

## Mann Ki Baat - 19

My dear countrymen, Namaskar. Today is the 27<sup>th</sup> of December. Just four days later, 2021 is about to usher in. In a way, today's Mann Ki Baat is the concluding Mann Ki Baat of 2020. The next Mann Ki Baat will commence in 2021. Friends, numerous letters written by you are there in front of me. The suggestions you sent on Mygov too are there. Many have expressed themselves over the phone. Most of the messages comprise experiences of the year gone by and resolutions for 2021. Anjali from Kolhapur has written that on new year, we offer greetings and good wishes to others ...let us do something novel this time! Why don't we greet our country; send best wishes to the country too! May our country touch newer heights in 2021... May India's image in the world strengthen further...what could be a greater wish than this!

Friends, Abhishek from Mumbai has posted a message on NAMO App. He has written that whatever 2020 revealed to us, taught us was unthinkable. He has written, on myriad aspects of CORONA. In

these letters, in these messages, one common special factor that comes across to me is something that I would like to share with you. In most of the letters people have commended the country's capabilities and the collective strength of the countrymen. When a novel experiment such as Janta curfew became an inspiration for the whole world, when the country felicitated our corona warriors unitedly with Taali-thaali, the applause and the reverberating chime of plates.....people have sent in reminiscences of that too.

Friends, the most common amongst the common folk of the country has felt this transformation. I have witnessed an extraordinary ripple of hope in the country. There came multiple challenges ... many a crisis. On account of Corona, the world faced numerous hurdles in terms of supply chains...But we learnt a new lesson with every crisis. The country was blessed with newer capabilities. Putting it into words...this capacity is termed as "Atmanirbharta"- self reliance.

Friends, the experience that Abhinav banerjee from Delhi has written to me is very interesting too. Abhinav ji wanted to buy some toys and

gifts for children in the family....hence he had gone to Jhandewalan market in Delhi.

Many of you might be aware that this market in Delhi is known for bicycles and toys. Earlier even expensive toys there would mean imported ones; cheaper toys too would come in from elsewhere too.

But Abhinav ji has mentioned in his letter that many shopkeepers are selling toys to customers emphasizing on the quality, saying those are better toys since they are Made In India. Customers too are demanding India made toys. Indeed, this is it- a big transformation in the mindset... this is living proof of the same. A huge change has begun in the minds of our countrymen...that too within a year. It is not easy to gauge this change. Even economists would not be able to assess it on their parameters.

Friends, what Venkat Murli Prasad from Vishakhapatnam has written to me also contain an idea of an entirely different kind. Venkat ji has written that he is attaching for me his ABC for 2021. I could not understand what he meant by ABC. Then I saw that Venkat ji had

attached a chart along with the letter. I glanced at the chart and realised what he meant by ABC...Atmanirbhar Bharat Chart. This is very interesting. Venkat ji has prepared a list of all those items that he uses on a daily basis. It comprises electronics, stationery, self care items besides many other things. Venkat ji has said that knowingly or unknowingly, we are using those foreign products whose substitutes are easily available in India. He has now vowed that he would use only that product that bears the mark of our countrymen's toil and sweat.

Friends, but along with that he has also referred to something which I found pretty interesting. He has written that while we are supporting a self reliant India, there should be a clear message for our manufacturers that they should not compromise on the quality of the products. What he says is right. This is the opportune moment to work with the ethos of 'zero effect, zero defect'. I urge manufacturers and industry leaders of the country ... people of the country have taken a firm step...moving a bold step forward...vocal for local is reverberating in each and every household....in such a

scenario, it is time to ensure that our products meet global standards. Whatever is global best; we should make it in India and prove it. For that, our entrepreneur friends have to come forward. Startups too have to come forth. Once again, I congratulate Venkat ji on his stellar effort.

Friends, we have to cherish this sentiment...preserve it and keep nurturing it as well. I have said this earlier too...I once again urge countrymen...do prepare a list. Whatever items we use throughout the day ....analyse them ....think of things manufactured abroad that have permeated into our lives unknowingly, in a way, shackling us down. Let us find out their substitutes made in India. and decide that henceforth we shall use products made with the hard work and sweat of the people of India. You make New Year resolutions every year...this time one has to certainly make a resolution for the sake of the country.

My dear countrymen, in order to protect our millennia old culture, civilization and traditions from the cruel misdemeanors of tyrants &

tormentors many a supreme sacrifice was made.....It is a day to remember them too. On this day the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, sahibzade Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were immured alive. The tyrants wanted sahibzade to renounce their faith; abandon the teachings of the great Guru tradition. But, our sahibzade showed amazing courage and determination even at that tender age. During the immurement, as stones began piling up, gradually raising the height of the wall..... death staring into the face.....despite that, they did not budge even a bit. It was on this day itself that Guru Gobind Singh ji's mother -Mata Gujari attained martyrdom. About a week ago, it was the Martyrdom Day of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji too. Here in Delhi, I was blessed with the opportunity to visit Gurudwara Rakabganj to offer floral tributes and pay my obeisance to Guru Tegh Bahadur ji. During this very month, inspired by Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji, many people sleep on the floor. People reminisce the supreme sacrifices made by family members of Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji with immense reverence. This martyrdom served as a new beacon of learning for entire humanity; for the country. This

martyrdom served towards the great deed of protecting our civilization. We are indebted to this martyrdom. Once again I bow to the martyrdom of shri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji, Mata Gujari, Guru Gobind Singh ji and the four Sahibzade. Several such sacrifices have preserved the present fabric of India, keeping it intact.

My dear countrymen, I am now going to tell you something that will gladden you and make you feel proud as well. In India, between 2014 and 2018, the number of leopards has risen by more than 60 percent. In 2014, the number of leopards in the country was about 7,900, whereas in 2019 it increased to 12,852. These are the very leopards about which Jim Corbett had said: "Those who have not seen a leopard wandering free in nature, cannot imagine its beauty.... cannot visualise the beauty of its colours and the charm of its gait." In most parts of the country, especially central India, the number of leopards has risen. Amongst the states with the maximum population of leopards Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra are top most in the order. This is a big achievement for year. Leopards, across the world have been facing dangers; their habitat

has faced loss in the entire world. In such circumstances, the continued growth of the population of leopards in India has shown a way to the entire world. You must also be aware that in the past few years, the population of lions in India has risen; the number of tigers too has increased. Also, there has been an increase in India's forest area, the reason for this is that not only the government but also many people, civil society, many institutions too are engaged in conserving our trees and plants and wild animals. They all deserve accolades.

Friends, I read about a heart-touching effort at Coimbatore in Tamilnadu. You too must have seen visuals of this on social media. We have seen wheelchairs for humans, but daughter Gayatri in Coimbatore, along with her father, made a wheelchair for a suffering dog. This sensitivity is inspiring and can happen only when a person is filled with kindness and compassion towards all life forms. In Delhi NCR and other cities of the country in the chilling cold many people are doing a lot for the care of shelter less animals. They arrange for food, water, sweaters and even beds for those animals. Some people

arrange food for hundreds of such animals every day. Such efforts should be commended. Several noble efforts are being undertaken in Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh. There, prison inmates are making covers from old and torn blankets to protect cows from the cold. Besides Kaushambi, these blankets are collected from jails of other districts and then they are sewn and sent to gaushaalas, cow shelters. Prisoners of Kaushambi are sewing several covers every week. Come, let us encourage such acts of care with a sense of service to others. In fact, this is a noble act that strengthens the sensitivity of the society.

My dear countrymen, the letter that is in front of me now bears two large photographs. These are photos of a temple and depict 'before' and 'after'. The letter which is with these photos talks about a team of youth which calls itself Yuva brigade. In fact, this Youth brigade has transformed an ancient Shiva temple named Veerbhadra Swami in Srirangapatna in Karnataka. All around in the temple there were widespread weeds and shrubs...so much that even travellers could not have recognized the existence of a temple there. One day, some

tourists posted a video of this forgotten temple on social media. When the Yuva brigade saw this video on social media they could not bear it and this team decided to renovate it together. They removed the thorny bushes, grass and plants that had come up in the compound of the temple. They did repair and construction wherever required. Seeing their good deed, the local people too extended a helping hand. Some offered cement; others offered paint... people came up with many other such contributions. All these youths belong to different professions. Hence, they took out time during weekends and worked for the temple. They arranged for electricity connection too for the temple besides getting doors installed, thus restoring the old grandeur of the temple. Passion and firm commitment are two means through which people can achieve every goal. When I see the youth of India, I feel delighted and assured. Delighted and assured because the youth of my country have the 'Can Do' approach and the 'Will Do' spirit in them. No challenge is too big for them. Nothing is out of reach for them. I read about a teacher from Tamil Nadu. Her name is Hemalata N. K., and she

teaches the oldest language of the world Tamil at a school in Viddupuram. Even the Covid 19 pandemic could not create hurdles in her teaching work. Yes! Challenges definitely were there but she found out an innovative way. She recorded all the 53 chapters of the course, created animated videos, put them in a pen drive and distributed that amongst her students. Her students got a lot of help from this; they understood the chapters visually. Along with this, she kept interacting with her students telephonically. Thus, study became quite interesting for the students. All over the country during this corona time, the innovative methods that the teachers have adopted, the course material they have creatively prepared, those are invaluable in this period of online studies. I request all the teachers to definitely upload these course materials on the Diksha Portal of the Education Ministry. This will help students who are staying in far-flung areas of the country, a lot.

Friends, let us now talk of Hiranman ji of Korwa tribe of Jharkhand. Hiranman ji lives in the Sinjo village of Garhwa district. You will be amazed to know that the population of Korwa tribe is merely 6,000,

which lives in hills and forests far away from cities. Hiranman ji has taken up the task of preserving the culture and identity of his community. After an untiring toil of 12 years he has created a dictionary of the Korwa language which is getting extinct. In this dictionary he has written with meanings many Korwa words right from words used in the household to words used in daily life. What Hiranman ji has done for the Korwa community is an example for the country.

My dear countrymen, it is said that there was a prominent courtier in the court of Akbar named Abul Fazl. After a visit to Kashmir, he once remarked that the place had one such scenic view that could uplift the mood of the most irritable and bad tempered people, making them rejoice. In fact, he was referring to the saffron fields in Kashmir. Saffron has been associated with Kashmir for centuries. Kashmiri saffron is mainly grown in places like Pulwama, Budgam and Kishtwar. In May this year, the Kashmiri Saffron was given the Geographical Indication Tag or GI tag. Through this, we want to make Kashmiri Saffron a Globally Popular Brand. Kashmiri

saffron is globally famous as a spice that has many medicinal properties. It has a strong aroma, its color is deep dark and its threads are long and thick which enhances its medicinal value.

It represents the rich cultural heritage of Jammu and Kashmir. And if you're talking about the quality, the saffron of Kashmir is unique and completely different from the saffron of other countries. Saffron from Kashmir has now got a distinct identity with the GI Tag recognition. You will be delighted to know that after obtaining the GI Tag certificate, Kashmiri Saffron was launched in a super market in Dubai. Now its exports will get a boost. This will further strengthen our efforts to build an *atmanirbhar* Bharat. Farmers growing saffron will be especially benefited by this. Now take a look at the case of Abdul Majeed Wani, a resident of Shar area of Tral in Pulwama. He is selling his GI Tagged Saffron with the help of National Saffron Mission at the Trading Center in Pampore through E-Trading. Many people like him are involved in this activity in Kashmir. Next time you decide to buy saffron, think of buying saffron of Kashmir! Only The

warmth of Kashmiri people is such that it imparts a unique, distinct flavor to the saffron.

My dear countrymen, just two days ago was Geeta Jayanti . The Gita inspires us in every context of our life. But have you ever thought why is Geeta such a wonderful Granth? That is because it is the voice of Lord Krishna himself. But the uniqueness of the Gita also lies in that it begins with the quest of knowledge... starts with a question. Arjuna asked the Lord a question, inquired and only then, the world received the wisdom of Gita. Like the Gita, all the wisdom in our culture starts with inquisitiveness. The very first mantra of Vedanta is - 'Athaato Brahm Jigyasa', that is, come, let us inquire about Brahm. That is why we talk about the inquest of even Brahm, the ultimate creator! Such is the power of inquisitiveness. Curiosity constantly inspires you to learn something new. In childhood, we learn only because we are curious. That is, we are alive as long as there is curiosity in us. As long as there is curiosity, the process of learning something new continues. No age, no circumstance, matters at all in this. I came to know of an example of such energy of inquisitiveness,

about Shri T. Srinivasacharya Swami ji, an elderly person from Tamil Nadu! Shri T Srinivasacharya Swami Ji is Ninety-Two years old. Even at this age, he is writing his book on the computer; that too, typing himself. You must be thinking that writing a book is fine.... but in the times of Srinivasacharyaji, there were no computers. So, when did he learn the computer? It is right that there was no computer during his college days. But, there still is as much curiosity in his mind and self-confidence as it was in his youth. In fact, Srinivasacharya Swamiji is a scholar of Sanskrit and Tamil. He has written about 16 spiritual books so far. However, with the advent of the computer, when he realized that the method of writing and printing books had changed, he learned the computer and necessary software at the age of 86... yes, at the age of eighty-six. Now he is completing his book.

Friends, Shri T Srinivasacharya Swamiji's life are a living example of the fact that life remains full of energy, as long as the curiosity in life, the desire to learn, does not die. Hence, we should never think that we lagged behind; we missed. "Only if...we too had learnt this!" We should not even think that we cannot learn, or cannot move forward.

My dear countrymen, we were just talking about learning and doing something new out of inquisitiveness. We were also referring to new resolutions in the New Year. But there are also some people who continuously keep on doing something new, keep on fulfilling new resolves. You too must have felt in life that when we do something for society, the society itself gives us the energy to do a lot of things. Significant deeds can be accomplished with seemingly simple motivations. One such youth is Shriman Pradeep Sangwan! Gurugram's Pradeep Sangwan has been running a campaign 'Healing Himalayas' since 2016. He goes to different areas in the Himalayas with his team and volunteers where they clean plastic waste dumped there by tourists. So far, Pradeep ji has cleaned tons of plastic from various tourist locations in the Himalayas. Similarly, there is a young couple from Karnataka, Anudeep and Minusha. Anudeep and Minusha got married just last month in November. A lot of young people go for a trip after marriage, but these two did something different. Both of them always saw that people go out on a trip, but, wherever they go, they leave a lot of garbage and waste behind. A

similar situation was prevailing at the Someshwar beach in Karnataka. Anudeep and Minusha decided that they would clean up the garbage that people have left behind at the Someshwar beach. This was the first resolve that both husband and wife took after marriage. Together they cleaned up a lot of garbage from the beach. Anudeep also shared about his resolve on social media. And then lo! I Inspired by his magnanimous thought, a number of young people came and joined him. You will be surprised to know that together these people have cleaned more than 800 kg of waste from Someshwar beach.

Friends, amidst these efforts, we also have to think how this garbage gets on these beaches, these mountains in the first place. After all, it is one amongst us only, who leaves this garbage there. We should run a cleanliness drive like Pradeep and Anudeep-Minusha. But even before that we should also take a resolve that we will not leave garbage at all, to begin with. After all, this is also the first resolution of the Clean India campaign. And yes, I want to remind you of something more. Due to Corona, this year it could not be discussed

much. We have to make our country free from single use plastic. This is also one of the resolutions of 2021. In conclusion, I extend my best wishes to you for the New Year. Stay healthy yourself, keep your family healthy too. Next year, in January, 'Mann Ki Baat' will touch upon new subjects.

Many thanks.

