

PM Ujjwala Yojana: Fulfilling the Dream of Smoke-Free Kitchens

Several Recount the Scheme's Positive Impact during the Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

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During the ongoing Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, several women have shared the transformation in their lives that has occurred after getting access to an LPG cylinder under the PM Ujjwala Yojana. Remarkably, a simple thing such as the provision of an LPG cylinder has brought multiple benefits to women across the country. Some rejoice in the freedom from unhealthy smoke that was integral to the cooking done with traditional *chulhas*, while some value the saving of time and effort that went into collecting firewood.

During one month of the Yatra itself, about 3.77 lakh women have enrolled for the scheme, adding to the crores who have already benefited under this scheme since its launch in 2016. If one goes by the experiences shared by several women during the Yatra, one can safely conclude that the PM Ujjwala Yojana has truly been a remarkable game changer bringing about a better quality of life for crores of women. Let us take a look at the testimonies of Shima Kumari and Bachan Devi.

Seema Kumari, a resident of Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh, used to encounter daily challenges in her kitchen. Like many Indian households, Ms. Seema Kumari was bound by traditional cooking practices, requiring her to collect firewood each day. She used to suffer from headaches due to the smoke and encountered significant difficulties following these traditional cooking practices. Cooking with firewood also consumed a substantial amount of time. This relentless routine proved difficult, making the idea of a smoke-free kitchen seem like a distant dream for her.



Seema Kumari, resident of Chandauli district, Uttar Pradesh

However, the government's timely intervention through the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' turned her life around. Upon receiving the LPG cylinder, her kitchen underwent a transformative shift, becoming free from smoke and allowing her to effortlessly prepare meals for her family. With the LPG cylinder, she can now swiftly cook meals, ensuring timely and hassle-free cooking. This convenience has made preparing meals for her children much easier. Shima expresses immense gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this invaluable favour, as it has significantly improved her life.

Similarly, Bachan Devi from Kathua district in Jammu and Kashmir endured similar struggles. Her days were marked by collecting firewood and hurriedly preparing meals, a challenging routine that seemed unending. When Ms. Bachan Devi thought there was no way out of these hardships, the PM Ujjwala scheme brought an unexpected positive change in her life. Receiving a gas cylinder under this scheme transformed her life for the better. Ms. Bachan Devi expresses immense gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the cylinder, relieving her from the exhausting task of collecting firewood. This newfound convenience enables her to cook timely meals for her children, alleviating a significant burden from her shoulders.



Bachan Devi, resident of Kathua district, Jammu and Kashmir

Life Before PM Ujjwala Yojana

Prior to the revolution brought about the PM Ujjwala Yojana, crores of households were compelled to use traditional cooking fuels like firewood, coal, and cow-dung cakes. It was common for Indian women to cook meals in smoky kitchens, coughing and struggling to breathe throughout the day. This not only impacted their health but also contributed to environmental concerns.

Many women, amidst smoke and harmful particles, had relinquished hopes of ever finding a substitute. However, Government of India launched the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) in May 2016 to make clean cooking fuel like LPG available to rural and deprived households. This initiative marked a liberating experience for Indian women who had endured generations of hardship, finally realizing the dream of a smoke-free kitchen.

The narratives of Seema Kumari and Bachan Devi resonate with countless women across India. Though their names, cultures, and backgrounds differ, they share a common emotion — relief from years of struggle and a sense of gratitude for the positive change in their lives.

References

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