



English rendering of the text of PM's speech at Swachh Shakti 2017 – A Convention of Women Sarpanchs at Gandhinagar, Gujarat

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Mothers and sisters coming from across the length and breadth of this country who are a source of motivation by virtue of their deeds, I feel fortunate to have your blessings and a dialogue with you all on the very occasion of International Women's Day.

I am told that some of you are here for the past three days, some for past two days and many among you will stay here further. Some of you have visited different districts and villages and seen what the life is like there. You have also seen two exhibitions here on the development of villages and the emphasis laid on the importance of cleanliness. This is a state of the art exhibition based on latest techniques. It is because of this I reached here late. I request you all not to take this exhibition casually rather see it with the eye of a student because it will help you in discharging your duties as a Sarpanch. I am sure you will get new inputs from this and a new direction to work as a Sarpanch and it will strengthen your resolve to work.

Secondly, this is an event to highlight the power of cleanliness. Gujarat Gandhi's birth place. In this city named after Gandhi and we are in that Mahatma Mandir. So you can easily understand the importance of this place. There is also a Digital exhibition and virtual museum here established on the life of revered Bapu. You also visit the Gandhi Kutir. An understanding of Bapu's life specially his emphasis on cleanliness will surely strengthen our resolve to turn Mahatma's dreams into a reality.

2019, the year of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. Pujya Bapu used to say that India resides in villages. Further he said, "Given a choice to pick between freedom and cleanliness, I will ask for cleanliness." This commitment shows Gandhiji's passion for cleanliness. Indeed every government has contributed to the realisation of Gandhiji's dream right from the days of Gandhiji. Still we have to work more and while in 2019 in commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi we have to ensure that cleanliness should become a part of our routine and be treated as our national identity. We will feel cleanliness in our veins. We want to reach at this point and the nation is capable of doing it.

Here are those Sarpanch sisters who had made it possible in their villages. They have opposed defecation in open and strived to develop a new system. This makes me believe that the momentum gained in this effort can change things to a large extent provided it is taken into action in a refined and time bound manner by 2019.

A couple of moments ago you watched a film that showed our cleanliness ranking at 42% before independence. In such a short span of time we reached 62 in ranking. If in such a short span we can go up by 20 percent then in next one and half year much more can be done and it is clearly your achievement.

Today I had an opportunity to watch the small films of those women who had shattered many myths. Some people are of the view that only educated ones can do such things but these sisters have broken that myth. Some people think that only city dwellers who are fluent in English are capable for such tasks. However, these sisters who are able to communicate only in their specific language have also done this. Attachment of a person with his life objective enables him to cross all kind of hurdles. Many persons are ignorant about their life objective. You inquire about their next day's mandate, they will say I will decide in the evening. Such persons cannot achieve anything during their life span. They just go it pass, count days and often celebrate petty good happenings of their life.

But the one who gets Purpose of his life, never tires and never relents heads for his goal taking every help available in the process, have his fights and face challenges till his task is fulfilled.

Your becoming Sarpanch is not a small achievement. Some of you may not have faced hurdles but the majority had to toil hard to reach this position in the democratic tradition.

Fifteen years ago when meeting of Sarpanchs were held, there were talks of 33 % reservation. But in meetings I had seen while working out of Gujarat and elsewhere in different states that while inquiring for women members it was man who occupied the scene introducing themselves as SP. Strange thing for me that how a government official has turned up in a party meeting. Asking them for their justification they elaborated SP as Sarpanch Pati (Husband of Lady Sarpanch). It was then and there but not now. A women elected as Sarpanch is now aware of her

importance for the period allocation of 5 years. She have something concrete for action. She performs her new role adjusting with her family chores and responsibilities. She makes an environment of her priorities in her family for acceptability. And it has been experienced that a Women Sarpanch works more efficiently in comparison to his male counterpart. She has a distinct focus. A Male Sarpanch engages himself in many more activities. His becoming Sarpanch is for a new higher chair in District Board. One who is in Jila Parishad thinks of State Assembly but a Women Sarpanch gets committed towards her role. And Now we have seen the result positive.

An interesting survey on Professional Women has revealed that women are more adaptive in learning new things. They work whole heartedly and continuously with full capacity to achieve the tasks assigned to them. They are not quite till the work is over. For this they are capable of mobilising proper resources with an instinct of knowing the right person in an appropriate manner without having any ego.

Active involvement of 50 percent women power in the development journey of nation can propel the country to amazing heights. Hence work with Beti Bachao Beti Padhao doctrine is direly needed in our country. At least there should be no female foeticide in a village having Mahila Sarpanch. A Sarpanch sister is capable of creating awareness in this regard provided she is determined for it. She can stand against the atrocities committed against any daughter-in-law there in and can save her too. After that no one can do so. Today our society is witnessing grave deteriorating things. There is a sharp imbalance in boy-girl ratio. Against 1000 boys there are somewhere 800, 850, 900 or 925 girls. With this grave imbalance a society can not move further. It's a sin and the society must stand against it.

Women Sarpanch can be more successful here. We have patriarchal society with a mind set of bias against girls as they will go to new family, rather take care of son. In your tender age you have noticed your mother despite being a women used to pour 02 spoons of Ghee on the plate of her son and only one in the plate of daughter. Simply because the daughter will be married in other family. Having son is a matter of pride. This is half truth. I have seen single child daughters had just decided not to get married so that her parents doesn't face hardships. On the other hand I have also seen that aged parents are stocked to old age homes despite having 4-4 male children.

Hence have bring change in society by standing firmly against this discriminatory approach. Surely the change is being witnessed. Just tell who have brought laurels to India's pride in Olympics. They all are daughters of my country. In the examinations of class 10th and 12th there are only girls getting ranked at first 10 places. We have to find the boys there.

Given an opportunity our mothers and sisters have given glory to their assignments so this Beti Bachao Beti padhao is our social, national as well as humanitarian commitment. Inhuman treatment should be unacceptable in our society. Even our scriptures value the importance of daughter in the following way:

यावत् गंगा कुरुक्षेत्रे, यावत् तिष्ठति मेदनी।
यावत् सीता कथालोके, तावत् जिवेतु बालिका॥

As long as there remains the Ganga, Kurukshetra and earth, as long as the tale of Sita lives the girl child will be remembered. These are the verses in our scriptures for a daughter. Hence take up Beti Bachao Beti Padhao without discrimination.

I urge our Women Sarpanchs to kindly uphold this theme vigorously. If a boy goes to school so be for a daughter even for a poorest of the poor. A Sarpanch should not think that no budget is required for this. The school is made by government and has posted a teacher too. The village nothing to incur expenditure upon it additionally, this just requires your monitoring only that whether girls are going to school or not and which those families are not sending their daughters in school.

You are all Sarpanchs, do one thing when you have time. Ask children in school to write the name of village Sarpanch. Only of that village and not the other one. There you are holding the job for last two-three years but the kids in your school may not be knowing your name and you are the Sarpanch of his village. He may be aware of the Chief Ministers or Prime Ministers name but not about your name. But ask that one to write your name and you will come to know that in the school made in your village with a construction cost of thousands and lakhs of rupees, having a teacher getting salary and the child there studying is unable to spell out your name. Though seeing you he will say yes you are our village Sarpanch. Will it not feel hurt? But just try this.

I don't know whether you cater your villagers whole heartedly or not? But invite all the teachers for tea once in a month at your residence for half an hour. Tell them that being Sarpanch you want to see that no school going child in your village school be seen as lagging behind in studies. He should get a place in tehsil, district or in state merit list. Ask teachers whether they have any grudge or complain? Now if you call them once a month means barring 3-4 months of holiday it will be a meeting 7-8 times a year or less because of Holi/Diwali festivity. But this summoning will give teacher a message of your being pro-active and having a concern for quality education.

Though rest of Sarpanchs will be busy in other 50 works except this basic one. Was there such a situation ever before? Earlier these Sarpanchs happened to be a wealthy city dwellers just extending hospitality to guests. While in villages there used to live one or two persons in their homes. But now after 14th Finance Commission Rs. 2 lakh crore is coming directly to villages and this is not a piecemeal sum.

If in village you set a target of 25 works to be done in 5 years, you can do them easily and with success. Call Anganwadi workers some day or visit the Anganwadi for a while and check there the sanitation and cleanliness, the status of teachers and the quality of food being served, feeding of children present there, also whether the required plays and games are being taken care of? You should exert leadership and pay a little attention there too.

You are aware that government incurs money for vaccination and I am telling you the task that doesn't ask for any specific budget. Your village need not spend a single rupee on this. Have you ever thought that why there were only 40 vaccinations against a target of 50? How the remaining 10 children will be vaccinated? Do you ever ensure that the entire course of vaccination has been completed? Does the vaccinated child is prone to any possible future serious ailment? If in your tenure all the targeted children get vaccination and if they remain healthy in future then after 20-25 years you will have a sense of pride of getting your village vaccinated to a tune of 100 percent. You can just imagine of the satisfaction and joy in your old age.

You ask them for refreshment and then remind for ensuring full vaccination of all the children in your village. Ask teachers to ensure that there should be no school drop out by any girl child. Being Sarpanch also ensure that this happens actually and the school teacher and vaccination staff is coming to village regularly.

If our Sarpanch exerts their leadership in getting these schemes implemented without any extra expense then benefits will be impressive. Often we have thought about the causes of diseases occurring in villages.

Now a days our focus is on toilets. But have thought about the benefits of sanitation? According to a World Bank report the average expenditure of a poor family on treatment of diseases arising out of unhygienic environment is seven thousand rupees per annum. Keeping our villages clean and doesn't allowing any disease to happen in villages will definitely save those 7 thousand rupees. This money will be spent by the poor on milk procurement. Then there will be surely healthy children in your villages. So you have to ensure that these initiatives must be taken in your tenure and there should be no compromise.

Many persons have written about the importance of villages. In 1924 Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote some poems in Bangla on the City and Villages. That I am telling you in Hindi and you will say it is exactly fit today even after 90 year. Now also in the year of Women.

Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote: A village is just like a woman and her image. And in the existence of women prevails the welfare of humanity. Compared to cities villages are more close to nature and are tuned more with the flow of life. In them lies the natural power of healing the wounds. Villages provide all happiness as well as food to all like women just as an easy life poem. More so, its women that enriches colourful traditions arising from villages. But the sheen of either village or women fades out if they are exploited or be put under pressure continuously.

Sometimes we had thought of the draining of village resources. Should the nature be saved or not? Why should not there be a village with ample greenery and pure air where the city dwellers get tempted to pass their quality time in a small cottage of their own and be there for a weekend in such an ideal village? Today's trend is that while we live in village there must also be a home in a city where we can go with our family for outing. This can be reversed for the sake of countryside life. Such a village can be a reality.

Government is also working on Rurban Mission. A place with rural spirit and city facilities. Work is going on to connect every panchayat in the country through Optical Fibre Cable.. Of the 2.5 lakh panchayats, nearly 70 thousands have been connected so far. Every school and panchayat ghar will have this cable connectivity which will be expandable as per requirement. Government is also working for modernity of villages. Here while seeing this exhibition my Secretary informed me that the sarpanch sisters are also taking this exhibition very attentively and every one was busy there taking Selfie. More often we find people speaking in Parliament of how technology will reach villages as they doesn't have ways to keep it. I don't know why such statement is given but I have something else to share about the remarkable revolution made by technology. Technology had made such grand revolution. During my tenure as Chief Minister in Gujarat I went to a place called Kaprada in a very backward tehsil in a remote area. The programme was of inauguration of a Milk Chilling Centre in tribal belt. Being a forest area with no ground the public addressing was fixed some three kilometres away in a school ground. There I saw 25-30 women filling milk in that plant. At the time of lighting the lamp and ribbon cutting I saw all the tribal ladies taking photos from their mobile phones and that too ten years ago. Amazed, I went near them and asked you are not in photo frame and what will you do of my photo? Do you know of culling out photo's. The answer of those uneducated tribal sisters impressed me and my thinking. Their answer was: we will get it downloaded. I was

taken aback, these sisters are illiterate but still saying of downloading.

Now the technology is in the life of a common person. In our system the Government of India has opened up Common Service Centres. Have you ever inquired about the employment provided to youth using technology in these Common Service Centres? What kind of services are being rendered by these computers and how these services could be used for village and how you can be benefitted from these amenities? I mean to say that we should try to bring technology and its use in our villages also. And this will definitely bring a visible change in your villages too.

May be we are not knowing every thing but we can take those along with us who have knowledge of it. Man is egoistic so he will not take it but you can ask this from a class 12th student in your family itself and he/she will definitely come to your help. And see doing this will enhance your strength manifold.

We are village dwellers. Have we ever thought of number of persons from our village working as Government Servants? Not at all. No one had ever thought of this. Anyone getting salary from Government Treasury is a part of Government itself? Can you convene a meeting in which all Government servant from your village, be they are driver running government bus, Compounder, a Peon, a Clerk or a Teacher, getting pay from Government. Every village must have 15-20 such persons associated with Government in one way or other. Does all these persons know about some higher officers? Can you ask such persons in a meeting to do whatever is possible for them in bringing required help in your village? If you are capable of doing then it will be your strength.

As of now you find only Patwari. But there are Aanganwadi workers, Asha Workers or Teachers, they all represent Government. You have so far not taken these along with you so I request you all to do so and see it will help a lot in your working.

Do one more thing also. Many people from your village might have migrated to cities. Now they would be a visitor for a while to attend marriages and other family festivities. Now you work for the birth anniversary of your villages and if many one of you are not aware of that then decide in a meeting and then invite all to usher in the celebrations with fan and fare, It should be a 3-4 day programme where persons above 75 years of age should be felicitated. Everyone should be requested for planting a sapling and the younger ones be attached with the cleanliness drives. Those went out of villages should be requested for a possible help on their part. You will see that the whole village has become vibrant. And now time has come to reverse the trend of leaving village after attaining the age of 18 for a better life. If you are capable of doing this I am sure your village will become a vital one.

As I said every village have live stock in abundance. I have been told that there are some villages near Gandhinagar housing Live stock hostels. Some of you may have seen there how the garbage of villages gets converted to wealth. And what we call Waste is actually a Wealth.

You strive for Self-Help-Group in your village. Engage some persons in it. Make Compost manure from the village waste garbage. Sale of this compost will have earning for village panchayat. Land will be rejuvenated with better harvest for its natives. You take initiatives for the petty works that doesn't require extra budget. You can make your village empowered in the same way you did it for cleanliness. You have cultivated the habit of cleanliness and it is a matter for that we have to take care on our own. Suppose we are going somewhere and some filth suddenly sticks upon our body then do we wait for any body to come and clean it as if we are a VIP? No, immediately we takeout handkerchief from our pocket and starts wiping that. Why, because we do not like dirt or filth even for a while and cleans it as early as possible. So is this our mother- Bharat Mata. If any garbage or filth falls upon it we will have to clear and clean it collectively. So we have to develop a habit of cleanliness. Because once this filth and dirt is gone you that the problem of malnutrition, problem of illness and its related expenses will drastically get minimised.

The poor will be benefitted most from this exercise. Dirty conditions most adversely affects the poor, Slum dwellers and to the people consuming contaminated water. Cleansing is a humanitarian task and if we take on this with an aim of public service then it will be worship of God. And to get a feeling of change we have to work and I am sure that the objective of Clean India will be achieved by 2019. I am not saying to dedicate this to Government rather it should become a part of our society. We will have to launch a movement for creating hatred towards dirty conditions. This will have to happen on its own and toilet is one of its part. This is not out thinking that mere construction of toilet is taken as completion of cleanliness. Earlier was one spoke of cleanliness but for the last two year this is a matter of discussion. I publically accept it that the day you speak something officially the media begins finding loopholes in it.

But Cleanliness is an exception as the media has welcomed and adored it and they are working one step ahead of Government in this area. Everyone has accepted this across the country. And a work acceptable to all is bound to succeed so naturally it has to be done systematically. Mere chanting of Cleanliness hymns will be of no use. This

we have to do physically. And clean village will be taken as transformed India and our life will appear as a changed one.

I congratulate to all those who have been honoured. Their work, life, entrepreneurship and resolve will motivate us. On the occasion of International Women Day there is a clear cut connection between Cleanliness and a women . Because it is the women power of our country who has contributed most for cleanliness. Every type of hygiene, cleanliness of each and every facet of social life, values , virtues and kind deeds are if thriving today are just because of the contribution of Mother-Power.

Hoping that this cleanliness drive will have blessings of Mother-power and it will witness success in leaps and bounds I once again greet you all. Many-many thanks to you.

AKT/ST/SH/DG

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