

A meeting with Gram Panchayat Adhyakshas and Elected Representatives

"Even in the face of unlimited obstacles, people who love this country change it."

*- Mr. Barack Obama,
former US president.*



It was one of those mornings when I had to get ready a little earlier than usual because I had to travel for a meeting at a Gram Panchayat out of town. I had scheduled a meeting at the Gram Panchayat where Nanjamma served as the Adhyakshe. I had been working in the panchayat domain for over a decade now, and I wanted to share my experiences and help elected representatives like Nanjamma understand why they were so important in developing rural India.

Ever since Nanjamma was elected as a member of the panchayat in the last tenure, she had been talking to me about wanting to make an impact in leadership in her gram panchayat. However, Nanjamma had her own set of challenges. One of them was that she could not read or write. Villagers called her 'Hebbet Nanjamma' as she used her thumb impression as her signature. She was aware of this nickname, but it didn't deter her. She was determined to participate and lead in order to develop her villages without any hesitation.

Nanjamma had been busy with household chores since early in the morning. She had a routine where she completed the household work before 9 AM and then hurried to the meeting at the Gram Panchayat office. Her phone kept ringing several times as she finished the chores and got ready for the Gram Panchayat meeting. As she took the bus and travelled to the office, she encountered potholes filled with muddy water due to the lack of drainage, which flooded the road whenever it rained. The street lamps that were installed along the road a year ago were mostly broken or missing bulbs. Even on the bus, Nanjamma kept receiving continuous calls from citizens about work that needed to be done in their villages. Despite all these challenges, Nanjamma made sure to answer all the calls and talk to the citizens about finding a solution as soon as possible.

Nanjamma wasn't just an elected representative of the Gram Panchayat; she was the Adhyakshe this term.

Elected representatives from neighboring villages had also come to attend the meeting at the Gram Panchayat. I was excited to see a good crowd of elected representatives when I reached the Gram Panchayat office premises.

I arrived at the gram panchayat office by 10 AM and was greeted by Nanjamma and the other elected representatives. There were about 50-60 people, including Adhyakshas, Upadhyakshas, and elected representatives from the neighboring Gram Panchayats, seated in the hall.

I asked the elected representatives to sit in a circle, which was the way of conducting panchayat meetings in the villages.

"This is the first time since the Gram Panchayat elections that the Adhyaksha, Upadhyaksha, and elected members of various Gram Panchayats, including those from the neighboring villages, have gathered here. Shall we first introduce ourselves?" I suggested.

Hebbet Nanjamma, the new Adhyakshe of the Gram Panchayat, took the opportunity to introduce herself after welcoming everyone.

"Very nice, Nanjamma. Let's start with you," I added.

"I am Nanjamma, a resident of this village. Working for the Panchayat and striving for the benefit of the people brings me joy. Unfortunately, I do not know how to read and write, which is why people call me Hebbet Nanjamma," Nanjamma introduced herself briefly and took her seat.

"You were a member of the Panchayat even before?" I asked Nanjamma, intending to shed light on her previous work to those who were not familiar with her

Nanjamma nodded her head in confirmation, saying, "Yes, Shankranna."

The man seated next to Nanjamma stood up. He had a large physique with a thick moustache and wore a Zari turban on his head, locally known as a Mundasu. He was dressed in a khadi shirt and panche (traditional dhoti) with a Nehru coat over his shirt. He had an HMT watch tied to his wrist.

"I am Sahukar Seenappa, the Adhyaksha of the adjoining village Panchayat. Serving the people is a tradition in our family that has been passed down since my father's time. It runs in my blood. I feel great sorrow when I see impoverished individuals, and I want to do something to help them. Recognizing my concern, the people elected me not only as a Panchayat member but also as the Adhyaksha this time. I have a strong desire to make a difference in their lives."

Despite being a well-off person, Sahukar Seenappa's compassion for the underprivileged impressed me.

The next person to stand up was dressed in a regular shirt and pants.

"I am also from Sahukar Seenappa's village. My name is Rajanna. I cannot bear to see people starving, so I established a ration shop to assist them. The people love me, and they elected me as the Upadhyaksha of the Panchayat." Rajanna then took his seat.

Standing next to Rajanna was a woman dressed in all white—a white sari, white bodice, and white bangles adorning both her hands.

"I am Nanjamma, also known as Nurse Nanjamma. I work as a nurse in the government hospital in a neighboring village. I am interested in Panchayat activities, but I prioritize people's health. This time, I was elected as the Adhyakshe of the village Panchayat."

"I am Teacher Theresa, a teacher in a government primary school in the same village. Although I am not a Panchayat member, I am highly interested in Panchayat activities," introduced herself, a 40-year-old woman wearing a cotton sari with a green border, adorned with simple colored flowers, and a green bodice. She continued, "I am a close friend of Hebbet Nanjamma."

"Teacher Theresa teaches the children of our village with utmost care, Shankranna. She believes that education is her life," Nanjamma added, providing further details about Teacher Theresa.

"I am Mangalamukhi Manorama, a member of the Gram Panchayat in the same village where Hebbet Nanjamma serves as the Adhyakshe," Manorama introduced herself. "My aim is to promote equality among boys and girls, men and women." She had been elected as a member of the Gram Panchayat due to her dedication to social causes.

A middle-aged man wearing a dark-colored shirt and dark blue pants stood up and introduced himself, saying, "I am Borewell Boranna, the owner of the only borewell company in the adjoining village. I have provided clean drinking water to several

individuals through borewells. That's why people call me 'Borewell Boranna.' I am currently serving as the Adhyaksha of the Gram Panchayat."

"Do you know why our Borewell Boranna started the borewell company, sir? During the drought that struck the state a few years ago, people suffered greatly. It was the work of a minister nicknamed 'Neer Sab' by the people that inspired Boranna," Sahukar Seenappa recalled from his memory.

"Yes, during the tenure of then Chief Minister Rama Krishna Hegde, Nazeer Sab served as the Minister for Rural Development. He organized the digging of borewells across the state and provided drinking water during the drought. That's why people called him 'Neer Sab,'" I clarified. Boranna felt delighted as the discussion revolved around him.

Meanwhile, Maramma from the same village stood up and introduced herself. "I am Maramma. My job is to clean all the gutters in the village. I always encourage people to keep the gutters clean to prevent the survival of mosquitoes. If mosquitoes thrive, it leads to various health problems."

"Shankranna, she is also the Upadhyakshe of our Gram Panchayat. People respect her words, and they affectionately call her Mori Maramma," Boranna added, providing further details about the Upadhyakshe of their village.

"I am Kattige Katayya, a resident of a village beyond Sahukar Seenappa's village. I am also a member of the village Panchayat. My role is to provide firewood to the entire village. My wood depot is the largest in the village," said a middle-aged person wearing a colorful shirt and Lungi.

"Sir, I am the one trying to save people from the smoke caused by Kattige Katayya's firewood. I am Saleem, the Adhyaksha of the same Gram Panchayat. I urge the people of the village not to heat water by burning firewood but instead to use solar water heaters to avoid smoke and live in a smoke-free environment," a young man with tight-fitting trousers and a chiselled moustache introduced himself, eliciting laughter from the gathering.

"I am also working towards replacing kerosene lamps with solar lights for the people of the village," Saleem continued his introduction. At that moment, another youth with a chiselled moustache interrupted and said, "That's why we call him Solar Saleem."

"I am Papanna, known as Petrol Pump Papanna. I am the one who supplies petrol to the vehicles in the village. I always sit near Saleem because I am the Upadhyaksha of the Gram Panchayat," a man chimed in, causing another wave of laughter among the attendees.

"Born and raised in a village just 10 to 15 km from here, I am Somu, a software engineer. I journeyed to Bangalore for my education, earning a degree in software engineering. Securing a job in the city was a significant achievement, but upon returning to my hometown, I was filled with sorrow. The lack of technological knowledge among the people was stark."

"Believing that I could make a meaningful impact, I made a decision that shocked many. I left Bangalore, the bustling city of opportunities, and returned to my village to establish a software company. As people began to witness the transformative power of technology through my enterprise, they started affectionately referring to me as 'Software Somu.'"

'Motivated by this positive response and a desire to further serve my community, I took a leap of faith and ran for the Gram Panchayat elections. To my delight and honor, I emerged victorious. Today, not only am I a proud member of the Panchayat, but I have also been elected as the Adhyaksha of the Gram Panchayat.'

The young man, neatly dressed in jeans with a crisply ironed shirt tucked into his pants, shared his remarkable journey. His words left a deep impression on me. I gave him a flattering look, filled with admiration for his dedication to our community.

Meanwhile, a middle-aged man sitting next to him stood up. He was dressed in a T-shirt, jeans pants, and dark sunglasses. He held his smartphone in his hand.

"I am Nagaraj, a non-resident Indian. I worked in a foreign country as an NRI. Whenever I visited the village, I would discuss setting up industries, launching startups, and improving infrastructure with my friends. Later, I returned to the village with the belief that I could accomplish all of this by residing here. I contested in the gram panchayat elections this time and got elected. I later became the Upadhyaksha of the Panchayat where Software Somu serves as the Adhyaksha," Nagaraj explained.

"Even though he returned from a foreign country, people still refer to him as NRI Nagaraj,". Software Somu provided more information about Nagaraj.

Padmini, a middle-aged woman seated next to NRI Nagaraj, stood up. "I am Padmini, the Adhyakshe of a village located 10 kilometers away from here. I have a great interest in social

service. I attend any function in anyone's house and assist them in all tasks, from arranging marriages to shopping," she said.

"We call her Paropakari Padmini because she is a philanthropist. Her desire is to eliminate inequality. If someone falls ill in any household, she immediately sends her car to transport the patient to the hospital. She is always ready to help others," the person seated next to Padmini praised her qualities.

"Very good. Please introduce yourself," I looked towards the person who had yet to speak.

"I am Technology Tanveer. I am the Upadhyaksha of the same Panchayat. I was born and raised in the village, but I studied in a big city and worked there. I have witnessed how big cities grow sustainably using technology. It made me wonder why our villages couldn't grow in a similar manner. So, I made the decision to come back to the village and plan something for its welfare,". The youth concluded his talk.

A man, clad in a white Panche, a pristine white shirt, and humble rubber chappals, rose from his seat. As I glanced upon him, a faint memory stirred within me. Ah, yes! During my journey from Bangalore to this very place, a moment had unfolded—an image etched in my mind's eye. A roadside tap, gushing water recklessly, until this individual, astride his bike, appeared on the scene. He halted his vehicle, dismounted with purpose, and with a decisive hand, silenced the flowing stream. And then, with a nod of determination, he resumed his journey on that two-wheeled steed.

"I am Sudarshan," he spoke with a quiet confidence, "the Adhyaksha of a Gram Panchayat situated twenty kilometers hence. My fervent wish lies in the prudent utilization of

resources, leaving no room for wastefulness. Deep within me, I hold the conviction that our ancestors, those brave souls who fought for our Swarajya, have bestowed upon us a sacred responsibility—the transformation of self-governance into an era of virtuous rule, Surajya."

Intrigued by the stirring in his words, my curiosity sought to know more about this man, not merely through the lens of an introduction. It was then that a woman of middle age, seated nearby, found her voice and rose from her chair.

"Sir," she addressed me, her tone reverent, "allow me to shed further light on this extraordinary being. Amongst our villagers, he stands as the epitome of affluence, yet his heart knows only generosity. Inspired by the valiant fighters of our freedom struggle, he treads a path of simplicity. 'Simple Sudarshan,' we call him, for he champions the optimal utilization of our Gram Panchayat's resources."

Feeling proud of Sudarshan, I turned my attention to the woman who had provided the insightful information. "Okay, whatever it is, who are you? You didn't introduce yourself," I asked her.

"Oh, I am Kamala. I work as the Upadhyakshe of the Panchayat where Sudarshan is the Adhyaksha. I am very much interested in climate action. I want to address the problems of climate change. I always suggest to people not to cut down trees, litter, throw plastic here and there, or burn waste, as these actions contribute to climate deterioration. So, people call me 'Climate Kamala: The woman introduced herself.

Next, a young man stood up and spoke. "I am Vijaya. I am the Adhyaksha of a Panchayat located 20 kilometers away from here, on the way to Bangalore. Originally, I am not a resident of this village. I was born and raised in the coastal region and later

settled in this area. I have always been deeply interested in the vastness of the sea and the aquatic life it holds," he said.

"This person has a great love for the sea. He used to share stories from his school days about visiting the beach after school, watching the white waves crashing upon the shore. He would express his sorrow when he saw fish dying due to water pollution caused by industrial waste mixing with the sea water. He is always interested in telling such stories about the sea. That's why people call him 'Samudra Vijaya'," the woman in her fifties added.

"And who are you?" I asked her.

"Sir, I am Seethamma. I am the Upadhyakshe of the same Gram Panchayat where Vijaya is the Adhyaksha. I haven't had much formal education, but I have a deep love for plants. Inspired by Salumarada Thimmakka, who planted trees along the roadside, I began planting several trees in our village," she replied.

"Ah, so you are 'Salumarada Seethamma' of this village?" I asked.

"Yes, sir, that's how the villagers refer to me," Seethamma confirmed.

I recalled the line of trees on the roadside, 20 kilometers away from here, as I had journeyed to this village. "Did you plant those trees on the roadside?" I asked. She nodded her head in confirmation. "You are all like leafy nuts. Once upon a time, there was a teacher named Kongadiyappa in Doddaballapur. Whenever he had free time, he would take his students to nearby places and encourage them to plant trees along the roadsides," I shared my previous experience.

At that moment, two individuals stood up and introduced themselves one after the other. One was Police Papanna, a Panchayat member from a small village, and the other was Broker Bheeshma, the Adhyaksha of the same village. Policeman Papanna exhibited a great interest and concern for the peace and justice of the village, while Broker Bheeshma had a strong desire to bring everyone together to achieve the projects of his Panchayat.

Bheeshma was also skilled in assisting villagers with various transactions, such as renting houses and selling property. He was adept at bridging differences of opinion and finding resolutions.

In addition to them, several others briefly introduced themselves, including Middle School Muniyappa, the Upadhyaksha of a Grama Panchayat where Hebbet Nanjamma served as the Adhyaksha, and Janopakari Krishnappa, the Adhyaksha of another nearby Grama Panchayat. Journalist Jayasimha was also present among the introductions.

After all the introductions, I applauded their achievements, remarking, "All of you have been newly elected as members, Adhyakshas, and Upadhyakshas of the Gram Panchayats, and your interests and experiences are impressive."

"However, now I want to remind you of the importance of your roles, responsibilities, and the power you have to transform rural India," I continued. "Let me bring a simple example to illustrate the significance of your role in governance. Can you name a few companies that you know?"

"Nurse Nanjamma quickly responds, 'Amul and Nandini, the milk companies'," I acknowledge her answer.

"Any more?" I ask the others to gauge their understanding of relevance.

"Sir, Tata company," Ration Rajanna, sitting to the right of Nurse Nanjamma, responds.

"Do you know who a managing director of a company is?" I inquire further.

"Yes, sir. He is like the boss of the company," Sahukar Seenappa replies with a smile.

"Yes, Seenappa. Very close. A managing director is someone who makes important decisions for the company, alongside a team of managers. Their goal is to grow the company and improve its processes in every possible way," I explain.

"So, if Nandini wants to sell milk and butter in all the shops in Karnataka, what do you think the company will do?" I pose the question, waiting for an answer.

"The managing director of the company, along with his team, will hold a meeting and decide how they can expand their enterprise to the villages," I continue.

"I am using this example to highlight that all the Adhyakshas and Adhyakshes here today are the heads of your Gram Panchayats, just like the managing director of Nandini. You have the responsibility and power to make decisions for your own development choices," I emphasize.

"The first thing any new person who takes charge as a managing director of a company like Nandini, Amul or Tata company will do is to try to build his own team and lead the company. He

wants his company to be in the forefront, i.e., in the realm of top position. For that, the company needs to increase its efficiency by taking advantage of new technologies and methods such as e-commerce, website etc. As a leader, it is his responsibility to practice what's best for the company."

"Can my company improve processes to increase the productivity and efficiency? Or can it join hands with other organizations? A leader will always ask these questions to himself."

When I continued to share my experiences, the room remained in pin drop silence.

"I will give you another example. Imagine that you get elected as a Member of Parliament and become the Prime Minister. Do you know what the first task for you will be?"

"Sir, formation of Council of Ministers". A few people in the meeting reply.

"And what after that?" I questioned. Everyone in the meeting appeared confused and looked each other for an answer.

"You're right. As the Prime Minister, you will form a council of ministers whom you think will work well. Then you and your council of ministers will prepare a roadmap for the development of our country."

"The Prime Minister of India implemented the use of Aadhaar card to have a secure identification system for Indians. He also introduced the health ID so that there's a unified platform for each individual to store health data. All these developments help the system become more effective."

"Similarly, if you are the Adhyaksha or an elected representative, you want your government to excel under your leadership. Right?"

"Yes" the meeting replies unanimously.

"So now, it is your turn. You are all elected as Adhyakshes, Adhyakshas and elected representatives of Gram Panchayats. It is your time to take initiative and bring transformation to your villages."

"I want you to think about why you are here as an elected representative today. I want you to visualize the importance of your role. In the meantime, let me present a short film on some activities that we did in the past few years. I also want you to think about how you can make an impact in your villages."

I turn on the projector and put out the light in the room. A faint music starts in the background followed by images and a narration.

I presented a video of how my team worked in a gram panchayat in Davanagere district. The video showed how we brought workflow automation technology to digitise the Gram Panchayat processes. A village where citizens had to stand in a queue at the Gram Panchayat office for any kind of work could now accomplish the same work using a computer and internet. As the video kept playing, I could see the smiles on their faces when they saw the citizens learning to operate a computer and use the internet for the first time. School children were taught using a computer. This is the dream of digital transformation India needs today. Digital transformation to empower millions in rural India.

"Can we do all this in our Panchayat too?" Nanjamma stood up and asked a question as the video came to an end. Same question arose among others also.

"Yes, of course". I was happy that they were excited about the idea and started getting inquisitive.

"As the Adhyakshe of your Gram Panchayat, you have the power to make decisions to implement these technologies in your Panchayats. Everything you have seen just now is based on our

work in Davanagere district in our State." I reminded them that we implemented this solution in a few villages already.

"Is it?" Another guy from the back asks. It was a beautiful experience noticing the looks of astonishment as I explained more.

"When you take over as the Adhyakshe or Adhyaksha of the Gram Panchayat, you have the responsibility of making your Gram Panchayat more efficient and collaborative. It is your duty and obligation to ensure that your Gram Panchayat excels in all aspects of development. You want your Gram Panchayat to be a model for how local government can achieve social equality, economic development and environmental sustainability. This is possible only when you take the leadership to do so."

"Yes Sir, we agree." The meeting answered as I kept talking.

"Only when you, as the Adhyakshe and elected representatives of your Gram Panchayat, have the aspiration and passion to do good for society, will you put forth the effort to achieve these goals. This will give you and your team of elected representatives the zeal to make your Gram Panchayat a top-performing Gram Panchayat in India. A team of enthusiastic elected representatives like you can make firm decisions to bring about drastic changes and redefine the importance of Gram Panchayats in India's growth."

"Dear elected representatives, as the heads of the Gram Panchayat, you now have the opportunity to rejuvenate the concept of Local Self Governance. Do you know what Local Self Governance means?" I asked. "Isn't it about administering our own affairs?" Janopakari Krishnappa, Adhyaksha of one of the Gram Panchayats, asked me.

"Local self-governance means creating a system of governance where you don't have to wait for orders from external forces to

solve local problems. Instead of solely implementing development plans mandated by the central or state governments, your Gram Panchayats should have the authority to decide on appropriate and necessary developmental projects for your villages," I explained.

"To bring effective governance to your Gram Panchayats, you need to understand key processes such as government administrative procedures, statutory rules of governance, management practices, and modern technologies. You need to acquire the collective knowledge of all these aspects to make significant changes in the administration of your Gram Panchayats, I elaborated, highlighting the importance of domain competency.

"How can we learn all of this?" Paropakari Padmini, the Adhyakshe from the neighboring Gram Panchayat, asked.

"That's a valid question," I acknowledged.

"We have developed a technology called Navigated Learning Technology, through which we have created a comprehensive course on Gram Panchayat governance. The purpose of this initiative is to help elected representatives like you gain domain knowledge, enabling you to have a clearer understanding of your roles and responsibilities."

"But we don't know all of this," Sahukar Seenappa voiced his concern.

"I have been working in the Gram Panchayat domain for over 10 years. My goal is to empower leaders like you by utilizing digital technologies to bring about transformation in your Panchayats. Over the past few years, we have worked on multiple

technologies that have been carefully curated to suit the needs of leaders like you, equipping you with the tools for development. I will explain these technologies to you one by one as we progress," I assured them.

"Can we have reading materials on all of this?" Teacher Theresa inquired.

"I have written a book to help Adhyakshas and elected members understand how to enhance the current operations of your Gram Panchayats using new and innovative technologies. The purpose of this book is to raise awareness about the need for increased capacity in all areas of Gram Panchayat Administration," I responded.

"You are the architects of your Gram Panchayats' destiny, not the Members of Parliament or the legislators of the state, or even the Prime Minister of the country. This is the fundamental principle of self-governance," I explained to the elected representatives in the room.

"If you and your team of elected representatives are not aware of the importance of bringing new technologies to your village Panchayats and implementing them, as shown in the video, you will continue to rely on the government or other external entities for your growth. Don't you want to become independent and develop your Panchayats yourselves?" I observed their agreement as I continued speaking.

"It is crucial to realize that you have the authority to make decisions for your village Panchayat. It is important for you to understand that the reform process of the Gram Panchayat should be based on the specific needs of your Panchayat. You know what works best for your Panchayat, don't you?"

"Yes, yes," the gathering responded.

"We all know that most new developments in our Gram Panchayats have been initiated under the leadership of bureaucrats, senior officials, or educated legislators. However, it is rare to see a Panchayat Adhyakshe or elected member take the first step in bringing about major changes in Gram Panchayat administration or development. If this continues, you will keep depending on higher government authorities for any developmental work in your village Panchayat. Such supply-based development decisions slowly erode the decision-making capabilities of the Adhyakshe and elected members."

I paused for a moment and took a sip of water.

"I'm not saying that elected representatives have not initiated anything. Changes in some Gram Panchayats have been led by elected representatives, but usually limited to specific areas such as water resource management, waste disposal, road repair, or tree planting. Technology-intensive areas of development are often initiated or led by the government or private company initiatives. However, these are all fields where you can also start working on when you understand the transformative potential of modern technology."

"Have you heard about the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals? It is also called UNSDGs or SDGs," I asked, as the room listened in silence.

"No, Sir."

"That sounds like a big term. I have never heard of it," Kattige Katayya, sitting in front of me, admitted.

"Okay, don't be intimidated. I know it may sound overwhelming," I continued, "but it is not as complex as it seems."

"So, Nanjamma, as an Adhyakshe, what is your top priority for developing your village?" I inquired, addressing Hebbet Nanjamma.

"I want to ensure that every village has a school like the one built by *Harekala Hajabba, who received the Padma Shri Award, so that all children can receive a good education and become independent to support their parents as well,". Hebbet Nanjamma shared her dream of having quality schools in all villages.

Who is Harekala Hajabba?

Harekala Hajabba, recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri award, is a respected Indian social activist and orange vendor based in Mangalore, Karnataka. Despite his humble beginnings and own lack of formal education, Hajabba has made significant contributions to education in his village.

Hailing from a modest Muslim family, Hajabba had to drop out of school at a young age to contribute to his family's finances. His path to becoming a social activist began when an encounter with a foreign tourist exposed his lack of English language proficiency. The tourist had asked him the price of an orange in English, but he was unable to understand and felt deeply embarrassed. This incident sparked in him a resolution to establish a school in his village, Harekala Newpadpu, which

lacked any formal educational institution.

Over time, Hajabba saved money from his orange-selling business and successfully established a small school in his village. The school, now known as Hajabba School, has since expanded, thanks to government support and private donations. He has earned the affectionate moniker "Akshara Santa," translating to "letter-saint," for his extraordinary efforts to promote education under financially constrained circumstances.

Currently, Hajabba aspires to build a pre-university college in his village, further demonstrating his relentless dedication to the cause of education. In recognition of his exceptional service, he was awarded the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India, in 2020.

"Education is one of the sustainable development goals," I affirmed.

"What about you, Nurse Nanjamma? What do you want to develop?" I asked.

"Sir, I want our villages to have good healthcare centers. Currently, we don't have any," Nurse Nanjamma replied.

"Access to quality healthcare is also one of the sustainable development goals," I acknowledged.

"Sir, I want our villages to have good internet connectivity like the cities," Technology Tanveer chimed in.

"Very good. Tanveer, why do you want the internet?" I was curious to hear his reasons. "I have witnessed the benefits of technologies in cities Sir." Tanveer answers with a bright smile.

"Yes, Tanveer, only once your villages are equipped with robust internet connectivity will we be able to leverage technology to bring about profound changes in your Panchayats. This is also one of the goals of sustainable development. It is reassuring to know that rural India, like our cities, needs the very same modern infrastructure," I stated, filled with a sense of contentment.

"There are 17 such goals that identify the issues we need to address by 2030. These are challenges faced by everyone. We need proactive leaders like you, Adhyakshas and Adhyakshes, to drive the achievement of these goals. Many of you already demonstrate a keen interest in these matters. Consider if these goals align with your interests," I prompted, presenting all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the screen.

SDG 1: No Poverty - It is important that your villages are free from poverty.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger - Your villages should have enough food for everyone.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being - Your communities should demonstrate good health and well-being, supported by comprehensive and efficient medical facilities.

SDG 4: Quality Education: Your villages must have good schools to provide quality education to children.

SDG 5: Gender Equality: Ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls, men and women in all aspects of life.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: Provide clean water sources and improved sanitation facilities in your villages.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Transition to affordable and clean energy sources, such as solar power, and ensure electricity access in every household.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Create opportunities for decent work and economic growth in your villages.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: Foster industrial development, innovation, and build necessary infrastructure in your villages.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: Address and reduce inequalities within your communities.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Plan and develop sustainable communities to ensure safe and inclusive living spaces.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: Raise awareness about responsible consumption and production practices in your villages.

SDG 13: Climate Action: Take actions to mitigate climate change and its impacts in your villages.

SDG 14: Life Below Water: Contribute to the preservation and conservation of marine life and ecosystems.

SDG 15: Life on Land: Protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity in your villages.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peace, justice, and strengthen institutions in your communities.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Foster partnerships and collaboration at the global, national, and local levels to achieve the UN SDGs.

"Next, I will discuss the achievement of these goals one by one and emphasize the importance of using technology to accomplish the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030," I continued.

"It is crucial to understand that the governance and management of your Gram Panchayat must be systematic and comprehensive to achieve these developmental goals. I will delve into the utilization of comprehensive technical solutions and how they can enhance the economic, social, and environmental aspects of your Gram Panchayat. Through knowledge and processes, you will empower yourself and your team of elected representatives to restore true local self-governance in India."

As I noticed the serious expressions on the faces of Hebbet Nanjamma, Teacher Theresa, and others, I concluded the meeting with a question.

"Do you believe that you are now ready to become the architects of a New India?"