



English rendering of the text of PM's address at Inauguration of Sabarmati Ashram Centenary Celebrations in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

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My dear brothers and sisters from all over the world who are present here.

If you want to understand the cost of forgetting the history, to understand the importance of what is being lost, if one wants to understand this thing then I think we can understand it very well from the personality of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji that how much we have lost by forgetting him. And today it is very auspicious moment of 150 years of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, who was also called as *Kavi Shri* by the revered Bapu, and it is also the centenary year of the holy land of Sabarmati Ashram that was used for awakening the inner spirit of India after the slavery of hundreds of years.

The year 2017 is important in many ways. This is centenary year of the first Satyagrah (civil disobedience movement) of the country which was launched in Champaran 100 years ago. Revered Bapu returned to India from Africa in 1915 and when the year 2015, the centenary year of that event occurred, then the Government of India celebrated the centenary year in Gujarat only, in Gandhi Nagar, in the temple of Mahatma by inviting the overseas Indians from all over the world.

And through this program, several people who are associated with Gandhi Ji, who are practitioners of Gandhism, they are familiar with the name of Shrimad Rajchandra, however, there is an entire generation who is not familiar with the name of Shrimad Rajchandra. It's our fault, we should keep remembering these great people from generation to generation but we deviated from our path as we have forgotten them. This is our government's effort that we keep remembering the great sons of this great country, keep remembering the great traditions and great history of this country so that we remain attached to our historical roots and we should march ahead with the objective to create a new history.

The centenary of Sabarmati Ashram, sometimes I feel that we are not able to introduce Gandhi Ji to the world in the manner that is required to provide solace to the humanity that is passing through the burning period. However, it's still not late, otherwise sometimes I feel, I don't know, but it doesn't happen that one can fulfill all his wishes. However, it's not wrong to have wishes. Sometimes I feel that the United Nations that was established to ensure peace, the idea took the root due to the first and second world wars. However, had we succeeded in establishing Gandhi Ji as a messenger of peace in the people's mind then whosoever was the first secretary general of United Nations, he would have come to India after assuming the office and would have spent sometime in the *Hriday Kunj* and would have gone back after taking some inspiration for the world peace from the land where Bapu lived and worked with tenacity on the banks of Sabarmati river. But my inner voice tells me that if not today then certainly this thing will happen in future. We must look at our country in that manner, we must feel that strength and should constantly endeavor to attach the world with that greatness.

Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, as Gurudev Rakesh ji was telling that the eminent people of the world used to visit Gandhi Ji. He used to talk to eminent personalities of the world for securing independence of the country. Tall people with the height of 6, 6.5 feet, white people, people with glowing skin used to visit him, however, they were not able to leave their impression on Gandhi Ji. And Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, an ordinary thin and lean person, a trader who was leading an average life with an ordinary personality, who used to buy and sell products at his shop, and there was no age difference, it was only two and a half years, despite all these things what was the greatness of his personality that he covered the entire personality of Gandhi Ji in himself.

I've been fortunate to visit Bavania, the birth place of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, it's an ancestral place and I'm thankful to his family members for the way they have looked after the place. After visiting the place, I have asked teachers that they must visit Bavania if they are visiting Saurashtra. We feel a different kind of vibrations when we visit temples, it's a different experience. You would have also felt the same thing that I have felt. There is a memorial for Shrimad Rajchandra Ji in Bavania, it's not a temple, however, you must have felt the vibrations of spiritual awakening the moment you enter the place.

In our country, Ph.Ds. are conducted on several subjects; these are done on the poems and writings of several great personalities. However, I'd like that why not the universities of our country, specially, Gujarat University conduct a Ph.D. on the teachings and writing of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji at a time when we're celebrating the 150 years of him. What was the influence of the letters written by Shrimad Rajchandra Ji on the life and all the activities of Gandhi Ji? And see, there was not much difference in the age of Gandhi Ji and his age, Shrimad Rajchandra Ji was raised as per the Jain traditions, despite all these things, look at the simplicity of Gandhi Ji, otherwise he was a barrister, he came to India after successfully conducting a huge movement in Africa, top politicians of the country used to visit him, he had already established a name for himself and despite that, despite no age difference, he used to write to a person of the same age group leading an ordinary life to seek answers for all his inner questions and Shrimad Rajchandra Ji used to provide answers by using all his spiritual awakening, all his knowledge to all the queries of Gandhi Ji through the letters. We get to know about that period through the letters of Bapu Ji and Shrimad Rajchandra Ji. We get to know about the thinking of Gandhi Ji, we get to know how much he used to worry about his inner conscience, the person who was leading such a huge independence movement used to ask Shrimad Rajchandra Ji about what to do.

Our new generation is not aware about all these things, therefore at a time when we are celebrating the centenary of Sabarmati Ashram I'd like to urge the students who come to visit Gujarat as a tourist, I'd also ask the teachers that you visit all the places but you must encourage those students to spend some time in Sabarmati Ashram and show them by taking them to Bavania that what kind of great personalities were born in our country in recent times, it's not something that happened in ancient past during

the time of sages and ascetics. No amount of regards shown by me for Gurudev Rakesh Ji would suffice, he is a knowledge seeker and he is also a doer. His ideas are full of inspirations from Shri Lal Chandra Ji and his life is dedicated to the service of people inhabiting in the remotest parts of the forest to realize those ideals. And I have seen that a large number of his followers watch his sermons on television throughout the world.

I've just come back from Netherlands, I was in Netherlands day before yesterday. I came to know about two new things, first, Netherlands would rank second in the world after India for naming its roads on Gandhi Ji, it was a new experience, new information for me. Second, a large number of people have settled there from Suriname, they have become Dutch citizens in large numbers. And it also has young Indian IT professionals who settled there in recent times. However, I must have met at least a dozen people who inquired with me whether I was meeting Rakesh Ji day after tomorrow or not! And they said one more thing, they asked me to send them my photographs with Rakesh Ji that were to be taken today. These are not ordinary things, this in itself is a big thing. When we remember venerated Bapu, remember Sabarmati Ashram, he spent 12 years with rigorous perseverance and think of his determination that when he took a vow that he would rather die but will not come back without achieving the independence. What kind of determination it would have been when he left Sabarmati Ashram? How powerful the perseverance of those 12 years must have been that he had followed in Sabarmati Ashram that when he left the Ashram, he was so much confident that he would make the British people leave the country, would achieve India's independence during his lifetime.

In 2019, we will celebrate 150 years of venerated Bapu, Will we celebrate like this? No. No Indian has the right to celebrate 150 years of venerated Bapu in a routine manner. Celebrating 150 years of venerated Bapu means that taking a vow like Gandhi Ji and fulfilling that vow in any case by the time of 150 years of his birth, and every Indian....Bapu had that unmatched determination... we must have that determination and we must move forward with that determination today itself so that we will achieve those things by the time we celebrate 150 years of Gandhi, this should be in every Indian's heart. We can also contribute to make our country what venerated Bapu dreamed of, dreamed about an independent India by taking a vow at Sabarmati Ashram, at the place where the contours of India's freedom struggle were conceived.

Whatever things are discussed about Sabarmati Ashram, cleanliness is among those things that was discussed everyday throughout the year. He didn't use to compromise on cleanliness. The campaign for cleanliness should become every Indian's habit by 2019. Cleanliness should be the top most priority in our conduct, in our life, and it should be in our veins, in our mind and there cannot be a better tribute to the venerated Bapu than this. Bapu himself used to say that cleanliness will be my first priority if I were to choose between freedom and cleanliness. A clean India, cleanliness was more important for Bapu than India's independence. It was his dream. We have completed 70 years since our independence and in 2019 we're celebrating 150 years of Gandhi Ji, why not we should do something for cleanliness.

Venerated Bapu was very fond of this devotional song - Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re, we just heard this devotional song. Every student in India is aware about Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re, every citizen knows about it, everyone knows that it was liked very much by Gandhi Ji. And look at its power, look at its simplicity, you ask 100 people, 90 out of 100 will say Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re. You can try this thing in any corner of the country, 90 out of 100 people will say this thing. Then you ask them about the language of this song. I can say this thing with some sense of authority that even 10 people will not be able to tell the language of the song because we have internalized the song that there remains no barrier of the language. Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re, this song feels like our own. This is the success that no division remains, all the divisions disappear.

I joined politics very late. I was fortunate to work in the area of Dharampur where Rakesh Bhai is active now days. I was fortunate to spend a good period of my youth with tribal people, by doing social service. I joined politics very late and I had never thought that I would go into this direction. I was dedicated to the organization, was working for the organization and I used to tell the workers of Bhartiya Janta Party while training them. I used to tell them that Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re was written by Narsingh Mehta 400 years ago. Today, all the political leaders, all the representatives of people should do one thing, *Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye Re Jo Peer Parayi Jane Re*, they should remove the words *Vaishnav Jan* and say *Lok Pratinidhi To Tene Re Kahiye Re Je Peer Parayi Jane Re*. You see, what kind of people's representative is needed in India, what kind of public servant is needed, you put yourself in every line of this devotional song - *Vaishnav Jan*- for a moment, you will not require any guidance from anybody else. You will clearly come to know about the destination, there will be no confusion. You can associate yourself with every single word of that song, I'll not explain it here due to paucity of time, but that power is there in that song.

Brothers and sisters, we know when to use venerated Bapu's name when it is opportune, we have seen this thing for years; and we are also familiar with the habit of forgetting his name when it is expedient. Today, when I've come to Sabarmati Ashram, the perseverance of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, remembering him, we have been remembering every single thing of his teachings, and at a time when we are celebrating the centenary year of Sabarmati Ashram, I'd like to discuss something serious with my countrymen. There cannot be any place more sacred than this to discuss this thing when it is 150 years of Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, when it is centenary year of Sabarmati Ashram, when in 2019 we are going to celebrate 150 years of Gandhi Ji, there cannot be a better opportunity to discuss my inner feelings. I'd like to express my pain and anger over the current atmosphere of the country. The country that believes in feeding the ants, the country that cares to feed the street dogs, the country that has a tradition of feeding fishes by visiting river banks and ponds every morning, the country that has this kind of value system, this kind of character, the country in which a great soul like Mahatma Gandhi had taught the lesson of non-violence, what has happened to that country? What has happened to us if a hospital fails to save a patient, if the operation fails or medicines don't work and if the patient dies then the relatives of the patient kill the doctors, they burn down the hospital. Is it my country? Is this the country of venerated Bapu? What have we been doing? And these are the things that are encouraged. Destiny is destiny. If two vehicles collide anywhere, unfortunately someone dies or someone gets injured and a crowd gathers even if it doesn't know the victims and they burn down the vehicle. Is it my country?

Nobody can surpass Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave for protecting the cows, in devotion to cows. If you want to serve cows, want to protect cows then Gandhi Ji and Vinoba Bhave have already shown us a good path. And the country will have to follow that path. And the country's interest lies in that only. Vinoba Ji sacrificed his entire life for the protection of cows. I was fortunate that once I visited Vardha to see Vinoba Ji. I met him, offered my respect and I sat down there. Vinoba Ji was very eloquent person. I sat down there, introduced myself, I was looking at him and he told me to die, told me to die. I was surprised that Vinoba Ji asked me to die. I sat there silently and then he politely said - die for the cow, die for the mother cow. You can imagine that

Vinoba Ji fought till the end of his life against the government of that time for cow protection, he sat on hunger strikes for protection of cows, for devotion to cows. India's constitution also informs us about the importance of cow protection. But do we have a right to kill any person for this? Is this the devotion to cows? Is this the cow protection? It can't be the path shown by venerated Bapu. This is not the message from the life of Vinoba Bhave. And therefore at a time when we are celebrating centenary year of Sabarmati Ashram, celebrating 150 years of venerated Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, then it's in the heart and mind of every Indian, these are our fundamental values, this is our fundamental tradition - non violence. It has been our way of life. How are we losing our control, we are killing doctors, we are killing drivers if something happens by chance. We're killing humans in the name of cow.

I still remember one event from my childhood. It's a true event of my life. And perhaps it is for the first time that I'm going to share this. Earlier I had a habit of writing, when I used to write, and even then I had thought that I'd write on this topic, however, I could not do that. However, today I strongly feel that this is such a holy place, it's very natural that the inner feelings will come out at such a holy place.

I was a kid. In my village our house was located in a narrow lane. Houses were built adjacent to each other as was the case during the earlier period. Very close to our house, on the other side, there used to live a family who used to work as a mason; it was like working as a labourer. There was no child in that family, even after several years of their marriage there was no kid in the family. There was a feeling of unease in the family due to this reason. They were very religious people. A child was born in their family at very late stage. And the child was growing up. You see, that was very narrow lane where we used to live. Even the cows had become used to some discipline. People used to offer them bread when cows used to pass through nearby their houses. There was a cow that used to visit our area and every family used to offer a bread to that cow. The family, in which the child was born, it also used to offer bread to the cow. Once there was a sudden disturbance and commotion, perhaps some kids had burst firecrackers, today, I don't clearly remember what had happened actually but that cow got agitated and started running. And, what happened, the kid that would have been hardly three, four or five years old also started running with her. He wasn't in a position to decide which way to go and by sheer chance he was crushed under that cow's feet. The only child that was born in that family after several years died after being crushed under the cow's feet. You can imagine the situation of the family. It was very tragic days for them. However, I cannot forget what happened from the next day onward. The cow was standing up in front of their door. She did not accept any bread from any family. Even she did not eat bread offered by that bereaved family. The cow continued to shed tears for a day, two days, for five days and the cow refused to drink or eat anything. On the one hand there was the family that had the bereavement of the death of their only child. The entire locality was sad. Entire village was bereaved due to one family. But the cow was immersed in her compunction. She did not eat or drink for days, tears in her eyes also dried. The entire locality, even the family members tried very hard but that cow did not move from her determination. That cow gave up her life due to the pain that the child was crushed under her feet. During my childhood, I have seen a cow sacrificing her life due to the death of a child. That scene is still alive in my mind. Today, when I hear that someone is being killed in the name of cow. The law will take its course to decide whether that person was innocent or guilty. No one has the right to take the law in his own hand.

When we are celebrating the centenary year of Sabarmati Ashram, when we have the example of Gandhi Ji and Vinoba Ji whose lives were dedicated to cow protection, I'd like to urge my country that violence is not the solution for our problems. It's not the fault of the doctor who was serving your family member but could not save the life of that person. However, even if you want to lodge a complaint then there is a legal system. It happens by chance, if an innocent life is being lost, it happens by chance. Therefore, in this land of Gandhi Ji, it's every body's duty to lead a balanced life. When we share the burden of others' responsibilities only then we can make our country as was dreamed of by venerated Bapu. India is completing 75 years of its independence in 2022. Those great souls that sacrificed their lives for India's freedom, who spent their youth in prison, some of them spent their life time in the cellular jail in Andaman and Nicobar, some were taken to gallows, some continued to fight throughout their life, they all have one dream, the dream to see the independence of the country, to see a prosperous country, to see the welfare of the poorest of the poor people of this country.

We have been completing 75 years of our independence in 2022, we have five years with us. If 1.25 billion people of our country determine that by 2022 we want to take India to this place; that we want to realize the dreams of our freedom fighters.

The soil of Sabarmati Ashram, where the dream of an independent India was conceived, the country was roped in, where it was accepted to suffer hardships to realize those dreams, the land where every kind of non-violent means was used to get justice, the path of civil disobedience was adopted. We are completing 75 years of our independence in 2022. It's the time to take a vow, to do something, to do something new, to dedicate our lives; it's time to dedicate invaluable five years of our lives, to give our time till 2022. India moves forward by 1.25 billion steps if every Indian moves a step forward. We should forward with these dreams.

Shrimad Rajchandra Ji, who showed the path for such a great spiritual awakening, who showed the way for doing one's duty, who showed the path of wisdom, who showed the way for internal awakening; and venerated Bapu who followed the path shown by Shrimad Rajchandra Ji in his life, demonstrated its successful implementation in his life; I was fortunate to join you people, I was fortunate to meet so many people from India and abroad on the occasion to remember both the great souls together. I got the opportunity to meet Rakesh Ji, I consider that I'm very fortunate. Thank you very much.

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