

ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

SMT. DROUPADI MURMU

AT

**CIVIC RECEPTION IN PUDUCHERRY AND VIRTUAL
INAUGURATION OF PROJECTS**

Puducherry, August 7, 2023

I was looking forward to my first visit to Puducherry since assuming the office of the President of India. I feel extremely delighted to be here. I shall cherish the warm welcome extended to me by the people of Puducherry.

For me, it is a matter of immense spiritual significance that my first visit coincides with the celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. He was also one of the first political leaders in India who openly expressed the aspiration of complete independence for the country in his newspaper Bande Mataram. I bow my head in reverence to the Divine Soul.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is very interesting to note that Puducherry has attracted different people for very different reasons in different phases of history. The French established their trading posts in Puducherry about 350 years ago. Dupleix, the Governor-General of French territories in India, wanted to make Puducherry a major stronghold for the French. In stark contrast to the colonial aspirations of the French, Maharishi Aurobindo chose this place in the 20th century as the best abode for spiritual solace. Places of worship can be seen dotting every part of Puducherry. Today I will be going to seek blessings of the divine for the fellow citizens in the Arulmigu Manakula Vinayagar temple and Thirukanchi temple.

Puducherry's spiritual aspect makes it one of the most important centres of promoting Yoga. It witnesses a large gathering every year to celebrate the International Yoga Festival.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite living in a French enclave, the residents of Puducherry were equally active in the freedom struggle. Puducherry has been home to great writers and freedom fighters. Revered Tamil poet Bharathidasan was born here. This holy land was once the abode of the great poet, nationalist and social reformer Mahakavi Subramanya Bharati. He carried out his nationalist activities in Puducherry and played an important role in India's freedom struggle. Prominent Tamil scholar and freedom fighter V.V.S. Aiyar was a contemporary of Bharatiyar who also took part in the Indian freedom struggle during his stay in Puducherry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The political and social geography of Puducherry is rather unusual. Of the four regions of this Union Territory, Puducherry, Karaikal and Yanam are located on the Bay of Bengal. Mahe is situated on the Arabian Sea. Also, the four regions of the Union Territory are located within the areas of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here in Puducherry, we see a blending of diverse cultural streams. You have carried forward a vibrant cultural tradition which celebrates the Indian ethos of unity in diversity. The Tamil, Telugu, and Malayali influences are visible. So is the impact of the French. The architecture, the festivals and lifestyles reflect the diverse influences blending together in harmony. The cultural vibrancy of Puducherry derives much of its energy from the music and dance forms prevalent in Tamil Nadu. The spirit of enjoyment is demonstrated in Masquerade or the mask festival which is a French tradition. In fact, Puducherry is a living bridge of friendship between France and India.

This Union Territory which is small in size is extremely beautiful. It validates the expression, “small is beautiful”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to know that in a study conducted by a reputed international agency, Puducherry ranks first in the Social Progress Index Score 2022 among all States and Union Territories. It has performed very well on parameters such as:

- Personal Freedom and Choice,
- Shelter,
- Water and Sanitation.

It is commendable that Puducherry has one of highest literacy rates in the country. The sex ratio here has been favourable to women. These facts demonstrate that the people of Puducherry believe in gender equality. These are indicators of a truly progressive mindset. I must praise the residents of Puducherry for their truly modern and sensitive approach to development and progress.

I specially appreciate that higher education has been effectively promoted in Puducherry. It has excellent educational institutions. Students from various regions come here for higher studies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy to be in this auditorium of Jawaharlal Institute of Post-graduate Medical Education and Research. This auditorium is named after Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, one of my most illustrious predecessors. Among his many contributions, we must remember Dr. Kalam’s efforts for utilising defence research for the purposes of medical care. Just a little before this civic reception, I inaugurated a new advanced linear accelerator in this Institute of international repute. I am told that it will be used for providing radio-therapy treatment to cancer patients. This equipment will minimize radiation exposure through precise targeting of the radiation. I understand that this machine will increase the capacity of the Institute to provide curative radiation treatment. It will augment affordable advanced medical care.

I feel happy to have virtually inaugurated the hospital at Villianur under the National AYUSH Mission. This hospital will also provide access to affordable medical care. I am told that the hospital will provide medical services under different systems of alternative medicine. I am sure that the hospital will promote holistic wellness and provide high quality medical services to the people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Puducherry is a wonderful destination for what may be described as spiritual tourism. Spiritual tourism is fast becoming a global trend. It has the potential to provide a strong boost to socio-economic development of this region. The Union Government has taken several measures to promote tourism in Puducherry under the 'Swadesh Darshan Scheme'. With the growth in tourism, activities related to health tourism and eco-tourism will also get a boost.

In the end I would like to say that this unique and special Union Territory of Puducherry has made a distinct mark at national and global levels. I am sure that the people of Puducherry will take this Union Territory to still higher levels of growth and excellence. I wish all the residents of Puducherry a very bright and prosperous future.

Thank you!

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!