



English rendering of the text of PM's address at Samajik Adhikarita Shivir in Rajkot, Gujarat

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My dear family members, all the disabled persons, and brothers and sisters,

I was told by Vijay Ji, our chief minister, that after forty years a Prime Minister is visiting Rajkot for an official function. I'm told that the last time Shri Morarji Bhai Desai visited the Rajkot as Prime Minister. I'm fortunate that today I got the opportunity to have an audience with the people of Rajkot. Rajkot has a place of special importance in my life. The country would not have sent me to Delhi had Rajkot not elected me and sent me to Gandhi Nagar.

My political journey started with the blessings of Rajkot, it started with the abundant love of Rajkot and I can never forget the love of Rajkot for me. Once again I bow down to the people of Rajkot, offer my respect and repeatedly seek your blessings.

When I was elected as the leader by all the NDA MPs and the responsibility of the office of Prime Minister was given to me then that day I had said in my speech that my government was dedicated to the poor people of this country. These differently abled people, there are millions and millions differently abled people in the country. And it is unfortunate that most of them are the responsibility of the family that they were born into. I have seen several such families, several such mothers, in the age group of 25, 27 or 30 years, they have yet to realize the dreams of their lives and if their first child was a differently abled child then I've seen those parents sacrificing all of their dreams for that differently abled child. They have only one responsibility in their life that this differently abled child is born in our family, God has given us its responsibility and we must fulfill our obligation like a devotion to God. We have millions of such families in our country.

However, my dear countrymen, God might have selected the family and a differently abled child would have been sent to that family. God would be confident that this was the family that was sensitive, this was a cultured family and perhaps they would raise that differently abled child. Therefore God would have selected that family for these reasons. A differently abled person is the responsibility of the entire society, responsibility of the entire country even if it is born in one particular family and we should fulfill our responsibility. We must have that sensitivity.

When I was in Gujarat, there also I did focused on these things. In Rajkot itself, our friend Dr. PV Doshi was associated with one such school. Because of this I regularly got the opportunity to meet differently abled children, I used to go that school with him. And Dr. Doshi was able to connect with those differently abled boys of that school in a very dedicated and loving manner. His daughter was also dedicated to this cause. I had experienced these things before joining the politics, I was very young. Sometimes I used to visit Dr. Doshi Ji's home and sometimes I used to visit with him, it inculcated those values in me, it inculcated a kind of sensitivity, a kind of awakening. And when I got the power, when I got the responsibility then you people would recall that we took a very important decision. Usually a healthy boy requires 35 marks out of 100 to clear the exam, however, we decided that a differently abled child would be considered having passed the exam even if he scored minimum 25 marks. Because a differently abled boy will have to make three times more efforts, spend three times more time to fetch a book from the bookshelf than what is required by a normal boy therefore there should be a special treatment for a differently abled boy. And when I was in Gujarat, I was able to take several such decisions.

When I reached Delhi, I started a careful evaluation of everything to find a solution for such problems. We cannot fulfill our duties towards the differently abled persons just by coining the term 'Divyang Jan'. You can see here that there is a lady that is using the sign language to convey my message to those who cannot hear or speak. She is communicating my speech to them. You may be surprised to know that even after seventy years of independence every state in India had different sign languages. I could understand that there were different languages for different states, however, but the sign languages for different states were also different. That is why no communication was possible between a differently abled person from Tamil Nadu and a differently abled teacher from Gujarat. Both of them were using the sign languages but these signs were different for Gujarati and for Tamil. And therefore when our differently abled person traveled in the country it was very difficult for them to communicate as there were no interpreters. After our government came to power, we never thought whether the work was easy or difficult, that is a different issue, but we showed how sensitive a government could be, in what way it should think. We passed a law to ensure that all the boys across the country should learn one sign language and prepare similar kind of teachers so that the sign language is understood across the country. We did not stop there, we adopted a sign language, which, if an Indian boy visits any corner of the world and if he is required to use sign language to understand things, then we have adopted that sign language. It may appear to some that it's a small thing but it is a living example in what way a sensitive government works.

From 1992, please keep in mind that social empowerment ministry started discussion on providing resources for the disabled people, providing budget for them was started from 1992, it happened so many years after the independence. You would be surprised to know that between 1992 and 2013, before the formation of our government only 55 such program were organized to provide something to the disabled persons. Only 55! Brothers and sisters, within three years, between 2014 and 2017, we have organized 5,500 programs for the disabled people. Five thousand and five hundred! Only 55 programs in 25-30 years and 5,500 programs in just three years, this reflects the level of sensitivity of this government. Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas (Development for everyone, support for every one), it shows our way of implementing this formula of the government.

And brothers and sisters, we have been setting world records after one another, we have been placed emphasis on providing support to the disabled persons. Today, we have set a world record of providing support and assistance to 18,500 people under one roof. I offer my respect to the government of Gujarat, the officers of Rajkot and all other people who helped in this program that they came forward to show concerns for the disabled persons.

I was providing some assistance to the disabled persons as a token. I was trying to speak to them. Friends, what could give you bigger satisfaction in life than seeing the confidence and happiness on their faces. When our friend Gahlot Ji organize a program and requests my presence, then I adjust my schedule to attend the program for the disabled persons, I give preference to these programs as it is important to create awareness in our society.

If one is to travel in a railway coach or to take a bus then that is not difficult for an ordinary person. After formation of the government we have started a project under the name of Sulabhya Yojna. We have searched thousands of government premises that have been visited by both common man and also by the disabled persons to create special platform for them, to develop special system for them for boarding the train and if it is a government office and someone commutes on a tricycle then the cycle should be able to easily come inside the office. And there should be toilet for them, you can imagine their situation if they don't get the disabled friendly toilets. How difficult it will be for them? And unless we see these things ourselves, don't think, don't face ourselves then we can't understand the problem, we think that he will adjust somehow. No brothers, it's not like that. If we become aware about their problems while constructing our house, while constructing our society, our flat then we must think that if we have disabled person as a visitor then if needs to use lift, he should be able to do it easily, if he needs to use toilet then there will be separate arrangement for him. We should develop a character in the society. And we have continuously strived for this and as a result today there are thousands of such places where these facilities have been developed, models have been established and things are taking shape. Government of India has made it compulsory to create separate facilities for the disabled persons in all the new buildings.

I'm also grateful to the Gujarat government for adopting these norms. They have agreed to take it forward. I mean to say that a big program like this fixes the responsibility on the government to look for the disabled persons eligible to get help but who are not able to reach to the government, we have adopted this direction that the government should look for them, should reach them to help them by organizing a camp. And that is why there are more than 18,000 disabled persons are present here today. And because of this, the organizations, which work in the area of providing help to disabled persons, also get promotion and strength. Innovation Institutes of Government of India are working in this direction.

Today, I have seen the demonstration of those boys, I had invited them in my office in Parliament. Someone who was without hand and was given an artificial hand, I saw that he was able to write in a very beautiful manner, his hand was made of plastic but it had the technology so he could write more beautifully than I write. He was able to fetch water, could drink water and tea without any assistance. Today, I met a gentleman who told me that he could run, he told me that we have given a new strength to his legs. He asked me if he could demonstrate this by running here. I told him that it was not required.

I mean to say a big new confidence has developed. And new things have been innovated for this purpose. Government's own institutions are working in this direction. Some youth have come forward and I urge the youth of our country who are launching startups, I urge them to study what kind of innovation is taking place in the world for the disabled persons, what new things have been developed for them, what are the new innovations that can help the disabled persons to help him easily lead his life with the help of that innovation. And I tell them that if they study then they would also think of innovations, I told them that you are engineers, if you think then you are capable of doing that through startups, through innovations and you can produce those products for the disabled persons that is today a huge market in India. We have millions and millions of disabled persons, they need different kind of products, modified products. These are new avenues for employment.

I invited the youngsters from the field of startups that you discover, you develop new things for the disabled persons and the government will provide all the possible assistance so that these innovations can be used in bringing about changes in the life of disabled persons.

Brothers and sisters, we have brought that insurance scheme, one month's coverage for a premium of one rupee. Today, you can't even get a cup of tea for one rupee. However, even the poorest disabled person can afford the insurance by paying one rupee per month. And if a calamity befalls on the family, befalls on the individual then that family immediately gets a relief of two lakh rupees for spending a rupee per month, 12 rupees per year. It

helps them to tide over the difficult period for some time. Similarly, there is another insurance scheme for thirty rupees for thirty days, 360 rupees per year, and under that scheme a good amount can be provided in case of any calamity. So far 13 crore families out of total 25 crore families have joined this scheme. I urge all the families with the disabled persons that though this scheme is beneficial for all the people but the families with disabled persons should take maximum advantage of it. The families with a disabled person should take advantage of this scheme. This government is committed for the better future of your child, you should come forward, 12 rupees a year is just a token amount for a process, and it's less than the expenditure on stationary.

Brothers and sisters, Government of India has launched several such schemes for poor. We have a dream, India will complete 75 years of its independence in 2022. Seventy years have passed. Millions and millions of people don't have their own house. Brothers and sisters, we are moving forward to realize the dream of providing a house to every family by 2022, to provide a house that has a toilet; that has electricity connection; that has tap water; a school close by and also has medical facility for old people nearby. I know it's an extremely difficult goal, I'm aware that how difficult to complete something in five years that was difficult to complete in 70 years, I'm fully aware about it. But, brothers and sisters, if only 55 camps had been organized in 30 years and someone can organize 5,500 camps in 3 years then what did not happen in 75 years could be done in five years; we must have wherewithal, we must have intention and must have the desire to live for the country. Friends, you automatically get the results and we are trying to finish this work with that feeling only.

How to provide benefit to the poor families? Middle class families do many things on their own but the kind of opportunities they should get are diverted to other direction due to poverty. If the poor people of my country are able to come out of this poverty then no one can imagine that what kind of strength India's middle class will have to scale new heights for country. The world is surprised by the way India has emerged as a force in the world. It is scaling new heights in terms of development. And, therefore, my dear brothers and sisters of Rajkot, you have taught me many things, gifted many things, you, the people of Rajkot, have decided my path in life. Today, I can't be more fortunate than this that I got the opportunity to offer my respect to this land, got the opportunity to be blessed by all of you and to be blessed by the disabled persons while having these feelings throughout my life.

I, once again thank Shri Gahlot ji, his department, no other department has shown so much activeness in the history of India, the kind of activeness Shri Gahlot Ji has shown and today he is before you that efforts are made to fulfill the requirements of over 18 thousand disabled persons.

I once again offer my respect to this land, to its people. Once again, thank you very much.

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