

Book Launch
Mrs Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

Nov 28th, 2024

Draft Speech

1. Ms. Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri is no stranger to leadership and excellence. As a former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, she has been a global advocate for gender equality and human rights. Her transition from diplomacy to literature is proof to her versatility and dedication to creating meaningful impact in every field she enters.

2. Through this novel, she has not only honored her heritage but also contributed to the global understanding of India's freedom struggle. Her ability to balance historical accuracy with creative storytelling is commendable, and I am certain that *Swallowing the Sun* will find a special place in the hearts of readers across the world.

3. This is a work of historical fiction and sheds light on the unsung heroes of India's freedom struggle. Passionate about our Indian history and a proud custodian of our country's legacy, I deeply value any endeavor that revisits and celebrates the sacrifices made for our independence

4. *It* is much more than a novel. It is, in many ways, a tribute—a salute to the ordinary men and women whose extraordinary courage shaped the narrative of India’s freedom. While reading this book, I found a story of personal memory, familial history, and national pride. The main protagonists being girls brings more pride to the story, as they chronicles the personal struggles of two sisters and also encapsulate the collective yearning of a nation to break free from the shackles of colonial rule.

5. As the Governor, I have had the privilege of engaging with many initiatives aimed at preserving our heritage and educating our youth about our past. By spotlighting the pivotal role played by women, it reminds us that the freedom struggle was not solely a male-dominated domain. Women, too, were torchbearers of resistance, often fighting battles on multiple fronts-against colonial oppression, societal norms, and patriarchal constraints.

6. The novel does not merely recount events; it immerses readers in rural Maharashtra and the bustling streets of Bombay during the freedom movement. The poetic inspirations from the Varkari tradition, references to saints like Namdev, Tukaram, and Muktabai, and the evocation of the Marathi culture add layers of richness to the story.

7. It is a timely reminder of the values that defined our freedom struggle—courage, unity, and selflessness. At a time when the world is grappling with challenges of inequality, polarization, and social discord, these lessons are more relevant than ever. The story of Malati and Kamla shows us that even the smallest acts of defiance, when multiplied by the will of many, can lead to monumental change.

8. Our youth, who are the custodians of India's future, must read such narratives. They need to understand the sacrifices that secured our freedom and the responsibilities that come with it. Through its strong female characters, this book also offers an empowering message to young women, encouraging them to dream fearlessly and act decisively.

9. Let us reflect on our collective duty to keep the flame of history alive. Stories like these are not just meant to be read; they are meant to be shared, discussed, and internalized. They serve as a bridge between generations, ensuring that the sacrifices of the past are never forgotten.

10. I urge educational institutions, libraries, and literary circles to promote this book widely. Let it inspire conversations about the lesser-known aspects of our freedom struggle and the diverse voices that contributed to it. Let it remind us of the values that bind us as a nation.

11. In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri for her outstanding contribution to literature and history. Your work will inspire countless readers and ensure that the legacy of our freedom fighters continues to shine brightly.

12. Let us take a moment to honor the sacrifices of the unsung heroes who made our independence possible. Let us carry forward their spirit of resilience, unity, and hope.

Jai Hind!