

## **Mann ki Baat ( Episode 18)**

My dear countrymen, Namaskar! I want to share a good news with you all at the beginning of Mann ki Baat today. Every Indian will be proud to know that a very old idol of Devi Annapurna is returning to India from Canada. This idol was stolen from a temple of Varanasi and smuggled out of the country around 100 years ago somewhere around 1913. I express my gratitude to the Government of Canada and to all those for this large heartedness who made this propitious deed possible. Mata Annapurna has a very special relationship with Kashi. Now the coming back of her Idol is pleasing for all of us. Just like the idol of Mata Annapurna, a lot of our invaluable heritage has suffered at the hands of International gangs. These gangs sell them at a very high price in the international market. Now not only are they being subjected to heavy restrictions; India has also increased her efforts for their return. Because of such efforts, India has been successful in bringing back lots of such idols and artifacts in the past few years. There is a coincidence attached with the return of the idol of Mata Annapurna... World Heritage Week was celebrated only a few days ago. World Heritage Week provides a wonderful opportunity to the lovers of culture to revisit the past and to know about the history of these important milestones. In spite of these times of corona, this time, we saw people celebrate this Heritage week in an innovative manner. Culture helps a lot during crisis, plays a major role in handling it. Even with the help of technology, culture works like an emotional recharge. Today, lots of museums and libraries in the country are working to make their collection fully digital. In Delhi, our National museum has made some commendable efforts in this respect. National museum is working on introducing around ten virtual galleries- isn't this interesting! Now, sitting at your home, you

can tour National Museum galleries of Delhi. On the one hand it is important to take cultural heritage to the maximum number of people through the medium of technology, the use of technology is also important for the conservation of this heritage. Recently I was reading about an interesting project. There is an island named Svalbard in the north of Norway. A project, Arctic World Archive has been setup on this island. Invaluable heritage data has been stored in this archive in such a manner that no natural or manmade disaster can affect it. Just recently, we have received information that the heritage of Ajanta caves is also being digitized and preserved in this project. A full view of the caves of Ajanta shall be on display in this. Along with the digitalized and restored painting, it shall also have important documents and quotes related to it. Friends, the pandemic has on the one hand changed our ways of working; on the other it has provided us with an opportunity to experience nature in a new manner. Our perspective in observing nature has also undergone a change. We are now stepping into the winter season. We will get to see myriad hues of nature. For the past few days Internet is full of viral pictures of Cherry Blossoms. You might be thinking that when I am referring to Cherry Blossoms I am talking about Japan's distinct identity but it's not like that. These are not pictures of Japan. These are pictures of Shillong of our Meghalaya. These cherry blossoms have further enhanced the beauty of Meghalaya.

Friends, this twelfth of November marked the commencement of the 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebrations of Dr. Salim Ali ji. Dr. Salim has done illustrious work in the field of bird watching – the avian world. This has also attracted bird watchers of the world towards India. I have always been an ardent admirer of people who are fond of bird watching. With utmost patience, for hours together from morn to dusk, they can do bird watching, enjoying the scenic beauty of nature; they also keep passing on the knowledge gained to us. In India too, many bird watching

societies are active. You too should connect yourselves with this subject. Amid the hectic routine of my life, recently in Kevadia, I also got a memorable opportunity to spend time with birds. Time spent among birds will bond you closer to nature, it will also inspire you towards the environment.

My dear countrymen, India's culture and Shaastras, knowledge has always been a centre of attraction for the entire world. Many people came to India to discover & study them & stayed back for ever, whereas some of them returned to their respective countries as carriers of this culture. I got an opportunity to know about the work of Jonas Masetti, also known as Vishwanath. Jonas teaches Vedanta & Geeta to people in Brazil. He runs an institution named Vishwavidya, situated in the hills of Petropolis, an hour's distance from Rio De Janeiro. Jonas, after studying Mechanical Engineering worked in his stock market company. Later he was drawn towards Indian culture, especially Vedanta. From stocks to spirituality, it has truly been a long journey for him. Jonas studied Vedanta Philosophy in India, staying at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam in Coimbatore for four years. Jonas has another specialty- he is using technology to propagate his message. He regularly conducts online programmes. He also does a daily podcast. During the last seven years, through his free open courses on Vedanta, Jonas has taught over a lakh & a half students. Jonas is not only doing great work – he is doing it through a language understood by a large number of people. People are much keen on knowing how this could be of help to them during these times of Corona & quarantine. Through the medium of Mann Ki Baat, I congratulate Jonas on his efforts & wish him well for his future endeavors.

Friends, similarly, one piece of news might have caught your attention. Newly elected MP in New Zealand Dr. Gaurav Sharma took the Oath of office in one of the ancient languages of the world –

Sanskrit. The dissemination of Indian culture on part of an Indian fills us with pride. Through the medium of Mann Ki Baat, I extend best wishes to Gaurav Sharma ji. All of us wish he attains newer achievements in the service of the people of New Zealand.

My dear countrymen, tomorrow on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, we shall celebrate the 551<sup>st</sup> Prakash Parv, birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev ji. The world over, the influence of Guru Nanak Dev ji is distinctly visible.

From Vancouver to Wellington, from Singapore to South Africa his messages are heard all around. It is mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib –“sevak ko seva bun aayee”, that is the work of a sevak, a servant is to serve. In the past few years at many important junctures we had the opportunity to serve as a Sevak. Guru Sahib awarded us the opportunity to serve. 550<sup>th</sup> Prakash Parva of Guru Nanak Dev ji, 350<sup>th</sup> Prakash Parv of Shri Guru Govind Singh ji, next year we will have 400<sup>th</sup> Prakash Parv of Shri Guru Teg Bahadur ji too. I feel that I have been specially blessed by Guru Sahib that he has associated me very closely with his work.

Friends, do you know that there is a Gurudwara, Lakhpat Gurudwara Sahib, in Kutch. Shri Guru Nanak ji had stayed at Lakhpat Gurudwara Sahib during his Udaasi, his spiritual travels. During the 2001 earthquake this Gurudwara too faced damage. It was the blessings of Guru Sahib that I was able to ensure its restoration. Not only was the renovation done; its glory and grandeur were restored too. All of us were bestowed with ample blessings of Guru Sahib. The restoration efforts of Lakhpat Gurudwara were honored with the Award of Distinction by the UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Award in 2004. The jury that gave away the award found that during the restoration, the fine details of the art and architecture were given special care. The jury also noted that in the restoration of the Gurudwara not only did the Sikh community

participate actively; it was done under their guidance too. I had the good fortune of visiting Lakhpat Gurudwara when I was not even the Chief Minister. I used to feel immensely energized being there. Everyone feels blessed on visiting this Gurudwara. I feel very grateful that Guru Sahib has granted me the opportunity to serve regularly. Opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor in November last year was historic. I will cherish this lifelong in my heart. It is the good fortune of all of us that we got the opportunity to serve Shri Darbaar Sahib once more. It has now become easier for our Sikh brothers and sisters abroad to send contributions in the service of Darbaar Sahib. With this step, the Sangat, the followers all over the world have come closer to Darbaar Sahib.

Friends , it was Guru Nanak Dev ji who started the tradition of Langar and we saw how the Sikh community all over the world continued the tradition of feeding people during this period of Corona , served humanity – this tradition always keeps inspiring us. I wish we all keep working as a Sevak. May Guru Sahib keep taking services from me and countrymen in the same manner. Once again, many best wishes on Guru Nanak Jayanti.

My dear countrymen, in the past few days I had the opportunity to interact with students of several universities across the country and be a part of important events in their journey of education. Through technology I was able to connect with students of IIT- Guwahati, IIT-Delhi, Deendayal Petroleum University of Gandhinagar, JNU of Delhi, Mysore University and Lucknow University. To be amongst the youth of the country is extremely refreshing and energizing. University campuses in a way are like Mini India. In these campuses on the one hand we see the diversity of India; on the other we also find great passion for changes for a New India. Before Corona when I used to go for a face to face event at any institution, I would urge that poor students from nearby schools to be invited to the function. Those children have been attending

the functions as my special guests. When a small child in the grand function watches a young person becoming a Doctor, Engineer, Scientist, sees someone receiving a medal, new dreams awaken in the child- 'I too can do it', this self confidence arises. There is inspiration for resolve.

Friends, besides this, I am always interested in knowing who the alumni of the institution are, what the arrangements by the institution for regular engagement with its alumni are, how vibrant their alumni network is.

My young friends, you are a student of an institution only till you study there, but you remain an alumni of that institution lifelong.

After leaving school or college, two things never end - one, the influence of your education, and second, your bonding with your school or college. Whenever alumni interact with each other, in their memories of school or college, greater time is given to reminiscing about time on campus and moments spent with friends than about books and studies, and, from these memories, a feeling is born to do something for the institution.

What can bring greater happiness than to lend a hand in development of the place where your personality was moulded? I have read certain such efforts, where the former students have given back to their old institutions in great measure. Nowadays, alumni are very active in this. IITians have provided their institutions many facilities like Conference Centres, Management Centres & Incubation Centres set up by their efforts. All of these endeavors improve the learning experience of the current students. IIT Delhi has initiated an endowment fund, which is a brilliant idea. There is a culture of such endowments in renowned universities across the world, which helps the students. I think that universities of India are also capable to institutionalize this culture.

When it comes to returning something, nothing can be deemed big or small. Even the smallest help matters. Every effort is important. Often, alumni play a very important role in technology upgradation of their institutions, in construction of buildings, in initiating awards and scholarships and in starting programs for skill development. The old student associations of certain schools have started mentorship programmes. In these programmes, they guide the students of different batches and also discuss educational prospects. Alumni associations are robust in many schools, especially in boarding schools, where they organize activities like sports tournaments and community service.

I would like to urge former students to keep consolidating their bonding with the institution in which they have studied! Whether it is at the level of school, college, or university. I also urge the institutions to work on new and innovative ways of alumni engagement and develop creative platforms so that alumni can be actively involved. A strong vibrant & active alumni network is needed not only in big Colleges and Universities but also in schools of our villages.

My dear countrymen, the 5<sup>th</sup> December is the death anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. The more we read Sri Aurobindo, greater is the insight that we get. The more my young friends learn about Sri Aurobindo, greater will they learn about themselves, enriching themselves. The state of inner consciousness in which you are, where you are engaged in trying to achieve the many resolves, amid all this you will always find a new inspiration in Sri Aurobindo; you will find him showing you a new path! Just as at present when we are moving forward with the campaign 'Vocal for Local', Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Swadeshi shows us the path.

There is a very profound poem in Bangla.

‘Sui Chhuto Poy-Monto Ashe Tunga hote’.

Diya-ShalaiKathi, Tau aasepote ||

Pro-deeptiJaliteKhete, Shutee, Jethe.

KichhuteLokNoyaShadhiaan ||

That is, here, even the sewing needle and match stick come on a foreign ship! The people are not free even in eating, drinking, sleeping!

He also used to say that Swadeshi means that we give priority to the things made by our Indian workers and artisans. It is not that Sri Aurobindo ever opposed learning anything from abroad. Wherever there is anything new, we should learn from there and then support and encourage what can be good for our country-and that is the spirit of the Vocal for Local Mantra in the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* campaign. Especially what Shri Aurobindo opined about adopting Swadeshi should be read by every citizen today.

Friends, likewise, Shri Aurobindo's views on education were very lucid. He did not consider education to be limited only to bookish knowledge, degree and job. Sri Aurobindo used to say that our national education should focus on training of the hearts and minds of our younger generation, that is, scientific development of the mind and Indian ethos reside in the heart should also be there, then only a young person can become a better citizen of the country. Whatever Shri Aurobindo said about national education and expected then, the country is now achieving it through the new National Education Policy.

My dear countrymen, new dimensions are being added to agriculture and its related activities in India. The agricultural reforms in the past few days have also now opened new doors of possibilities for our farmers. The demands that have been made by farmers for years, that every political party, at some point or the other made the promise to fulfill, those demands have been met. After a lot of deliberation, the

Parliament of India gave a legal form to the agricultural reforms. These reforms have not only served to unshackle our farmers but also given them new rights and opportunities. In just a short span of time, these new rights have begun to ameliorate the woes of our farmers. You too should know how Jitendra Bhoiji, a farmer from Dhule district in Maharashtra made use of the recently promulgated farm laws. Jitendra Bhoiji had sown corn and decided to sell his produce to traders for a right price. The total cost of the produce was fixed at approximately Rupees Three Lakh thirty two thousand. Jitendra Bhoi even received an advance of Rupees twenty five thousand. It had been decided that the outstanding amount would be cleared in fifteen days. However, later such circumstances developed, that he did not receive the remainder of his payment. Buy the crop from the farmer, keep the payment pending for months on end ; probably this was the long standing tradition that the buyers of corn were following. This continued for four months wherein Jitendra ji was not paid his dues. In this situation, the new farm laws that were passed in September came to his aid. Under this law, it was decided that all dues of the farmers should be cleared within three days of procurement, failing which, the farmer can lodge a complaint. Another notable aspect of this law is that the area Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) has to ensure grievance redressal of the farmer within one month. Now, with our farmer brother empowered with this law, his grievance had to be redressed ; consequently, he lodged a complaint and within days his outstanding payments were cleared. This correct and complete knowledge of the law became the strength of Jitendra ji. Whichever the field, correct knowledge, free from misconceptions and rumors can act as a force multiplier for every individual. Mohammad Aslam ji from Baran district in Rajasthan is working in a similar fashion to increase awareness among farmers. He is also the CEO of a farmer producer organization. Yes, you heard it right! - the CEO of a farmer producer organization. I hope this is heartwarming news for the CEOs of

major companies - that farmers from far flung areas of the country are now also becoming CEOs of farmer organizations! Friends, Mohammad Aslam Ji has made a Whatsapp group comprising several farmers from his area. On this group everyday he shares updates with the farmers on prevalent prices at neighboring Mandis in the area. His own FPO also buys produce from farmers, hence, this effort of his also helps farmers in taking a decision.

Friends, awareness beget spiritedness. Shri Virendra Yadav ji is one such farmer entrepreneur, who has influenced the lives of thousands through his awareness. Sometime ago, Virendra Yadav ji used to live in Australia. Two years ago, he came to India and now lives in Kaithal, Haryana. Just like others, the stubble in the fields was a big concern for him too. Work is being done on a massive scale to find the solution to this issue, however, today in Mann Ki Baat, I am especially mentioning Virendra ji because his efforts are different and show a new way forward. To find a solution to stubble, Virendra ji bought a Straw Baler machine to make bundles of straw. For this, he also received financial assistance from the Agricultural department. With this machine, he began to make bundles of stubble. After having made the bundles, he sold the stubble to agro energy plants and paper mills. You will be amazed to know that in just two years, Virendra ji has traded in stubble in excess of Rupees Two and a Half Crores and has earned a profit of approximately Rupees Fifty Lakhs. The benefit of this also accrues to the farmers of those fields from where Virendra ji sources his stubble. We have often heard of 'waste to wealth', however, this initiative is a unique example of earning money and righteous goodwill while finding a solution to the problem of stubble. To the youth, especially the lakhs of students who are studying agriculture, it is my request that they visit villages in their vicinity and talk to the farmers and make them aware about innovations in farming and the recent agricultural reforms. This way, you will become stakeholders in major reforms underway in the

country.

My dear countrymen, in Mann Ki Baat, we refer to a wide range of issues and topics. However, it has been one year of one such incident we would never want to remember fondly. It has been roughly one year since the world came to know of the first case of Corona. Since then, the entire world has seen several ups and downs. Coming out of the lockdown now the discussion on a vaccine has commenced, however, any sort of negligence regarding Corona can be deadly even now. We have to firmly keep fighting against Corona.

Friends, Baba Saheb Ambedkar's Punya Tithi, death anniversary is in a few days from now on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. Besides paying our homage to Baba Saheb, this day is also an occasion to reaffirm our resolve to the country and abiding by the duties, assigned to us by the Constitution as an individual. A large part of the country is also witnessing the onset of winter. Many areas are experiencing snowfall. In this weather, we must take care of the children and elders in the family, especially the ailing and take precautions ourselves too. It gives me joy to see people assisting the needy around them ; helping them with warm clothing. Winter brings many problems for destitute animals too and many people come forward to their aid. Our young generation takes active part in such initiatives. Friends, the next time when we meet in Mann Ki Baat, the year 2020 will be drawing to a close. With new hopes and faith, we will move forward. Whatever suggestions or ideas you may have now, do continue to keep sharing with me. My best wishes to all of you. May all of you stay healthy, stay active for the country.

Many Many thanks.