On 12th February, 2019, the Prime Minister of India saluted the huge contribution of women in making the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) campaign a people’s movement. He addressed about 16,000 women swachhata champions from across the country who gathered in Kurukshetra of Haryana for the Swachh Shakti 2019 (SS-2019) convention.

The Prime Minister also presented awards to 12 women champions from all five zones of the country – North, South, East, West and Central – for their exceptional contribution to the Swachh Sundar Shauchalaya (SSS) campaign held in January 2019. During the month-long campaign, 1.34 crore rural toilets were painted and decorated in vibrant colours and attractive motifs with sanitation messages.

Here are the SS-2019 awardees:

1. Smt. Laxmibai Jat, Harda, Madhya Pradesh

“A toilet is like mandir (temple) and we have painted all our toilets that way,” said Smt. Laxmibai Jat, Sarpanch of Dhanwada Gram Panchayat in Khirkiya Block of Harda
district. Well aware of the problems that daughters and mothers faced when they had no toilets at home earlier, she reiterated that toilets have allowed women to live in dignity. On account of her motivation, all the homes painted their toilets, as a part of the SSS campaign. The GP which has roads and drainage facility has made progress in solid and liquid waste management too. It is now mandatory for all households to segregate waste and systems are in place to prevent stagnation of waste water. Delighted to be in Kurukshetra representing her state, she said she would return to her village with added enthusiasm to keep the sanitation movement alive.

2. **Smt. Binko Uraon, Palamu, Jharkhand**

All the families in our GP painted their toilets in the run up to the SSS competition, using bright colours, said Sarpanch of Chiyanki GP of Daltonganj block in Palamu District, Smt. Binko Uraon. Ahead of the event, all households were informed and asked to prepare through Ratri chaupals (night meetings) and children’s rallies. People from the village, predominantly from a tribal community have had their share of challenges. However, when it came to sanitation, they were convinced of the need to build and use toilets that represent safety, convenience and dignity – for children, the elderly and the entire family. Binko was impressed with the sites she visited in Kurukshetra, seeing the infrastructure, and the effective management of waste.

3. **Smt. Langpu Yakia, Arunachal Pradesh**

An ex-Sarpanch of Pipsorang GP in KRA Daadi district, Smt. Langpu Yakia who is the current chairperson of the Anchal Samity takes great pride in her village that is clean and well maintained with all people using their toilets regularly. She said the transformation from earlier was quite remarkable. In fact, the GP received an award for their uniquely painted toilets; and all people are aware of the importance of safe sanitation. In addition, the GP regularly makes compost from all their waste. Earlier, through CSR funds, they had built community toilets. It was the first time for Langpu to visit Kurukshetra and she was happy to see the Kalpana Chawla Planetarium, the Brahma Sarovar and other sites.

4. **Smt. Pushpa Devi, Uttar Pradesh**
To visit the holy city of Kurukshetra was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Pushpa Devi, Sarpanch of Gogav GP in Chhanve Block of Mirzapur district. “It was wonderful talking to Sarpanchs from other states and share stories,” she said. She is grateful to the Swachh Bharat Mission for this opportunity. According to her, her village today is very beautiful and open defecation free (ODF). Seeing all people join together to paint their toilets was very motivating for her. Her village had come a long way from about a year ago when all of them went into the jungle to relieve themselves. All of us are now aware of the need to maintain cleanliness in all aspects of life, she said.

5. Smt. Rekha Rani, Haryana

Having started the ODF campaign in February 2016, the Tharwa Gram Panchayat in Raipur Block of Panchkula district in Haryana was made ODF in 3 months. Rekha Rani played a major role in this process by identifying homes without toilets and convincing them to build. Describing the situation earlier, she said that disease was rampant near the poultry farms where they lived owing to unhygienic conditions that attracted lots of flies. With cleaner villages, the community now enjoys better health. All of them got together to clean up their villages and paint their toilets as a part of the SSS competition.

6. Smt. Reeta Rani, Punjab

In preparation for the SSS campaign, Reeta Rani, Sarpanch of Chadiala village in Mohali district of Punjab went door to door of all homes to request them to paint their toilets. Majority of the women painted their toilets themselves. She is also a part of a 5-member Nigrani committee that monitors village cleanliness, as aspect she attributes to making her village a safer, healthier and cleaner place to live. While she is firm in her opinion that girl children need education and should be more independent, she intends to return home and tell others about the friends she made and the SBM campaign that is active across the country.
7. Smt. Madhuritai Ghodmare, Maharashtra

Before she was made Sarpanch in 2018, Madhuritai from Bramhni village of Nagpur in Maharashtra was an ordinary lady who just attended to her work and household chores. In her new role, she has many additional responsibilities. She often dreams of how to develop her village and the situation of womenfolk. Over the last year certain developments have taken place – people have access to bare necessities, water supply, education, library, anganwadi and even the school has a water filter and has adopted digital technology in the form of LCDs.

8. Smt. Mondi Baghyalashmi, Telangana

It is a matter of pride for Mondi Baghyalashmi from Erravally GP in Jagdevpur (Markook) Block of Siddipet district in Telangana that there is 100% toilet usage in her village and all toilets were beautifully painted as a part of the SSS campaign. In addition, the village communities observed one week of shramdaan, cleaning up their homes and public spaces. Every Sunday, the ladies in the village meet for a session on sanitation awareness. Visiting Kurukshetra was an amazing experience for Mondi who would like to continue working for the development of her village.

9. Ms. Radhika, Tamil Nadu

According to Radhika from Irumbedu GP in Aarani Block of Thiruvannamalai District, Swachh Bharat Mission was a form of redemption, saving village communities from the evils of open defecation. Having been a Sarpanch for over a decade, the recent widow was convinced from the outset about the need to adopted safe sanitation practices. Visiting homes to convince people to use twin pit toilet technology with the support of SHGs and students was a major task. On her return, the awardee wants to put in place community toilets for those who have no space in their homes. She will also look into other technologies to build toilets for fisher folk who live in areas with a high water table.

10. Smt. Amratbai Manikant, Daman and Diu
“I am immensely fortunate to have met Prime Minister Modi at this event. I am inspired to return to my village and continue to work for the development of the village on all fronts,” said Amratbai from Zolawadi village of Diu in the Union Territory of Daman and Diu. A member of the village panchayat, she was active during the SBM-G campaign to convince people to build toilets and a survey conducted prior to the SSS campaign when people were told to clean their toilets and paint them.

11. Smt. Magi Shanuben Kalpeshbha, Dadra and Nagar Haveli

An active woman swachhagrahi and panchayat member, Shanuben from Kharbharipada Village, Amboli in Dadra and Nagar Haveli talked about the transformation seen in the village as a result of the SBM-G campaign. “Now everyone has a toilet,” she smiled. Having been instrumental in encouraging rural people to construct toilets and making them aware of the advantages of using toilets, she said that 100% of the toilets in her village were painted during SSS campaign. She had visited each one of them and oversaw the painting of 83 anganwadi toilets.

12. Smt. Marshal Basaiawmoit, Meghalaya

A swachhagrahi from Mawkhan village in West Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya, Marshal continues to play a prominent role in toilet construction and sustaining usage of toilets. It was not easy to convince people from the remote village where basic amenities like roads, water supply, health and sanitation are a challenge. However, she constructed her own toilet and mobilized other womenfolk to do likewise. She participated in the awareness campaigns promoting the message that toilet usage can improve health and wellbeing of all people. During the SSS campaign she mobilized village communities owing to which 84% of the toilets in the district were painted.