

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION
BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE EVE OF THE 74TH REPUBLIC DAY**

New Delhi, January 25, 2023

Dear fellow citizens,

Namaskar!

On the eve of the 74th Republic Day, I extend my heartiest greetings to every Indian, at home and abroad. From the day the Constitution came into effect to the present day, it has been an amazing journey that has inspired many other nations. Every citizen has reason to be proud of the Indian Story. When we celebrate the Republic Day, we celebrate what we have achieved, together, as a nation.

India is, of course, home to one of the oldest living civilisations. India is called the mother of democracy. As a modern Republic, however, we are young. In the early years of Independence, we faced countless challenges and adversities. Very high levels of poverty and illiteracy were just two of the many ill-effects of the long foreign rule. Yet, the spirit of India was undeterred. With hope and confidence, we began an experiment unique in the history of humankind. Such a vast and diverse multitude of people coming together as one nation remains unprecedented. We did so with a belief that we are, after all, one; that we are all Indians. We have succeeded as a democratic republic because so many creeds and so many languages have not divided us, they have only united us. That is the essence of India.

That essence was at the heart of the Constitution, which has withstood the test of time. The Constitution that started governing the life of the Republic was the outcome of the Freedom Struggle. The national movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was as much about

winning Independence as about rediscovering our own ideals. Those decades of struggle and sacrifice helped us win freedom not only from colonial rule but also from the imposed values and narrow world-views. Revolutionaries and reformers joined hands with visionaries and idealists to help us learn about our age-old values of peace, brotherhood and equality. Those who shaped the modern Indian mind also welcomed progressive ideas from abroad, following the Vedic advice: आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः. “Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions”. A long and profound thought process culminated in our Constitution.

Our founding document is inspired by the humanistic philosophy of the oldest living civilisation in the world as well as new ideas that emerged in more recent history. The nation will always remain grateful to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who headed the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, and thus had a critical part in giving it the final shape. On this day, we should also remember the role of jurist B.N. Rau, who had prepared the initial draft, and other experts and officers who helped in making of the constitution. We are proud of the fact that the members of that assembly represented all regions and communities of India and that they included 15 women too.

Their vision, as enshrined in the Constitution, has been continuously guiding our Republic. During this period, India has been transformed from a largely poor and illiterate nation into a confident nation marching on the world stage. This would not have been possible but for the collective wisdom of the Constitution-makers guiding our path.

While Babasaheb Ambedkar and others gave us a map and a moral framework, the task of walking that path remains our responsibility. We have largely remained true to their expectations, and yet we realise that much remains to be done to realise Gandhiji’s ideal of ‘Sarvodaya’, the upliftment of all. Yet, the progress we have made on all fronts is encouraging.

Dear fellow citizens,

In our mission of 'Sarvodaya', the most encouraging has been the progress made on the economic front. Last year, India became the fifth largest economy in the world. It needs to be underlined that this achievement comes against the backdrop of high economic uncertainties around the world. The pandemic has entered the fourth year, affecting economic growth in most parts of the world. In its initial phase, Covid-19 also hurt India's economy badly. Yet, guided by our able leadership and driven by our resilience, we soon came out of the downturn, and resumed the growth saga. Most sectors of the economy have shaken off the pandemic effect. India has been among the fastest-growing major economies. This has been made possible by timely and pro-active interventions from the Government. The 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, in particular, has evoked great response among people at large. There have also been sector-specific incentive schemes.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that those on the margins have also been included in the schemes and programmes and they have been helped in tiding over difficulties. By implementing the 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana' announced in March 2020, the Government ensured food security for poor families at a time when the country was facing economic disruption in the wake of the unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19. Because of this help, no one had to go hungry. Keeping the welfare of poor families paramount, the duration of this scheme was extended successively, benefiting about 81 crore fellow citizens. Further extending this assistance, the Government has announced that even during the year 2023, the beneficiaries will get their monthly ration free of cost. With this historic move, the government has undertaken the responsibility of caring for the weaker sections while also enabling them to benefit from economic development.

With the economy on a sound footing, we have been able to begin and carry forward a series of praiseworthy initiatives. The ultimate goal is to create an environment in which all citizens can, individually and collectively, realise their true potential and prosper. As education builds the right foundation for this purpose, the National Education

Policy has introduced ambitious changes. It rightly addresses the two-fold aims of education: as an instrument of economic and social empowerment and as a means to explore truth. The policy makes our civilisational lessons relevant for contemporary life, while also preparing the learner for the 21st century challenges. The National Education Policy appreciates the role of technology in expanding and deepening the learning process.

As we have come to realise since the early days of Covid-19, technology offers life-changing possibilities. The Digital India Mission is striving to make information and communication technology inclusive by bridging the rural-urban divide. More and more people in far-flung places have been reaping the benefits of the internet and are receiving a variety of services provided by the government, as the infrastructure expands. We have reasons to be proud of our achievements in the domain of science and technology. India has been among the handful of pioneers in space technology. As long-pending reforms in this sector are underway, private enterprises are now invited to join the quest. The 'Gaganyaan' program to carry Indian astronauts into the space is under progress. This will be India's maiden human space flight. Yet, even as we reach out to the stars, we keep our feet on the ground.

India's Mars Mission was powered by a team of extraordinary women, and our sisters and daughters are not far behind in other areas too. Women's empowerment and gender equality are no longer mere slogans, as we have made great progress towards these ideals in recent years. With people's participation in 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign, women's representation has been rising in every sphere of activity. During my visits to various states, educational institutions and while meeting delegations of various professionals, I am amazed by the confidence of young women. I have no doubt in my mind that they are the ones who will do most to shape tomorrow's India. What miracles cannot be achieved if this half of the population is encouraged to contribute to nation-building to the best of their ability?

The same vision of empowerment guides the Government's approach to the marginalised communities including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In fact, the aim is not only to remove hurdles and help them in development, but also to learn from them. Tribal communities, in particular, have rich lessons to offer in many areas, ranging from protecting the environment to making the society more cohesive.

Dear fellow citizens,

As a result of a series of initiatives in recent years to transform all aspects of governance and unleash creative energies of people, the world has started to look at India with a new sense of respect. Our interventions in various world forums have started making a positive difference. The respect that India has earned on the world stage has resulted in new opportunities as well as responsibilities. This year, as you know, India holds the presidency of the Group of 20 nations. With our motto of universal brotherhood, we stand for peace and prosperity of all. Thus, the G20 presidency is an opportunity to promote democracy and multilateralism and the right forum for shaping a better world and a better future. Under India's leadership, I am sure, G20 will be able to further enhance its efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable world order.

As G20 represents about two-thirds of the world population and around 85 per cent of global GDP, it is an ideal forum to discuss and find solutions for global challenges. To my mind, global warming and climate change are the most pressing among them. Global temperatures are rising and incidents of extreme weather are increasing. We are faced with the dilemma: To lift more and more people out of poverty, we need economic growth, but that growth also comes from fossil fuel. Unfortunately, the poor bear the brunt of global warming more than others. Developing and popularising alternative sources of energy is one of the solutions. India has taken a commendable lead in this direction by giving a policy push to solar energy and electric vehicles. At the global level, however, emerging

economies need a helping hand from advanced nations in the form of technology transfer and financial support.

To maintain the balance between development and environment, we have to look at the ancient traditions with a new perspective. We need to reconsider our basic priorities. The scientific aspects of traditional life-values have to be understood. We must, once again, rekindle that respect for nature and humility before the vast universe. Let me state here that Mahatma Gandhi was a true prophet of our times, as he foresaw the calamities of indiscriminate industrialization and cautioned the world to mend its ways.

We need to modify our lifestyle if we want our children to live happily on this fragile planet. One of the changes suggested pertains to food. I am happy to note that the United Nations accepted a suggestion from India and declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. Millets were essential ingredients of our diet and they are making a comeback among sections of society. Coarse grains like millets are eco-friendly as they require less water to grow and yet they provide high levels of nutrition. If more and more people turn to millets, it will help conserve ecology and also improve health.

One more year has gone by for the Republic and another year commences. It has been a time of unprecedented change. With the outbreak of the pandemic, the world had changed within a matter of days. During these three years, whenever we have felt that we have finally put the virus behind, it raises its ugly head. However, there is no need to panic because we have learned in this period that our leadership, our scientists and doctors, our administrators and 'Corona Warriors' will make every possible effort to meet any situation. At the same time, each of us has also learned to not let our guard down and remain alert.

Dear fellow citizens,

Generations of people working in different fields deserve praise for their invaluable contribution in the development story of our Republic

so far. I commend the roles of farmers, workers, scientists and engineers whose combined strength enables our country to live up to the spirit of “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan”. I appreciate every citizen who contributes to the nation’s progress. I also convey my greetings to our diaspora, the great ambassadors of India’s culture and civilisation.

On the occasion of Republic Day, I convey my special appreciation to our jawans who guard our borders and are ready to make any sacrifice for the country. I also express my appreciation for all the brave soldiers of paramilitary forces and police-forces who provide internal security to their fellow citizens. I salute all the brave-hearts of our armed forces, paramilitary-forces and police-forces who laid down their lives in the line of duty. I convey my blessings to all the dear children for their bright future. Once again, I extend my best wishes to all of you on this Republic Day.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!