



Every Indian should become part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan: Vice President Gives away India Today Safaigiri Awards 2017

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that every Indian should become part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, a "Jan Andolan", with a missionary zeal so that the goal of a "Clean India" is achieved by 2nd October, 2019 - the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. He was addressing the gathering at an event to present the India Today Safaigiri Awards 2017, organized by India Today Group, here today. The Chairman of Living Media, Shri Aroon Purie was present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Gandhiji accorded highest priority to sanitation and cleanliness and had famously said "Sanitation is more important than political freedom". He further said that the cause of many of our diseases is the condition of our lavatories and our bad habit of disposing of excreta anywhere and everywhere. The dream of the Father of the Nation a 'Clean India' could be realized through 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan', he added.

The Vice President said that we cannot achieve sustained progress if we adopt a business as usual approach. He further said that we should collectively search for innovative solutions that will make a tangible difference to the lives of the people. This is the responsibility that everyone must take it as a sacred mission, not a mere job or chore, he added.

The Vice President complimented the India Today Group, under the leadership of 'Swachh Bharat' ambassador Shri Aroon Purie, for organising these Safaigiri Awards. He further said that media today holds enormous potential for influencing public opinion, and award events like these to give a big boost to all stake holders.

The Vice President congratulated all the India Today Safaigiri Awardees, and said that they are the true beacons of light who can become role models for other citizens to come forward to contribute to the 'Swachh Bharat Mission'.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"It is my pleasure to be here today, along with friends from the media and other industries, to deliberate on issues related to sanitation and waste management, and take forward our collective mandate of a 'Swachh Bharat'.

Media today holds enormous potential for influencing public opinion, and award events like these to acknowledge and reward the efforts of proactive citizens and organisations will give a big boost to citizens and corporate houses to come forward to donate their time and efforts towards the cause of swachhata, and strengthen the government's efforts at citizen outreach.

I commend the India Today group, under the leadership of Swachh Bharat ambassador Shri Aroon Purie, for organising these annual awards for the cause of 'swachhata'.

I would also like to congratulate the awardees tonight, for they are the true beacons of light who can become role models for other citizens and organisations to come forward to contribute to the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Friends!

Gandhiji accorded highest priority to sanitation and cleanliness and had famously said "Sanitation is more important than political freedom". He had also pointed out that "the cause of many of our diseases is the condition of our lavatories and our bad habit of disposing of excreta anywhere and everywhere".

I have recalled these telling statements made by Gandhiji to drive home the point that the dream of the Father of the Nation could be realized through 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan' if everybody from celebrities to common man selflessly participate and take ownership of the programme, rather than treating it as a government-driven campaign.

According to UNICEF, good sanitation can save Rs.50,000 per year per family. Over 1,00,000 children die every year in India due to diarrhea.

Lack of sanitation also contributes to physical and cognitive stunting in children. Besides, women and girls face a serious threat to their safety when they resort to open defecation. These are all serious issues and can no longer be ignored by adopting a status quoist mindset.

A World Bank report had said that lack of sanitation costs over six per cent of our GDP.

Every Indian should become part of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan - "Jan Andolan" with a missionary zeal so that the goal of a "Clean India" is achieved by 2nd October, 2019 - the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Ever Since Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi launched 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan' with a call to achieve 'Clean India' by 2019, there no doubt has been tremendous response from different sections of the people as also various State Governments, local bodies, public representatives, NGOs and local communities.

Overall, the Swachh Bharat Mission has made remarkable progress and has transformed the sanitation situation in the country.

The number of Indians defecating in the open in rural and urban areas is estimated to have reduced to 30 crore, from about 60 crore in 2014.

Over 2,45,000 villages, 1300 cities, 200 districts and 5 states have been declared open defecation free (ODF). All villages along the banks of the Ganga have been declared ODF.

Over 50% of urban wards have door to door collection of municipal solid waste. Nearly 100 megawatts energy is being produced from waste in the country.

Over 5 crore toilets have been constructed in rural and urban areas. There is some distance to travel, and we are all committed to achieving a clean and open defecation free India by October 2019.

This campaign aims to mobilise people from across the country, especially government functionaries across all levels, local leaders, youth groups, women, school children, defence personnel, corporate, celebrities, faith organizations and citizens

We cannot achieve sustained progress if we adopt a business as usual approach. We should collectively search for innovative solutions that will make a tangible difference to the lives of the people.

This is the responsibility that all everyone must take it as a sacred mission, not a mere job or chore. It is possibly the best and the most sincere tribute to the father of the nation who was so passionate about it.

It is an opportunity for each one of us to show that we care, that we care about our country and our fellow citizens.

Friends!

These kind of achievements are possible only when the community comes together to achieve public health outcomes through engaging and motivating public, generating demand for toilets and using them. Few such examples:

On this occasion let me share with you all the story of a spirited **105-year-old Kunwar Bai** from Chhattisgarh. She is an inspiration for all of us to emulate. Her zeal and actions for a better life made her sell off all her goats to build toilets in the house. She was felicitated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister himself and is now the mascot for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

A teenager **lavanya** in Karnataka went on a **3-day fast demanding toilets in each house in her village**. She finally called it off when officials promised to construct toilets in the village.

Dr.Manjula, IAS, the former CEO of Bangalore rural achieved ODF in 48 GPs in 6 months which was a record time in Karnataka.

16-year-old Mallamma from Koppal district in northern Karnataka recently **went on a hunger strike to pressurise her mother to build a toilet at home**.

Tanuja Gouda, who hails from **Uttar Kannada** district comes from an all-women household who **dug the toilet pit all by herself** investing in her family's health.

Women and girls are taking a stand against marriage into families without toilet facilities.

It is relatively easy to build a road, bridge or an airport. But trying to change human behaviour is complex. The sheer scale of the operation makes it a gargantuan task.

While mass-media campaigns are useful, the real key to bringing about behaviour change on the ground is to have grassroots-level trained and incentivised motivators using interpersonal communication with villages and households to 'trigger' demand for toilets and cleanliness.

Beyond behaviour change and appropriate technology practices, it is also crucial that swachhta, or cleanliness, becomes 'everyone's business'.

To this end, all sectors, including the private sector, are increasingly getting involved to mainstream sanitation into their core work. The private sector is stepping up to the plate.

Friends!

Through the past fortnight under Swachata Hi Seva , several Cabinet Ministers, Chief Ministers, State Ministers, MPs, MLAs and Sarpanches have offered shramdaan to inspire their constituents.

The Prime Minister himself offered shramdaan for the construction of a twin-pit toilet in a village in his Parliamentary constituency Varanasi.

Movie stars, sports personalities, corporates, artists and faith leaders have offered shramdaan in different parts of urban and rural India.

We have seen amazing examples of service for cleanliness even by the institutions which are the epitome of service – the armed forces and police forces across the country.

The first step towards a developed India is to create a clean and hygienic and therefore a healthy India. Let us ensure that this jan andolan intensifies every day and every citizen plays his part.

With the kind of leadership we have now in the country ,the near-unanimous support of political leaders across states, civil servants , people from all walk of life and, most importantly, the leadership of grassroots-level leaders like sarpanches, especially women, there is now a quiet confidence across the country that the Jan Andolan will succeed.

I hope that more media houses and corporate organizations come forward and join hands with the government, for it is only when each of us come together unitedly that our collective dream of a "Swachh Bharat" can be met.

Jai Hind"

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