



English rendering of PM's speech at foundation stone laying ceremony of Kedarpuri Reconstruction Projects in Kedarnath, Uttarakhand

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Join me chanting in full strength, "Jay Jay Kedar".

My best wishes to all the brothers and sisters in the divine land of Uttarakhand; I have just one desire, may Baba Kedar continue to bless everyone.

The auspicious festival of Deepavali was celebrated in the country and across the world only yesterday. I convey my best wishes to all the brothers and sisters in the country and around the world for this auspicious festival from this holy land of Kedarnath.

There are some states like Gujarat where the new year starts today. Greetings on the occasion of the new year; many congratulations! I convey my best wishes to all those families around the world who begin their new year today. Greetings to all of you on the occasion of new year. Happy new year! Once again Baba has summoned me. Once again I have reached here at the feet of the lord. Once again I got the opportunity to meet the old acquaintances. Today, they again reminded me what they would have heard of me.

This Garuda Chatti, at one point of time I got an opportunity to spend several years of my life here. But, perhaps, it was not the Lord's will that I spend my whole life at his feet and that's why he sent me back. Perhaps the Lord thought, why should I serve just one god as there are 1.25 billion gods in the country to serve. There is a saying that service to the people is just the same as the service to God. And that is why the service to 1.25 billion people is equal to the service of the Lord, it is equal to the service of Badri Vishal, it is equal to the service to Mandakini and it is equal to service to mother Ganges. And that is why once again after making a solemn pledge with new energy from here and with the blessings of Bhole Baba, with a clean mind and concrete determination every Indian makes a solemn pledge to take the country to the top of the world by 2022, the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

With this solemn pledge, at the outset I pay my tributes to all those people who lost their lives in this holy land due to the natural calamity. They came from all the states. At that time I was chief minister of a state and I had no right to encroach upon the work of other states. I can never think of doing that thing. However, I could not help myself. Whether I was right or wrong, this will be decided by the history. But I reached out to those victims and I came here.

And I made a request to the government at that time that please allow the Gujarat government to carry out the work of rebuilding Kedarnath and I will try to meet the expectations of my fellow countrymen. We were sitting in a room, the then chief minister of the state agreed, all the officers also agreed and they said that Modi Ji it will be good if Gujarat took the responsibility. And I expressed my pledge before the media after coming out of the meeting. The news flashed on TV that Modi was now taking the responsibility of rebuilding Kedarnath. I don't know what kind of upheaval it created in Delhi. Within an hour such a pressure was built on the state government that it had to announce that it did not need help of Gujarat to deal with the issue. It's fine, if the people sitting in Delhi were feeling problem then why should I trouble anyone? I stepped back. However, perhaps the lord had decided then that this work will be done by one of his sons.

And when Bhartiya Janta Party's government was formed here and the people of Uttarakhand overwhelmingly supported us then it strengthened my belief that now the Lord has decided that I would have to finish this task and that is why I have come back here before the closure of the temple's doors and once again I make a pledge at the Lord's feet. Today the foundation is being laid for a grand redevelopment work within the stipulated time. What kind of pilgrim centre it should be, what kind of arrangements should be made for the priests, how to take care of all the needs of the priests, how to make arrangements for a more comfortable life for them that is bigger than the hardships suffered by them, how to make arrangements for it? The roadmap for redevelopment has been prepared while keeping all these in mind. I myself took the meetings, I was taking care of everything; what kind of design it will be? What will be the architecture? How the rebuilding work will be carried out while following the architecture of our temples and also following all those rules and regulations? The roadmap for its development has been prepared keeping all these things in the mind.

In a way, the houses that will be given to the priests, they will be three-in-one. The arrangement for serving the travelers should be made on the ground floor, all such arrangements will be made there. They themselves will stay on the first floor and their guests and personal guests will stay on the floors above that level. Round the clock electricity and water will be provided and all the arrangements for cleanliness will be ensured and this entire road will be made very wide. And then a separate facility will be created for the priests. We will also create

facilities for buying worship related stuff, for buying pilgrimage related stuff for a very large number of travelers if they need to buy something after coming here; we will have that facility. We will make all the arrangements be it a post office or be it a bank or facility of telephones and also the facilities for using computers.

Today, five projects are starting here. First, as I just said, the widening of this road, it will be made of RCC and it will have all the modern facilities. As soon as a traveler starts his journey, he will get to listen the music being played at the banks of Mandakini, he will walk towards this side while listening that music lost in the devotion.

The work of constructing a wall on the bank of Mandakini will be done. In a way it is related to providing the seating facility to the travelers, this kind of arrangements should be there so that they can hear the sound of the flowing river. As I just said, the approach road, such an approach road will be constructed that will make it very grand, will make it look like divine. And its lighting will be similar to the lighting arrangement made at the retaining wall on the bank of river Mandakini. And one more embankment will be constructed because the power of the source of water can be experienced on both the sides. So on the one side is mother Saraswati; so the retaining wall and embankment for it will also be constructed, it will be done. And a lot of money will also be spent on that thing.

And one more thing. A boy who was born 2500 years ago in Kerala's Kagadi -he left home at the age of 7 and wanders through Himachal, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari reaches the land of mother Bharti; who on the Tilak on his forehead carries the soil of all the regions on his forehead comes to Kedar. He also completes his life here. The Adi Shankaracharya, whose philosophy has continued to inspire India for hundreds of years, whose sepulcher; that too was destroyed in this calamity. The design work for that structure is ongoing. I invite devoutness and architecture that such a grand place should be built for Adi Shankar, such a grand sepulcher should be built for him; and it should be built in such a manner that people should not feel that it is separate from Kedar. But the travelers should feel a kind of spiritual awakening along with the tradition of that great mortification as soon as they reach near the Adi Shankar. The work is ongoing in that direction to create such a structure. Today, the foundation is being laid for that thing also.

I'm aware that money will be required but I have full confidence that once Indian pilgrims decide this thing with a sense of devotion then it is my belief that this country will not fall short in providing the funds for the kind of redevelopment work as desired by the pilgrims. And I also invite the state governments of the country to participate in this thing. I would also invite the people from industry, business people to lend their support for the corporate social responsibility.

I'm grateful to JSW which has decided to take the responsibility for the initial work. But different kind of dreams keep coming into my mind, new and newer things keep getting added into them therefore I would also request the people for this thing and also for the CSR.

When this kind of massive fund will be invested here, massive work for creating infrastructure will be carried out here then all the rules related to environment will be followed in that thing. The place will be rebuilt as per the interest, as per the nature and tendency of this place. It will be modern but its soul will be the same that has been preserved by the land of Kedar inside it for hundreds of years; this kind of redevelopment work will be done here.

When I had come here at the time of opening of the doors of the temple I had the intention of sending a message to the country that we should get out of the shadow of that calamity. Sometimes we think at the time of starting the journey whether facilities have now been created there or not? Can we reach there or not? And that is why the number of pilgrims had come down. However, I'm happy that this time more than 4.5 lakh pilgrims have come to the feet of the lord in such a short span of time. And once again this pilgrimage has been revived. And you can write it down that the next year this number will not be less than 10 lakh because people's trust has been restored, the message has been conveyed as the entire country saw that on TV and the message will be conveyed once more due to today's programme and when the doors will be opened again, when the journey will start again then once again the plenty of pilgrimage will be undertaken with the same strength. Once again Uttarakhand which is our divine land, which is the land of our brave-hearts; Uttarakhand, there cannot be a better place to express the devotion of my brave mothers.

In our country, Himalaya has a lot of unique features. There is so much potential for development and every region of Himalaya has a different spirit in it. If we go to Sringar, then we have a different experience of Himalaya; and we experience another thing if we go to Mata Vaishno Devi or Amarnath. The same Himalaya is in Himachal Pradesh, but if we go to Shimla, Kullu, Manali then we experience something different but if we come to the land of Uttarakhand in the lap of the same Himalaya then we experience a spiritual awakening. The same Himalaya, but we experience a different thing when we go to Darjeeling and we experience different thing when we go to Sikkim. You can imagine the same Himalayas, the same mountains, the same snow but we experience different spirit in different regions.

I'm a person who has wandered a lot in the lap of Himalayas. I have experienced the spirit of every region distinctively. And that is why I'm able to talk about this thing myself. I don't know what can be weighed in which manner in a science laboratory but the way I have experienced the Himalaya; that Himalaya, if anyone has interest in flora and fauna of this place then a very wide landscape is available to him to keep discovering new things throughout his life. If someone has interest in adventure then Himalayas invite every adventurer of the

world. If someone has interest in herbs and herbal medicine of this place then such natural gems have been present in every single lap of Himalaya that it can make someone feel a new spirit and the kind of usage of herbal medicine are there that the rural people of this place are being aware of. And I have seen that this scorpion herb, if a scorpion stings by chance then a villager would immediately ask not to cry and use this herb or apply that herb and it will give relief. And he puts a leaf on it and it provides relief. And both of them grow together. What a wonderful arrangement has been made by the lord. And that is why the deeper we dwell into these things; and that is why the government of India has started a massive research work in Dehradun on our natural assets, on the assets of Himalaya, this research is going to be of great use in the future.

In the entire world, I see a huge potential for organic farming in the lap of our Himalaya. Sikkim is a small state. It has a population of just 6-7 lakh people but nearly 12-15 lakh tourists visit the state and it also has problem of road connectivity and it doesn't have an airport either. But now I'm constructing it and it will be constructed soon. But despite that tourists come in such a large numbers. Sikkim has converted the entire state into an organic state. It continuously worked for 10-12 years as per the international parameters. The entire Himlayan region should be freed from the use of chemical fertilisers, all the Himalayan states should stop using chemicals and should use herbal compost. If we continue to work for the next 10-12 years with patience then this is the power of organic farming that the world will be ready to pay one dollar for the same agricultural produce of yours that now just fetches one rupee.

I invite Uttarakhand, I call upon the government of Uttarakhand and the officers of Uttarakhand to take up this task and you should move ahead with the dream to turn Uttarakhand into an organic state, you should set a target for 2022 and start working on it from today itself. It may take 10 years to get the certification as it has its own rules. But once you decide this thing that you will create public awareness, you will bring about the change; you can imagine that today the entire world is moving towards holistic health care and only then we can move our agriculture produce away from the world of chemicals and then what a great service it will be to the mankind. We also need to strengthen this power of Himalayas.

There is plenty of scope for tourism but it should not jeopardize spiritual strength of this land even a bit and tourism can be simultaneously developed along with it. We can develop new and newer areas so that the nature is protected, environment is protected and the devotion for the god too has been maintained.

There is an old saying in the hills that hills have their unique features. The youth and water of hills never come to the use of the hills. We have taken up the task to change this saying. The youth of the hills and the water from the hills should be used here. The electricity should be generated from the hill water and the same water should be used for adventure tourism and water sports. And new tourist destinations should be developed on the basis of the same water that has never been used for the hills and that the same water should become capable of inviting the youth from all over the world and it should become useful for the hills. And the youth those who used to get downs from the hills and go to the plains in search of livelihood, we should create such opportunities in the hills that these youth will not have to leave the hills. The government of India is taking one step after another so that the youth of the hills should become useful for the hills.

The government of Uttarakhand has taken several important decisions, several important initiatives in such a short span of time and it's the result of these things that today the development is scaling new heights; a new confidence is being generated.

People of Uttarakhand have enough strength and sense of discipline.. There is not a single family which does not have someone in the armed forces. There is not a single village where there will not be 250-300 retired armed forces personnel. And when ex-servicemen are present in such a large number then the discipline of that area becomes commendable. And this discipline is a big support, a big strength for the tourists. And we should publicise this thing, we should create scheme for this purpose. We should create a system for using the experience of ex-servicemen for instilling confidence in the tourists which can become a big source of support for us and others. There is an immense potential and development of Uttarakhand by exploiting that potential should be done so that Uttarakhand becomes the biggest attraction in the country, so that it becomes the most favored tourist destination so that for tourists it is: Uttarakhand, for adventure it is: Uttarakhand, for travelers it should be Uttarakhand, for adventure it should be Uttarakhand, for the nature and for those people who have a desire to stay in the lap of nature it should be Uttarakhand, for those who conduct research and develop things, for them it should be Uttarakhand.

I invite all of you to start a new account on these days of Diwali and the beginning of new year. In our tradition, the entire country closes its books of accounts on Diwali and starts new books of accounts, so a new book of account of development starts today. We will move ahead to take this development journey to new heights. Even today, I have given some suggestions. The state government will go through them one more time and I will meet them again in a month or two. I will lay emphasis on those other things that I have in my mind for this area. But it is our collective responsibility to protect the environment. It is our collective responsibility to protect the nature. I can guarantee this thing that if we protect the environment then it will protect us. I would like to assure you that if we protect the nature then it will protect us. The history of hundreds of years is a testimony to the fact that

whenever, wherever the nature has been protected no problem was created there due to the nature. Wherever the environment has been protected no problem was created there due to the environment. And it is that land from where we can provide that strength to the people.

We took upon us the task of providing gas connections to the poorest of the poor under the Pradhanmantri Ujjwala Scheme to set them free from using the wooden stoves, to stop logging of the forests. It was a massive campaign for protection of environment. The government of India and Uttarakhand government have taken it forward in a significant manner by working together.

Now we have taken upon us another task. Today, there are four crore families in the country that don't have electric bulb in their houses. Even today they have been condemned to lead the life of 18th or 19th century. This is the 21st century and whether the poorest of the poor family should have an electric bulb or not? Whether electricity should be provided to that poor family or not whose kids want to study in the night? If a poor too wants his wheat or grain to be milled in a wheat grinder then why should he has to go 10 kilometers, instead of that if there is electricity operated grain mill in his village then the work of milling of wheat and millet will be done in the village or not? In order to bring about change in the lives of poor, I have taken upon this task on myself to provide electricity connection to 4 crore poor households under the Pradhanmantri Saubhagya scheme. There are thousands of families in Uttarakhand those are yet to get electricity connection.

I call upon the government of Uttarakhand please adopt this scheme of the government of India. And there should be a competition among the states that which one of them will complete the Saubhagya Scheme before others? Which state will complete the Ujjwala scheme before others? Which state promotes the tourism to the maximum possible extent? In the coming time there should be a healthy competition among the states for different sectors of development. I call upon all the Himalayan states for a competition. Let's have a healthy competition with each other and take the development to new heights.

I would also like to congratulate Uttarakhand for this thing - toilets, freedom from open defecation; some days ago I was told that Uttarakhand has completed the work of making its rural areas free from open defecation. Now no one has to go to defecate in open in villages of the state. In cities, the work is ongoing and Uttarakhand is getting ready to completely become open defecation free including cities.

I congratulate all of you for providing the momentum to this work so far. But I'd like to urge you people to run this scheme under the mission mode. Nobody should be compelled to relieve himself in open area in the cities as well.

I had visited Uttar Pradesh some days ago. Yogi Ji's government has taken up the responsibility of Uttar Pradesh. Now they have changed the name of toilets. Now they no longer call a toilet - toilet, they don't call it Sandas, they have named toilet as Izzatghar (the place of honor).

I think those mothers and sisters who have been compelled to relieve themselves in open they fully understand the meaning of this word - Izzatghar. We should also run a campaign for building these Izzatghars. Toilets are in themselves a great facility for restoring the honor of mothers and sisters. It provides a great service to their health as well. And recently Unicef has conducted a survey of 10,000 villages in India. The survey covered both kind of houses that had toilets and that didn't have toilets. It covered those villages which were aware about the toilets and also those villages which were not aware; Unicef studied all those villages. It's an organ of United Nations and they found that different kind of diseases that afflict the household due to lack of toilet, and due to the disease if the kid falls ill then mother gets busy, father gets busy in tending the kid; the kid can't go to school and father can't go out for work; and if the mother falls sick then the entire family falls sick and if the wage earner of that house falls sick then the income of that family stops and the entire family starves. After taking into account all these things, they conducted this survey that if there is no toilet in the household then what are the expenses on diseases and what are the expenses when a toilet has been constructed. And Unicef has calculated that construction of toilet saves Rs. 50 thousand of a poor family on diseases. You just imagine if a family is able to save Rs. 50 thousand annually then what kind of strength it will provide to that family.

A toilet can change lives and that is why I have to run a campaign to construct toilets across the country with the same commitment with which I will have to carry out rebuilding work of Kedarnath Dham of the Lord only then my country will move ahead. We should march with the same commitment.

Once again I welcome the government of Uttarakhand, I thank them. And all the pilgrims from across the country who come on the pilgrimage of Char Dham Yatra, and those who are aware that we have started construction work for the new roads to connect the four pilgrimage centres at a cost of Rs. 12,000 crore; we have started the work on providing modern connectivity.

So now this Kedarnath Dham will be constructed in this manner. My Kedarnath will become grand, it will become divine and it will become a good source of inspiration. It is becoming a source of devotion for 1.25 billion countrymen. Every son has a desire to once take his old parents on the pilgrimage of Char Dham.

Today, this government is carrying out that work that is dream of 1.25 billion countrymen; it has been working to realise those dreams. Although this work is being executed on the land of Uttarakhand but it is being done for every single Indian. And I'm having a feeling of extreme divine satisfaction in my life while starting that work

before you people.

I convey my good wishes to all you. I once again bow down to Bhole Baba (the lord Shiva). And I once again call upon you to join me chanting with your full strength Jay Jay Baba Bhole, Jay Jay Baba Bhole,

Jay Jay Baba Bhole, Jay Jay Baba Bhole.

Thank you very much.

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