support them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The idea of women-led-development can be implemented only when the women get the freedom to make their choices. With economic independence, this has become a reality to some extent. During one of my interactions with women of self-help groups in Srinagar, one woman shared how she has also started taking decisions regarding the renovation of her house or the furniture to be bought. I do not mean that women can take decisions only if they are earning members of the family. But, economic self-reliance definitely brings a greater self-confidence in women.

I would like to stress here that you have to keep moving ahead and also hold hands of other women to take them forward. This is not your journey alone but that of large number of women in our country who are

yet to explore the opportunities that lay beyond the four walls of their homes. You must become an inspiration for other women of your region and the nation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The empowerment of women in social, economic, political and spiritual spheres is essential for the country to realise its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047. India's women are making a mark and paving way for other women in every field whether it is defence, science and technology, sports, education, entrepreneurship, agriculture, or any other field. They just need some words and small actions of encouragement, a pat on the back. I am sure that we will see and experience more positive changes in this direction in near future.

In the end I wish you all a bright future. Dream big and never stop pursuing your dreams.

Thank you!
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!