

Mann Ki Baat DOB 26th April 2020

My dear countrymen, Namaskar. All of you are tuned into this episode of 'Mann Ki Baat 'during the lockdown. The number of suggestions and phone calls for this episode is many times the usual. Matters close to your heart; your own Mann Ki Baat, comprising a number of issues has reached out to me. I've tried to the best possible extent to read them, listen to them. One has come to know of certain aspects which do not get noticed during the course of this flurry of exigencies. I wish to touch upon and share a few of those aspects with our countrymen in this 'Mann ki Baat', taking place amidst a battle.

Friends, India's fight against Corona is people-driven, in the truest sense of the term. In India it is the people who are fighting the Corona; it is you who are putting up a fightalong with the people, the government and the administration are fighting as well. A vast country such as India, with its proactive endeavor on the path of development is fighting a decisive battle against poverty. This is the only medium it possesses to fight the Corona and triumph over it. And we are fortunate that today the whole country; each and every citizen of the country; every person is a soldier in this battle; nay, leading the battle. Cast a glance anywhere, you'll notice that India's fight is people driven...at a time when the whole world is trying to extricate itself from the clutches of this pandemic. In future when it will be dwelt upon in hindsight; when ways and means will be reflected upon, I do believe that India's people driven fight will also be touched upon. Today at each and every place, in neighbourhood lanes, people have come forward to help each other. From food for the underprivileged,

arranging rations, ensuring lockdown, arrangements in hospitals to manufacturing medical equipments indigenously...the entire country is marching ahead together in the same direction, towards a single common objective. Collective applause, *Thaalis*, lamps, candles are reflective of a rising sentiment that has inspired countrymen to be altruistic, motivating each and everyone on the way. From metropolises to villages, it comes across as a 'Mahayagya' being performed in the realm of our national ethos where every individual is eager to contribute. A case in point are our farmer brothers and sisters – on the one hand , they are toiling day and night amidst the scourge of the pandemic; on the other displaying due concern to ensure that none in the country goes to bed hungry. Everyone is putting up a fight, as per one's capacity and ability. There are some who are waiving off rent; there are others depositing entire amounts received through prizes and pension in PM CARES. Some are donating vegetables grown on farms; others are feeding a multitude of the under privileged. Some are making masks; at places, our construction workers are whitewashing and painting schools meant for their quarantine stay.

Friends, the feeling that emanates from the core of your heart when you help others , that touching, benevolent emotion takes the form of inner strength in India's fight against Corona, making it people driven in every sense of the term. And we have seen in recent years in our country, this altruistic bent of mind is gaining strength...it could be in the form of crores of people giving up Gas Subsidy, lakhs of senior citizen leaving Railway Subsidy, leading the 'Swachcha Bharat Abhiyan' or getting toilets constructed ...there are innumerable examples. All these are reflective of the fact that we, our minds and hearts have been

intertwined along a common strong thread...it has inspired us to do something for the country unitedly.

My dear countrymen, with utmost humility and deepest respect, I bow to this sentiment displayed by a 130 crore countrymen. To facilitate your selfless endeavor towards our country, as per your inclination and time, the government has come up with a Digital Platform ...it is called *covidwarriors.gov.in* ... I repeat- *covidwarriors.gov.in* . Through the medium of this platform, the government has linked volunteers of social organizations, representatives of civil society and local administration with each other. It did not take long for 1.25 crore people to be part of this portal. They comprise Doctors, Nurses, ASHA-ANM workers, our friends from NCC and NSS, professionals from myriad fields...all of them have made the platform their own. These people are of immense help at the local level in preparing Crisis Management Plans and implementing them. You too can join *covidwarriors.gov.in* to be a Covid warrior and serve the country.

Friends, every adverse situation, every battle leaves in its wake a worthwhile lesson or two; a moral. It paves the way for further possibilities, shaping the course for newer goals. The strength of the resolve the countrymen have displayed during the crisis has led to the beginning of a new transformation too in India. Our businesses, offices, educational institutions, our medical sector are rapidly advancing towards new operational changes. On the technology front, it actually seems every innovator in the country is coming up anew with something or the other amid emerging situations.

Friends we are experiencing the results of the entire country in unison as a team. Today, the Central Government, State Governments; each and every department and institution are working hand in hand for relief at full speed. People working in the aviation sector, Railway employees are working day and night to alleviate hurdles confronting our countrymen.. Many of you might be aware of a special campaign called 'Lifeline Udan' undertaken for ensuring supply of medicines to every corner of the country. Within a short span of time, our colleagues clocked a flight distance of three lakh kilometers, delivering over five hundred tons of medical supplies to you in the farthest corners of the country. Similarly our colleagues in the Railways are working relentlessly during the lockdown, so that the common man throughout the country does not have to face the shortage of essential commodities.

For this, Indian Railways is running more than 100 parcel trains on close to 60 routes. Similarly, our postal department personnel are playing a critical role in ensuring medical supplies. All these colleagues of ours are Corona Warriors in the truest sense.

Friends, money is being directly transferred into the accounts of the poor, as part of the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Package. Old age pension has been started. The poor are being provided facilities like free of cost gas cylinders and rations for three months. In all these activities, different government departments and banking sector personnel are working together round the clock as a team. And I would also like to commend our state governments for playing a very

proactive role in dealing with this pandemic. The responsibilities being borne by local administrations and state governments are critical in the fight against Corona. Their hard work is worthy of commendation.

My dear countrymen, medical services personnel across the country have expressed satisfaction with the ordinance that has been issued recently. This ordinance provides for stringent punishment for those harassing or injuring or indulging in violence against Corona warriors. This step was critical to ensure the safety of our doctors, nurses, para-medical staff, community health workers and all such personnel who are working round the clock to ensure a Corona-free India.

My dear countrymen, we feel that during the fight against this pandemic, we have been accorded an opportunity to look at our lives, our society and the happenings around us, with a fresh perspective. There is a far-reaching change in the viewpoint of the society. Today we realise the importance of each person who is connected with our lives. Whether they are household helps, common workers who fulfill our various needs or personnel working in shops nearby – we are realising what a major role they play in our lives. Similarly, personnel delivering essential services, labourers working in marketplaces, the auto rickshaw drivers in our neighbourhood – today we realise how difficult our lives can be without them.

These days we regularly see on the social media that during the lock down, people are not only remembering these colleagues and helping them with their needs, but are also writing about them with great respect. Today we see pictures coming in from all corners where sanitation workers are being showered with petals. Earlier, you probably did not even notice their contribution. Doctors, cleaning staff and other such services personnel, and even our police organisations are being seen in a new light by the common people. Earlier when we thought of the police, we were engulfed only by negative thoughts. Today our police personnel are ensuring that food and medicines reach the poor and the needy. Just as the police is stepping forward to help, a humane and sensitive aspect of policing has manifested itself before us, and has touched our hearts to the very core. This is a time when common folk are connecting with the police at an emotional level. Our police personnel are treating this as an opportunity for serving the public. And I am fully confident that such incidents can, in the times to come, bring about a very positive change, and we must never tar this positivity with hues of negativity.

Friends, we often hear three words - nature, perversion and culture – if you see these words together and see the intent behind these words, you will find a new key to understanding life. If we talk of human nature, 'this is mine', 'I am using this' – such a mindset is considered

quite natural. Nobody seems to have any objection to this. We can refer to this as 'nature'.

But that 'which doesn't belong to me', 'which is not rightfully mine', and I forcibly snatch it from another person and use, can be referred to as a kind of perversion or degeneration. Beyond these two i.e. nature and perversion, if a cultured mind rises above, in thought and action, then 'culture' manifests itself.

When something that is rightfully yours, something that you earned through hard work, something that is essential for you – be it little or more- without bothering about such things, you are willing to see the other person's need, to look beyond your self interest, and willing to share what is rightfully yours with another person – THAT reflects 'culture'. Friends, in critical times, these qualities are put to the test.

You would have seen in the past few days, that India has taken some decisions while keeping true to its culture and ethos – and upholding our cultural heritage. During this crisis, the world - including rich and prosperous nations - is facing a shortage of medicines. In these times, even if India does not provide medicines to the world, no one would have faulted us. Every country would understand that obviously India would priorities the lives of its own citizens. But friends, India went beyond nature and degeneration and took a decision. We took a

decision in keeping with our culture. While we stepped up efforts to fulfill India's needs, we also paid heed to the cry of help that came from other parts of the world to save humanity. We undertook the task of providing medical supplies to the needy across the world, and have successfully completed this humanitarian task. Today when I speak to heads of state of various countries on phone, they make sure to express gratitude to the people of India. When they say, 'Thank you India, Thank you people of India', we feel greater pride in our country. In the same vein, people across the world are paying special attention to the importance of India's Ayurveda and Yoga. Just look at the social media... how people everywhere are discussing India's Ayurveda and Yoga to boost immunity. I am sure you all are following the Corona-related protocol to boost immunity suggested by the Ayush ministry. Warm water, decoction and other guidelines issued by Ayush ministry, would be very helpful for you if you include it in your daily routine.

Friends, it has been our misfortune that we always refuse to acknowledge our own strengths and glorious traditions. But when another country of the world, says the very same thing, on the basis of evidence based research, when they teach us our own formula, we instantly accept their assertions. Possibly this is largely due to our hundreds of year long phase of bondage. Due to this, often we fail to realise our own strengths. Our self confidence wavers. That's why

instead of presenting our traditional principles with evidence based research, we just ignore them and consider them inferior. India's young generation will now have to take up this challenge. Just as the world has happily accepted Yoga, the world will surely also accept our ages old Ayurvedic principles. Of course, the youth will have to resolve to do this and explain these principles to the world in a scientific language, so that they understand it.

Friends, I must say, many positive changes are organically making their way into our work culture, our lifestyle and our daily habits. You all must have felt how this crisis has made us more aware and heightened our consciousness on various subjects. The effect that is most visible around us, is wearing a mask and covering the face. In the changed paradigm due to Corona, masks are becoming a part of our lives. We were never used to seeing so many people around us in masks, but we are now getting used to that reality. However, it does not mean that all those wearing a mask are sick. And when I talk of masks, I am reminded of something. You might also remember this. There was a time when in many parts of our country, if we saw someone buying fruits in our neighbourhood, we would enquire about their health. So – buying fruits meant illness. That was the notion back then. But times have changed and this paradigm too has shifted. Similarly we are going to see a change in attitude towards masks as well. Mark my words, masks will

now become a symbol of cultured society. If you want to save yourself and others from disease, you will have to wear a mask. And my simple suggestion to every one is to use a *Gumchha* or a light towel to cover the face.

Friends, another awareness that has come about in our society is that people now understand the damage that can be caused by spitting in public places. It had been a part of our bad habits that we would spit just about anywhere. This presents a serious challenge both to cleanliness and to health. Although if we look at it, we have always been aware of this problem, but this problem just refused to get addressed by our society. But it's time now to get rid of this problem once and for all. As they say, 'better late than never'. So even though we have been late in addressing it, but now we must eradicate the spitting habit. These things will not only boost our basic hygiene levels, but also help in preventing the spread of the Corona infection.

My dear countrymen, it is a happy coincidence that, today when I am sharing my 'Mann Ki Baat' with you, it also happens to be the holy festival of Akshaya-Tritiya'. Friends, 'Kshay' in Hindi means destruction but 'Akshay' means that which is indestructible or which never ends or is forever. We all celebrate this festival every year in our homes, but this year it bears a special significance for us. In the present troubled

times, this is a day that reminds us that our soul, our life-force, is 'Akshaya'. This day reminds us that no matter how many difficulties block our path, no matter how many disasters are wreaked upon us and no matter how many contagions have to be faced - the human spirit of fighting and battling them are inexhaustible. It is also believed that this is the day when the Pandavas got the Akshaya-Patra through the blessings of Lord Krishna and Lord Suryadev.

Akshaya Patra was the mythical vessel which always remained replete with food! Our farmers are our *Annadata* or providers who work hard in adverse conditions, for the country, for all of us, imbued with this spirit. It is due to their hard work, that today the country has vast reserves of food grains for all of us and for the poor. On this day of Akshaya Tiritiya, we should give a thought about the preservation of our environment, forests, rivers and the entire ecosystem, which play an important role in our lives. If we want to remain bestowed with 'renewable' resources then we must first ensure that our earth remains ever abundant.

Did you know that this festival of Akshaya-Tiritiya also provides us an occasion to realize the strength of charity - Power of giving! Whatever we give away wholeheartedly is what actually matters! It is not important what and how much we give. In this period of crisis, our small efforts can become a huge support for many people around us. Friends, this is a very holy day in Jain traditions as it happens to be an important day in the life of the first Tirthankara Lord Rishabhdev. The followers of Jainism celebrate it as a festival and hence it is quite easy to understand why on this day people like to initiate an auspicious project. Since today is the day to initiate something anew, cannot we all

take a resolve to make our earth bountiful and imperishable through our efforts? Friends, today also marks the birth anniversary of Lord Basaveshwara. It has been my good fortune that I have had the opportunity to learn and connect with reminiscences of Lord Basaveshwara and his messages repeatedly. I extend many felicitations to all the followers of Lord Basaveshwara in our country and the world on his birth anniversary.

Friends, the holy month of Ramazan too has begun. The last time when Ramazan was celebrated, no one had imagined that we would be facing such a huge predicament this time around. But, now that this trouble has come to plague the entire world, it gives us an opportunity to mark this Ramazan as an icon of restraint, goodwill, sensitivity and service. This time, we should pray more than ever before so that prior to the celebration of Eid the world is rid of Corona and we celebrate Eid with enthusiasm and gaiety like earlier times. I am confident that during these days of Ramazan, by adhering to the guidelines of the local administration, we will reinforce our fight against Corona. It is still very important to follow the rules of physical distancing in the streets, in the markets and in the mohallas or colonies. Today, I also express my gratitude to all those community leaders who are making people aware about the two yards distancing and not going out of the houses.

In fact, Corona has changed the manner of celebrating festivals all over the world including India .It has changed the ways of their observance. Recently, we observed many festivals such as Bihu, Baisakhi, Puthandu, Vishu and Odia New Year. We saw how people celebrated these festivals staying indoors, with great simplicity while wishing well for society. In ordinary circumstances they used to celebrate these festivals with full zeal and enthusiasm with friends and families. people used to come out of the house and share joy. But this time, everyone observed restraint, following the rules of lockdown. We have seen that this time our Christian brethren too celebrated Easter within the confines of

their homes. It is imperative at present to fulfill this responsibility of ours towards society and our nation. Only then will we be able to prevent the spread of corona... We will be able to defeat a pandemic like Corona.

My dear countrymen, in the midst of this pandemic, as a member of your family, and all of you happen to be my family members, it is also my responsibility to touch upon certain points and offer some suggestions. To my countrymen, I urge, let us not at all get caught in the trap of over-confidence, let us not harbor a feeling that if corona has not yet reached our city, our village, our street or our office, it is not going to reach now. See! Never make such a mistake! The experience of the world is narrating a lot to us! And, here in our country we are always reminded again and again - 'Where caution has been lowered, the accident has happened!' Remember, our ancestors have guided us very well in dealing with such situations. Our ancestors have said –

Agni: Shesham Rina: Shesham,
Vyadhi: SheshamTathaivacha.
Punah: Punah: Pravardheta,
Tasmaat Shesham na Kaaryet ||

That is, Fire, Debt and Illness, if taken lightly, grow again at the first opportunity, assuming dangerous proportions- so it is important to treat them completely! Therefore, in over-enthusiasm, there should be no negligence at the local level or elsewhere. We will always have to remain cautious. And, I will reiterate, “Maintain a distance of two yards and keep yourself healthy!” or "*Do Gaz Doori, Bahut Hai Zaroori!*". Wishing all of you the best of health, I conclude my thoughts. I also wish that when we meet during the next episode of Mann Ki Baat, may some news of escape from the clutches of this pandemic and mankind

emerging out of this predicament greet us from all over the world!
Thank you very much.

