

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESENTATION OF 47TH JNANPITH  
AWARD TO DR. PRATIBHA RAY**

Balyogi Auditorium, Parliament Library Building,

New Delhi: 22-05-2013

1. Thank you for your words of welcome. It is a great pleasure to be amongst the distinguished literary personalities present here today. I recognize among you many friends and I am delighted to see you present on this occasion. In conferring the 47<sup>th</sup> Bharatiya Jnanpith Award for the year 2011 on Dr. Pratibha Ray, we honour an eminent Oriya litterateur, fiction writer, and educationist for her outstanding contribution to the enrichment of Indian literature.
2. Although I have recently been introduced to her works, I have been deeply impressed by her treatment of contemporary issues and the erosion of values in our complex modern society. In another literary vein, her research on the social and economic aspects of remote societies of Orissa is particularly note worthy.
3. Dr. Ray has, through her novels and in her own personal life, actively taken up social reforms and raised her voice against social injustice and corruption. She has been appreciated for the authentic reality in her fictional works. Her anthropological research into the life of the Bondas in the Bonda Hills of Orissa resulted in her publication, 'Adhibhumi' which has been considered a masterpiece. Her novel 'Magnamati' (The Regenerative Earth) based on the super cyclone of 1999 and its transformative effect on man and his civilization is considered to be her greatest work.

4. Dr. Ray has been described as a complete writer with novels, short stories, children stories, autobiography, translations and also a volume of lyrics to her credit. She has, nevertheless, remained consistently devoted, in her writing, to reality and humanity, classic values and human dignity. Her works have been translated into a number of Indian languages.
5. I would like to see our schools and colleges encourage the reading of the abundant prose and verse that has been published in our vernacular languages. This would educate our young about distant regions that they may not be aware of - and make them more sensitive to the social, religious and cultural diversities of our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. This prestigious award has come to symbolize the comprehensive vision of Indian literature. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust founded by the Sahu Jain family. Initiatives like these are commendable as they support the role of the State in facilitating and promoting our cultural heritage. The blossoming of Indian literary talent owes much to the efforts of such philanthropists and patrons of the arts. I congratulate and compliment the Trustees for their sustained support, over five decades, to the development of Indian literature.
7. With these few words, I once again congratulate Dr. Pratibha Ray and wish her many more years of creative writing and great success in her future endeavours.

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