Parliamentarian Youth Conclave

“Youth and the Challenge of Swachh Bharat Mission”

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Youth and the Challenge of Swachh Bharat Mission

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I am elated and delighted to participate in and address this Youth Conclave being organized by the Parliamentarian magazine on the happy occasion of completing two eventful years of its existence. I would first like to congratulate all the people associated with this magazine for organizing this youth-centred conclave. This meeting, I hope, will enthruse our young generation to cultivate a life-transforming vision and help them nurture a strong value system that is grounded in our national ethos and cultural heritage. Such events assume special salience in today’s fast-changing and chaotic world, as they can make our youth realize their potential and channelize their talents and energies to accomplish their individual and social goals.

Before I come to the subject of Swachh Bharat on which I am urged to speak, I would like to begin with gently reminding our young people present here that human beings are vision-creating beings rather than merely tool-making beings. As human beings, we are driven by goals beyond physical gratification and material abundance to seek a deeper level of meaning and fulfillment of our lives. To lead such an inspired and purpose-driven life, what we need the most are character building and the cultivation of virtue through self-discipline and diligence. This can be learnt from the life and mission of one of the best inspirational figures for our youth, Swami Vivekananda. His emphasis on the Karma yoga and practical Vedanta as a path to virtue implies a return to the ideal of work as a vocation rather than merely a conduit for commercial and material success. He saw the potential divinity in every human, and his great dream was to kindle this divinity in all of us and make it manifest in every movement of our life. His whole life, as he himself put it, was his mission—the mission of man-making, character-making, and life-building. “My whole ambition in life,” he said, “is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life.”

We know the sheer force of Swami Vivekananda’s personality and the power of his words. His inspired life and teachings played a crucial role in the transformation of Indian self-consciousness at a critical juncture of our history, and earned him the admiration of millions in India and abroad. Here, I would like to share

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with you a few things so nobly illustrated in his life. As an intrepid spiritual warrior, Vivekananda strove for nothing less than divine reality and a higher form of knowledge, and yet he powerfully combined this heavenly quest with the mundane question of social reform and reconstruction. His relentless reminding that without removing mass hunger and mass ignorance, no national regeneration would be possible now seems commonplace (even though the country has not yet been able to fully overcome poverty and illiteracy), but at that time and coming from his mouth, it was not an empty rhetoric.

Mahatma Gandhi took this legacy forward when he effectively combined his spiritual quest and his struggle for the country’s freedom from the colonial rule with his constructive social work and his emphasis on sanitation and cleanliness. It was Gandhi, more than anyone else, who understood the centrality of sanitation in human life, as it provides the basic condition and foundation for our wellbeing. Gandhi vividly made this point when he said during the freedom struggle that cleanliness was more important than political independence.

After Gandhi, our present Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is the first national leader who has accorded so much importance to cleanliness and sanitation. His assertion after becoming Prime Minister that building toilets was a priority over temples is in sync with Gandhi’s dream of making India clean.

**Swachh Bharat Mission and Sulabh**

In respect of policy, the sanitation sector in India was injected with a revolutionary energy in 2014 when a new Government took charge. In his address to the nation on Independence Day 2014, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi underscored the importance of sanitation and set the target of providing toilets to all unserved households of the country by October 2019 when the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi will be celebrated. To stress the point, in the context of the fact that India has traditionally been an overwhelmingly religious country, the Prime Minister gave the slogan of *Toilet first, Temple later!* He called for efforts by all—the Government at all levels, civil society, NGOs, corporate bodies and individuals—to carry out this national mission of Swachh Bharat. Thus, we have a new policy formulation and determination to make India clean and provide toilets for all.

This is the task—the task of environmental and social sanitation—that Sulabh International Social Service Organisation has been championing and executing on the ground since its formation in 1970. I laid the foundation of Sulabh with a purpose of providing toilets for all and for rescuing the ‘untouchables’ from cleaning bucket toilets, and stopping defecation in public by providing toilets to households in rural and urban areas, schools, in slum areas and in public places like railways stations, bus stops, market areas and religious and tourist places.

When we started our sanitation work in the 1970s, no house in rural India had a toilet. People went outside for defecation and women suffered the most. They had to go out for relieving themselves before sunrise or after sunset, and due to darkness
sometimes snakes and other noxious reptiles would bite them. There were cases of animal attacks and atrocities against women including sexual assaults. No school had a toilet in rural India. Therefore, girls were discouraged from going to school. Children used to die in large number because of diarrhoea and dehydration. In urban areas, 85 percent of houses had bucket toilets and they had to be cleaned by the untouchables. For that they were segregated from the rest of society and were often insulted and humiliated. Public places had no public toilets in even cities and therefore foreigners used to hesitate to visit India.

To solve the above problems, I invented, innovated and developed the decentralized treatment of human waste technology where human excreta is converted into fertilizer on site, which does not require manual handling of human excreta. This technology is appropriate and affordable, indigenous and culturally acceptable and this has made a difference in the sanitation scenario of India. This technology ends the practice of manual cleaning of night soil by untouchables and it also helps to stop open defecation. Now women can go to the toilet with safety and dignity. Girls go to school and the practice of manual cleaning of night soil has been almost stopped. Sulabh has built 1.5 million household toilets in both urban and rural areas and the Government of India has constructed 54 million household toilets based on the Sulabh technology. Internationally, countries like China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, South Africa, etc., have adopted our technology and more countries are willing to do that.

I also gave the concept of maintenance of public pay-and-use toilets in 1974. Initially, it was opposed, joked about and viewed skeptically by the people. In 1974 on the first day of the opening of our public toilet complex in Patna, the state capital of Bihar, 500 people came to use our toilets; and, now this system has been accepted throughout the country. So far, Sulabh has built 9000 public toilets which are being used by 20 million people on a daily basis. Other companies and NGOs have also constructed public toilets and are maintaining them on a similar pattern.

**Sulabh’s vision of making India open-defecation-free**

After the announcement from the Prime Minster to provide toilets for all by 2019, Sulabh has been working with the Central and State governments as well as more than 80 corporate houses to help achieve the target. Our Sulabh movement is making an all-out effort to realize the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister Modi. We are making efforts to build a broad alliance of politicians, corporations, NGOs and civil society to spread awareness of the Clean India to evolve it into a people’s movement and turn the vision of open-defecation-free India into a reality. All stake-holders are aware that besides the need of inculcation of behavioural change alongside the cultural and social issues that will have to be carefully dealt on the ground, the real challenge is to construct millions of toilets. However, as the premium centre of sanitation in the country, Sulabh has a pragmatic vision of how the goal of open-defecation-free India can be achieved within the stipulated time. This vision, which we have shared with the Government and all stakeholders, I am sharing today
with this discerning gathering of youth, and I would like all of you to give your constructive feedback and contribute your mite in making India a clean and open-defecation-free country. Here is the Sulabh framework that we have developed, and which can be formulated in the following manner.

TARGET: The target will be to make India open defecation free (ODF) by 2019. In India, there are 686 districts, 6849 blocks, 2.51 lac panchayats and 6.46 lac villages. The target to be achieved is construction of nearly 12 crore toilets.

REQUIREMENT OF FUND: The requirement of fund will be 4200 billions to build 120 million toilets in three years. (with the cost of a toilet being Rs. 35,000/- inclusive of cost escalation in two years. Therefore there will be no requirement of extra fund over and above, during the envisaged two years’ period.)

FUNDS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES:
- Contribution from the beneficiaries
- Subsidy from the Government
- Bank loan
- CSR fund
- Donation from India, abroad, Industries and rich people.
- NRIs

TECHNOLOGY
- The two-pit pour-flush eco-friendly compost toilet technology popularly known as Sulabh Shauchalaya was invented by me in the year 1968-69.
- In 1996 India’s Cost Effective & Appropriate Sanitation Systems – Sulabh International Projects was ranked in the top 100 of the Best Practices Database for Human Settlements by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements for the Habitat II City Summit in Istanbul and as cost effective technology in 2000 in Dubai.
- In 2003 UNDP has adopted Sulabh technology.
- BBC HORIZONS has featured Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak’s invention of the Sulabh toilet technology as one of the five inventions of the world.

METHODOLOGY: First party i.e. Government or the Corporate sector or any other organization will work for resource mobilization, monitoring and supervision.

The second party i.e. civil society or NGOs or Sulabh International will go house to house, tell the beneficiaries about the importance of toilets, motivation, education, communication, training, designing, estimation, implementation, maintenance and follow-up. The second party will give guarantee for one year and if there is any defect it will rectify free of cost by the second party. The second party will also see that toilets have been used by the people and if there is any problem
like leaving mensuration cloths by the women inside the toilet, it will be taken up by the second party so that it could be remained functional.

For the entire job from motivation to follow-up, the second party charges 15% as implementation charge.

If the beneficiaries themselves want to get toilet constructed in that case the second party will not be given any implementation charge.

**FINANCING PATTERN AND PROCEDURE**: Implementing agency/ agencies will be selected on the basis of their expertise, experience, infrastructure, financial turnover, management capabilities and any other condition/s the Government may decide upon.

Agency/ agencies so selected will choose one person from each village, to be known as Change Makers (6.46 lac villages). Apart from motivation, education, communication, the motivator so selected from one village with the help of two masons and four labourers will/ should be able to construct minimum 200 toilets in a year and will subsequently follow-up the functioning of the toilet.

On the basis of construction of minimum 200 toilets in a year will mean (6.46 lac villages x 200 toilets) = 12 crore 92 thousand toilets in 2 years. Therefore even if there are slippages in construction, attainment of target of construction of 12 crore toilet is/ should be possible.

The motivator will motivate the beneficiary and after the latter agrees to get the toilet constructed in the house will fill-up a form and authorize the agency to receive money from the bank on behalf of the beneficiary. After receiving the application and proper scrutiny the bank will give 50% amount as advance to start the construction work. The bank will inspect the construction work and after satisfying itself that 80% work of the received amount has been completed will then release another 45% amount as advance and rest 5% of the money will be released after the completion of the work after being so satisfied. Implementing agency will be given 15% as Implementation charge, out of which 10% will be given to the local youth who will implement the project.

**REVIEW**: After completion of the work the progress review should be conducted jointly by the bank, the beneficiary, implementing agency and coordinating agency. The completion certificate will be submitted to the bank signed by the beneficiary and the executing agency and the bank will adjust the amount after the inspection of the work done.

- First, 10% of the families who have no toilets in their homes they have been excluded from the assistance because they are supposed to be the rich people.
- About 54 million families already have been provided assistance or subsidy from 1986 when the cost of a toilet was Rs. 500/- except few percentage or maximum are either non-existent or non-functional. The Government should
consider to give them fresh subsidy to them otherwise they will not be able to build toilets on their own within three years.

- At present Government of India is giving subsidy of Rs. 12,000 per toilet. This amount is not adequate to get built good quality of toilet. So the loan up to Rs. 50,000/- should be given to get built toilets of their choice and by doing this we can achieve the target.
- The Government can provide Rs. 35,000 as a subsidy then there will be a chance to achieve the target 100%.
- In India, there are 686 districts, 6849 blocks, 2.51 lac panchayats and 6.46 lac villages. We have 16057 companies whose profits are more than Rs. 5 crores depending on the capacity of the company they can take up one village or one panchayat or one block or one district.

We have calculated the price of Rs. 35,000 per toilet for three years, that is, up to 2019, keeping in mind the inevitable escalation in price. Thus, the company may like to donate a minimum of Rs. 35,000 which is the cost of one toilet, and so on and so forth. If there are 200 toilets needed in a village, the cost will come to Rs. 70 lakh. One panchayat comprising of three villages, the cost will come to 2 crore 10 lakh. Similarly, the cost for covering a block or tehsil Rs. 70 crore and for one district Rs. 700 crore. The Bharti Foundation has taken responsibility for one district—Ludhiana—and the company may decide whether it will take responsibility for one toilet or for toilet in all homes of a village, a panchayat, a block, or a district. The work will be carried out in the name of the concerned company or organisation. Before taking the decision, the company may like to interact with the people of the village for whom the work will be done.

By doing so, the target can be achieved and the country will be free from open defecation. We have requested the Prime Minister of India to instruct the concerned authorities to act accordingly as per our advice so that the target can be achieved. The task of constructing million of toilets by October 2019, which will fulfill the aim of providing toilets for all, is immense but Sulabh is doing all it can and invite the youth of the country to be a part of this challenging journey.