

# President asks women to lead sanitation revolution

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**NEW DELHI:** Anita Bai Narre and Usha Chomar — who rewrote the script for themselves, their community and neighbourhood — received accolades from President Pratibha Patil, who maintained that the country's sanitation was totally dependent on women and children.

Addressing the Nirmal Gram Puraskar function here on Wednesday, the President lauded the two women for showing courage and standing up for their rights. She expressed the hope that disadvantaged women in other villages would draw inspiration from the two women and assert themselves to reform their own lot and shape the campaign for a clean country.

Ms. Patil said they were ushering in a new revolution in India.

Anita, a tribal, shot into the limelight for leaving her husband's home as a bride on the ground that it lacked a toilet and returned only after one was constructed. Usha, hailing from Alwar district of Rajasthan, now a liberated woman, has addressed a seminar in Paris on the health problems affecting manual scavengers.

The two stressed that it was imperative for women to fight for self-respect. Usha Chomar, in particular, urged the President to use her good offices to ensure that other manual scavengers were liberated. She hoped all of them would one day lead a good life.



*Some of the recipients of the Nirmal Gram Puraskar 2011 in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PHOTO: S. SUBRAMANIAM*

The President appreciated Union Minister of Rural Development Jairam Ramesh's approach of giving a participatory role to such path-breakers at functions of national importance and sending a clear message to the disadvantaged people to gather courage and as a matter of right join the mainstream.

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj V. Kishore Chandra Deo was also present.

After giving away the Nirmal Gram Awards to panchayats which had done well in spreading cleanliness as a whole, the President stated women could be the prime movers of the sanitation movement throughout the country emphasising that it would benefit them the most because it had a bearing on their dignity, health and security.

Ms. Patil said the involve-

ment of women would ensure the success of the sanitation drive and they could play an important role in changing the face of rural India and contribute to the economic welfare of the nation.

She regarded it necessary to involve children at the school level to spread the messages of sanitation and hygiene at home. There should be lessons on the importance of hygiene in schools, she said.



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