



English rendering of the text of PM's speech at Centenary Celebrations of Bharat Sevashram Sangha in Shillong (via video conference on 07 May, 2017)

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Ladies and Gentleman

Delhi and Shillong are nearly 2000 km apart. Technique has however erased this distance. I came to Shillong in May last year itself. Today in having a dialogue with you through video conference, it becomes obvious to have a recall of old memories and also an opportunity of receiving blessings from you all. In Gujarat I got a chance to have affection from and to work closely with Bharat Sewashram Sangh member late Swami Akshayanand ji Maharaj. I know Swami Ambrishanand ji who is now sitting on the dais since the time he was with black hairs. And I worked with him like a friend. I have not seen Swami Ganeshanand ji for many years but had close acquaintance with him. It was Acharya Shrimat Swami Pranabanand ji Maharaj who established Bharat Sewa Sangh. Sewa Yatra is completing 100 years this year. Many-many greetings from me to Sangh members for taking the service along with labour for Bharat Nirman.

It's a matter of laurel and pride for any institution at the threshold of completing 100 years of his services. Bharat Sewa Sangh has more specifically done highly commendable public welfare works in North-Eastern States. Be it flood or drought or an earth quake, the members of the Bharat Sewa Sangh are seen providing relief to affected persons with full integrity. In critical conditions when a person need most caring the disciples of Swami Pranabanand ji forget everything except service to human being. Serving the affected ones is termed as pilgrimage in our scriptures. As is the saying:

एकतः कृतवः सर्वे सहस्त्रं वरदक्षिणा अन्यतो रोग-भीतानाम् प्राणिनाम् प्राण रक्षणम्

Means a well paid systematic copybook style yagna karma on one side and service of aggravated and sick person on the other have same sanctity. Our scriptures have taught us that performing a yagna and service to the affected ones are equally pious.

Friend, Swami Pranabanandji, during the attainment of prime slot of his spiritual journey had observed that, this is the time of great conjugation, great-awakening, great salvation and great equal justice. Whatever about the social justice we are talking now was highlighted by Swami Pranabanand ji during his time period. Only after that he founded this Bharat Sewashram Sangha.

The urge to serve was the motive behind establishing this institution in 1917 which deeply impressed the then ruler of Baroda Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaikwad. And the zeal with which Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaikwad used to perform for benevolence and uplift of people is well known. He was just like a mobile establishment of public welfare so the Maharaja could not resist himself from praising Swami Pranabanandji's foot soldiers when he saw their working on the ground level.

Our source of inspiration, the founder of Jansangh, honourable Shyamaprasad Mukherjee revered Swami Pranabanandji as his teacher. We can sense a glimpse of Swami Pranabanandji's views in the thoughts of Dr. Mukherjee. The way Swami Pranabanandji linked the vision of National Building with spirituality and service of his disciples is beyond any comparison. Bharat Sewa Sangh was only six year old during the 1923 drought of Bengal. Again the yeoman services rendered by Bharat Sewashram Sangh during Noakhali riots of 1946; devastating flood of Jalpai Gudi in 1950; first earth quake of 1956 at Anjar in Kutch; massive cyclone of 1977 in Andhra Pradesh and 1984 gas tragedy at Bhopal, all are in memory of people there.

We must reconcile that it was the time when there were neither much agencies for disaster management nor there was any awareness or talk of such situations. People locally managed things as per their skill and wisdom. So be there any natural calamity or a manmade strife, Bharat Sewashram Sangh played a crucial role in such difficult situations.

It seems there is no power supply at the place of your seating's. From here I am seeing that area in dark. Are you able to see and hear me? Though I am getting your voices.

If we talk about recent past, Gujarat earth quake of 2001, Tsunami in 2004, the tragedy of Uttarakhand in 2013 or flood of 2015 in Tamil Nadu, we see that Bharat Sewashram Sangh never lagged behind in rendering their whole hearted and dedicated services.

Brothers and sisters, Swami Pranabanandaji used to say that life without an ideal is equal to death. True service to humanity is possible only after setting high morale in one's life. All the members of Bharat Sewashram Sangh have actualised this vision in their lives.

Today, wherever the soul of Swami Pranabanandji will be, he might feel contained and happy at your efforts for humanity. The members of Bharat Sewashram Sangh reach at the places of Natural calamities well in time not only in the country but also in foreign lands. In this regard any kind of felicitation will be lesser for you.

आत्मार्यम् जीव लोके अस्मिन् को न जीवति मानवः।

It means, every person in this world lives for himself, But the true life is for them who dwells for the welfare of others. Hence anointed by innumerable laurels of others welfare the Bharat Sewashram Sangh well deserves for congratulations on the completion of 100 years of foundation.

Friends, in the bygone decades a hype was created that means of spiritualism and services are different. Some entities tried to spell out that those treading the spirituality path are away from the path of services. You have proved that this hype is flawed, rather you have furthered a service based on spirituality and Indian ethos all along in one line. Today more than 100 branches of Bharat Sewashram Sangh along with its 500+ health units are busy in imparting in the area of health services education and doing a yeoman service.

Bharat Sewashram Sangh has developed a model of public service which is based upon a joint venture of penance and social-services. This is running successfully in a number of countries. United Nations too has prized the works of Bharat Sewashram Sangh. Swami Pranabanndji was one of some divine souls who worked for the safety of spiritual awakening of country and then linked it with the freedom movement in the bygone century. Like Swami Vivekananda and Maharishi Arvind his name is taken as one of the great saints of last century. He used to say that a man should keep devotion in one hand and power on the other. He was convinced that without power one cannot safeguard himself and without devotion threat of becoming a predators for himself always persists in waiting.

Armed with devotion and power he started uniting and enlightening the people for the development of society in his very childhood. Many years before attaining salvation and becoming Swami Pranabanand he was only "Vinod" who was busy in collecting rice and vegetables from door-to-door just to redistribute them among the needy and the poor. Once noticing no road connectivity for his village he motivated the villagers for constructing a road to reach easily.

In a very early stage he had sensed the divisions in society because of the poison of caste system and untouchability. So he started worship of God by assembling all the people of village at one place. Bengal was a central hub of specific political activities during the last days of 19th century as well as in the beginning of 20th century and at this juncture the efforts for national awakening by Swami Pranabanandji were also on the ascending note. He gave open support to the revolutionaries of *Anusheelan Samiti*, set up in Bengal. Fighting against the Britishers, once he was arrested and sent to jail. Through his acts he proved that it is not essential to remain in caves for penance, rather one can reach to God by way of awakening and enlightening the masses.

Brothers and sisters, exactly hundred years ago our country was dwelling in a mental state to get rid of slavery and its own fault lines and to this end continuous efforts were on to group peoples different parts of country. 1917 was the year in which Mahatma Gandhi seeded Satyagrah movement in Champaran. It's a healthy co-incidence that country is celebrating centenary of Champaran movement.

In addition to Satyagrah Movement Gandhi ji awakened masses about cleanliness. You may be knowing that last month like Champaran Movement a new movement called Swachhagrah had been launched in the country. Swachhagrah means urge towards cleanliness. Today on this occasion I request you to make it also an integral part of your activities. This is due to one reason. You would have gone through the ranking of cities announced in this year's cleanliness survey. 12 cities of North-East states were also surveyed but their status is not very good. Only Gangtok city has got 50th ranking. Four cities are ranked in between 100 to 200th place while the remaining seven are in the range of 200-300. Shillong, where you are sitting now is ranked as 276th. This situation is a challenge for us, the state government and institutions like Bharat Sewashram Sangh. Local agencies are on their job though every one should feel that he himself is a foot soldier for Cleanliness Mission. The objective of Clean India; Clean North-East can be attained only through individual efforts

Brothers and sisters, Swami Pranabanandji Maharaj used to say that country needs millions of selfless workers. These selfless working saints will change the mind set of country which in turn lead to nation building. So like you crores of selfless workers are spread across the country. We just have to engage our power jointly so as to make this Swachhagrah Movement a sure success.

I have been told that at the outset of *sawachha Bharat* campaign you did chose five Railway Stations of North-East for taking onus of cleanliness and every fortnight a cleanliness drive was carried out there. Now your efforts need to be extended.

You may feel surprise that Modi is assigning job to us. I am telling you because you people always do like that, and obviously the works are assigned to those, who are in habit of accomplishing them. So, I also like to suggest you something. At an occasion when you are celebrating the centenary of your organisation, can it be possible to devote all your efforts to cleanliness drive. For the protection of environment, could it be possible for your institution to make the area, wherever you are working now, plastic free? Can your institution concentrate on other cleanliness related works? Can it work for making masses aware about water conservation and its benefits? Could your institution connect some of its targets with the year 2022, when India will be celebrating 75th year of its independence. Still five years left in it and I think, every person and every institution should utilise this time to left behind the evils of their surroundings and resolute to step forward.

Friends you would be aware that in 1924 Swami Prnabanandji had rejuvenated many shrines spread in the country. By launching a programme *Theerthshankar* he tried to do away the shortcomings rampant in the shrines. Today unhygienic environment is the biggest flaw at our shrines. Can Bharat Sewashram Sangh re-launch Teerthshankar programme by linking it with cleanliness.

Similarly how the Bharat Sewashram Sangh is able to share its experiences and expertise in disaster management as much as possible with other persons? This requires a thoughtful provocation. Every year thousands of live face the threat on account of natural calamities. In order to keep damage and loss at minimum last year a National Disaster Management Plan has been chalked out. Government is keeping the people well informed in this regard and they are being updated through mock drill exercises.

Friends, the alertness and quick response of your institution could be of immense use in NE States. Your institution is capable of keeping people ready both in the events, i.e. before the disaster and after the disaster.

The way by Swami Pranabanandji used to send his preachers in India and abroad for the spread of the message of spirituality and service, in the similar style your institution can follow him in the tribal pockets of far flung corners of North-East in searching the talented sports persons. Your dozens of schools are already working in these areas and many tribal children are hostel inmates there so it will not be a difficult task for you.

You people are ground workers among the masses. Your aesthetic vision is capable of bringing up sports talent in the forefront. Swami Pranabanandji used to say that all efforts will become futile if the youth power isn't awakened.

Once again the opportunity has arrived for upbringing and unveiling the sports talent of North-East Youth power. Your institution can have a big pie in it. My only request to you in this matter is that your targets for service solitude should be measurable means they could be quantitatively fixed. It is up to you that you will reach to 10 cities or in 1000 cities. You have to fix whether to set up 100 camps or 1000 camps for disaster management. My only urge is that it should be measurable. By 2022 Bharat Sewashram Sangh must be in a position to say that we not only campaigned, rather we linked 50 thousand or one lakh persons with this movement. Pranabanandji always insisted on maintaining a diary so you should also keep a diary for institution and place targets there in such a manner that could be cross checked time to time regularly and later in it the amount of achievements should also be entered. Your efforts and hard work is very important for nation building and accomplishing the dream of NEW INDIA.

Labour (hard work) is revered as greatest donation in our society and we are inspired and motivated for donating in every situation.

श्रद्धया देयम्, अ-श्रद्धया देयम्, शिरया देयम्, ह्रया देयम्, भिया देयम्, सम्बिदा देयम्

Means a person must donate with devotion and also donate even if there is no devotion. Donate when your coffers are on rise and donate for societal respect even if no increase in your assets. Donate with fear or with love. As a sum donate in every situation.

My specific thrust for North-East is just because of the unbalanced development of this region even in the post independence era. Now for the last three years the Central Government is trying for the proper as well as balanced development of this region using its all resources. Emphasis is also being given on connectivity enhancement. Road Infrastructure is being set up in North-East region with an investment of 40 thousand crore rupees. 19 big railways related projects have been launched. The area is also being strengthened, keeping in mind the tourism potentials. The small air ports of North-East are also being modernized. The lengthening of Shillong airport runway has also been approved. In a very short time North-East will also be linked with "UDAAN" project. All these efforts will help in making North-East the Gateway to South-East Asia. If the Gateway of South-East Asia continues to remain unhygienic, sick, illiterate and unbalanced, our country will lag behind in crossing the gateway of development. There is no reason for our country having all resources and means to remain poor and under developed. With the mantra of *Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas* we have to move ahead by empowering all.

Our society will be strengthened by coordination, association and harmony. Our youth will be empowered by morale, thinking and awakening. Our nation will be empowered by peoples power, public support and mass feeling. For bringing a change and the scenario as well as to make NEW INDIA we all, crores of selfless workers and numerous institutions like Bharat Sewashram Sangh will have to put in our efforts unitedly. With this call I stop here. I salute in the foots of the divine personality of Parmanandji Maharaja, present on the dais. Once again many-many greetings to the members of Bharat Sewashram Sangh. Lots of thanks.

AKT/ST/RSB/AK

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