

## MANN KI BAAT (EPISODE - 20)

My dear countrymen, Namaskar. When I express Mann Ki Baat, it feels like I am present amongst you as a member of your family. Little matters exchanged that teach one another; bitter-sweet life experiences that become an inspiration for living a wholesome life...and this is just what Mann Ki Baat is! Today is the last day of January 2021. Are you too thinking, the way I am that 2021 had commenced just a few days ago? It just doesn't feel that the entire month of January has passed by! This is what is termed as the speed of time. It feels like just a matter of a few days ago when we were exchanging good wishes with each other! Then we celebrated Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal and Bihu. It was festival time in different parts of the country. We celebrated the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as PARAKRAM DIWAS and also watched the grand Republic Day Parade on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January. Following the Address to the joint session by Rashtrapati ji, the Budget Session has also begun. Amidst all of this, there was one more happening that is keenly awaited by all of us – that is the announcement of the Padma Awards. The nation honored people doing extraordinary work; for their achievements and contribution to humanity. This year too, the recipients comprise people who have done excellent work in myriad fields; through their endeavour, they've changed someone's

life, taking the country forward. Thus, the tradition of conferring the Padma honour on unsung heroes that was started a few years ago has been maintained this time too. I urge all of you to know more about these people and their contribution...discuss it amongst the family. You will see how this inspires everyone!

This month, there has been very good news from the cricket pitch too. Our cricket team, after initial setbacks made a grand comeback, winning the series in Australia. The hard work and teamwork of our players is inspirational. Amidst all this, the country was saddened by the insult to the Tricolor on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January in Delhi. We have to infuse times to come with new hope and novelty. Last year, we displayed exemplary patience and courage. This year too, we have to work hard to attain our resolves. We have to take our country forward at a faster pace.

My dear countrymen, the beginning of this year marks the completion of almost one year of our battle against Corona. Just as India's fight against Corona became an example, our vaccination Programme too is turning out to be exemplary to the world. Today, India is undertaking the world's biggest Covid Vaccine Programme. Do you know what's a matter of more pride? Along with the biggest Vaccine Programme, we are vaccinating our citizens faster than anywhere in the world. In just 15 days, India has vaccinated over 30 lakh Corona Warriors,

whereas an advanced country such as America took 18 days to get the same done; Britain 36 days!

Friends, today, the Made in India vaccine is, of course, a symbol of India's self-reliance; it is also a symbol of her self-pride. On NamomApp, Bhai Himanshu Yadav from UP has written that the Made in India vaccine has generated a new self confidence within. Kirti ji writes from Madurai that many of her foreign friends are messaging her thanking India. Kirti ji's friends have written to her that the way India has helped the world in the fight against Corona has enhanced the respect for India in their hearts. Kirti ji, listening to these notes of glory for the country also fills the listeners of Mann Ki Baat with a sense of pride. These days, I too receive similar messages for India from Presidents and Prime Ministers of different countries of the world. You must also have seen recently how the President of Brazil, in a tweet thanked India – every Indian was gladdened at that. People residing thousands of kilometers away in remote corners of the world are deeply aware of that context in Ramayan; they are intensely influenced by it. This is a speciality of our culture.

Friends, in this vaccination Programme, you must have noticed something more! During the moment of crisis, India is able to serve the world today, since she is capable, self-reliant in the field of medicines, vaccines. The same thought underpins the

Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign. The more India is capable, the more will she serve humanity; correspondingly the world will benefit more!

My dear countrymen, every time, lots of your letters are received; one gets to know about your thoughts through your messages on Nammo App and MyGov and phone calls. One amongst these messages caught my attention – this is from sister Priyanka Pandey ji. 23 year old Beti Priyanka ji is a student of Hindi literature and resides at Siwan in Bihar. Priyanka ji has written on Nammo App that she was highly inspired by my suggestion of visiting 15 domestic tourist places in the country and hence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, she started for a destination which was very special. The place was 15 kilometers away from her home – it was the ancestral residence of the country's first President Dr Rajendra Prasad ji. Priyanka ji has beautifully mentioned that this was her first step in the realm of acquainting herself with the country's great luminaries. There, Priyanka ji came across many books written by Dr Rajendra Prasad and many historical photographs as well. Really Priyanka ji, this experience of yours will inspire others too.

Friends, this year, India is going to commence the celebration of 75 years of her Independence – Amrit Mahotsav. In this context, this is an excellent time to explore places associated with those heroes on account of whom we attained Freedom.

Friends, as we refer to the Freedom Movement and Bihar, I would like to touch upon another comment made on Namoo App. Jai Ram Viplava, a resident of Munger has written to me about the Tarapur Martyr day. On 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1932, the Britishers had mercilessly killed several of a group of brave young patriots. Their only crime was that they were raising the slogan of 'Vande Matram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'. I bow to those martyrs and remember their courage with reverence. I want to thank Jai Ram Viplava ji. He has brought to the notice of the country an incident about which not as much discussion happened as should have been done.

My dear countrymen, the freedom struggle was fought with full might in every part, every city, every town and village of India. In every corner of this land, Bharatbhoomi, great sons and brave daughters were born who gave up their lives for the nation. Hence it is very important that we preserve the saga of their struggles for our sake and their memories and for this we can write about them to keep their memories alive for generations to come. I appeal to all countrymen, especially the young friends to write about freedom fighters, incidents associated with freedom. Write books about the saga of valour during the period of freedom struggle in your area. Now, as India will celebrate 75 years of her freedom, your writings will be the best tribute to those heroes of our freedom. An initiative has been taken for Young Writers for the purpose of India

Seventy-Five. This will encourage young writers of all states and of all languages. Writers who write on such subjects, who have studied deeply Indian heritage and culture, will come forth in large numbers in the country. We have to fully help such emerging talents. This will also prepare a category of thought leaders that will decide the course of the future. I invite my young friends to be a part of this initiative and to use their literary skills more and more. Information about this can be accessed from the website of the Ministry of Education.

My dear countrymen, what the listeners of 'Mann Ki Baat' like, only you know better. But for me the best thing that I like in 'Mann Ki Baat' is that I get to learn and read a lot. In a way, indirectly, I get an opportunity to connect with you all. Someone's effort, somebody's zeal, someone's passion to achieve something for the country – all this inspires me a lot, fills me with energy.

I felt very happy on reading about how a local vegetable market in Boinpalli of Hyderabad is fulfilling its responsibility. All of us have seen that in vegetable markets, a lot of produce gets spoiled for a variety of reasons. The vegetables spread all around, it spreads filth too, but the vegetable market of Boinpalli decided that it will not throw away the leftover vegetables just like that. People associated with the vegetable market decided

that they will generate electricity from this. You may have hardly heard of generating electricity from waste vegetables – this is the power of innovation. Today in Boinpalli vegetable market what was once a waste, wealth is getting created from that – this is the journey of creation of wealth from waste. Nearly 10-tonnes of waste is generated there every day, which is collected in a plant. In this plant 500-units of electricity is generated every day, and about 30 Kilos of bio fuel too is generated. The vegetable market is illuminated through this electricity and the bio fuel that is generated is used to cook food in the market canteen – isn't it a wonderful effort!

A similar amazing feat has been achieved by the Badaut village Panchayat of Panchkula in Haryana. This Panchayat faced the problem of water drainage. Because of this dirty water was spilling around, spreading disease, but, people of Badaut decided that they would create wealth even from this water waste. The village Panchayat started filtering the dirty water coming from the village after collecting it at a place, and this filtered water is now being used for irrigation by the farmers of the village, thereby, liberating them from pollution, filth and disease and irrigating the fields too.

Friends, an example of how protection of environment can open avenues of income was seen in Tawang in Arunachal

Pradesh too. For centuries a type of paper called 'Mon Shugu' is made in this hilly region of Arunachal Pradesh. The locals here make this paper from the bark of a plant named Shugu Sheng, hence trees do not have to be cut to make this paper. Besides, no chemical is used in making this paper, thus, this paper is safe for the environment and for health too. There was a time when this paper was exported but with modern techniques, large amount of paper started getting made and this local art was pushed to the brink of closure. Now a local social worker Gombu has made an effort to rejuvenate this art, this is also giving employment to tribal brothers and sisters there.

I have seen another news from Kerala that makes us realise our responsibilities. In Kottayam of Kerala there is an elderly divyang, N.S Rajappan Sahab. Due to paralysis, Rajappan is incapable of walking, but this has not affected his commitment to cleanliness. For the past several years he has been going by boat in Vembanad lake and taking out the plastic bottles thrown into the lake. Think, how great Rajappan ji's thought is! Taking inspiration from Rajappan ji, we too should, wherever possible, make our contribution to cleanliness.

My dear countrymen, you must have witnessed a few days ago, that four women pilots from India took command of a non-stop flight from San Francisco, America to Bangalore. Travelling more than ten thousand kilometres, this flight ferried more than two hundred and fifty passengers to India. You must

have also observed this time in the 26<sup>th</sup> January parade, where two women officers of the Indian Air Force created new history. Whatever be the area, the participation of the women of the country is continuously on the rise, but, often we see that, there is not much discussion of similar changes occurring in the villages of the country, so, when I got this news from Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, I felt that I must make a mention of it in 'Mann Ki Baat'.

This news is very inspiring. In Chichgaon, Jabalpur, some tribal women were working on daily wages in a rice mill. Just like the Corona pandemic affected every person in the world, these women were also affected. Work stopped in their rice mill. Naturally, their income got affected as well but they did not get disheartened; they did not give up. They decided that collectively they would start their own rice mill. The mill where they worked wanted to sell its machine too. One among these women, Meena Rahangadale ji formed a 'Self Help Group' by associating all the women, and all of them raised capital from their savings. Whatever amount of money was short, was sourced under the aegis of Ajivika mission in the form of a loan from the bank, and, now see, these tribal sisters bought the same rice mill in which they once worked! Today they are running their own rice mill. Within this very period, this mill has also earned a profit of about three lakh rupees. With this profit, Meena ji, and her colleagues, are arranging to repay the bank loan and then seeking avenues to expand their business. Such amazing efforts have taken place in every corner of the country to counter whatever circumstances Corona created.

My dear countrymen, if I mention Bundelkhand to you, what are the things that will come to your mind? Those interested in history will connect this area with Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi. At the same time, some people will think of beautiful and serene Orchha. And some people will also remember the extreme heat conditions of this region, but, these days something different is happening here which is quite heartening, and about which, we must know. Recently, a month long 'Strawberry Festival' began in Jhansi. Everyone is surprised - Strawberry and Bundelkhand! But, this is the truth. Now, there is growing enthusiasm about the cultivation of Strawberry in Bundelkhand, and one of Jhansi's daughters - Gurleen Chawla has played a huge role in it! A Law student Gurleen carried out Strawberry cultivation successfully first at her home and then in her farm raising the hope that this was possible in Jhansi too. Jhansi's Strawberry festival emphasizes the 'Stay at Home' concept. Through this festival, farmers and youth are being encouraged to do gardening and grow strawberries in the vacant spaces behind their home, or in the Terrace Garden. With the help of new technology, similar efforts are also being done in other parts of the country, Strawberry which was once identified with the hills, is now also being cultivated in the sandy soil of Kutch, boosting the income of farmers.

Friends, experiments like the Strawberry Festival not only demonstrate the spirit of Innovation ; they also demonstrate the manner in which the agricultural sector of our country is

adopting new technologies. Friends, the government is committed to modernizing agriculture and is also taking many steps in that direction. The efforts of the Government shall also continue in future.

My dear countrymen, just a few days ago I watched a video. That video was of Sarmuddin, a painter from Naya Pingla village in West Midnapore, West Bengal. He was expressing happiness that his painting based on Ramayana had sold for two lakh rupees. This brought great happiness to his fellow villagers too. After watching this video, I was curious to know more about it. In this very context, I came to know about a very good initiative related to West Bengal, which, I would definitely like to share with you.

The regional office of the Ministry of Tourism started an 'Incredible India Weekend Getaway' in the villages of Bengal at the beginning of the month. The Handicraft artisans from West Midnapore, Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, East Bardhaman, organized handicraft workshop for visitors. I was also told that the total sales of handicrafts during the Incredible India Weekend Getaways is very encouraging to the handicraft artisans. People are also making our art forms popular employing novel methods across the country.

Look at Bhagyashree Sahu of Rourkela, Odisha. Although she is a student of Engineering, in the past few months, she started

learning the art of Pattchitra and has mastered it. But, did you know where she began painting - Soft Stones, on Soft Stones. On her way to college, Bhagyashree found these Soft Stones, she collected and cleaned them. Later, she painted these stones in Pattachitra style for two hours every day. After painting these stones, she started gifting them to her friends. During the lockdown, she started painting on bottles too. And now, she even conducts workshops on this art form. A few days ago, on the birth anniversary of Subhash Babu, Bhagyashree paid him a unique tribute done on stone. I wish her all the best for her future endeavours. A lot new can be learnt and done through Art and Colours.

I was informed of a similar novel initiative being carried out in Dumka, Jharkhand. A principal of a middle school there, in order to teach and help the children learn, got the village walls painted with the letters of the English and Hindi alphabets ; alongside various pictures have also been painted which are helping the village children a lot. I extend my greetings to all such individuals who are involved in such initiatives.

My dear countrymen, thousands of kilometers from India, across many oceans and continents, lies a country - Chile. It takes a lot of time to reach Chile from India. However, the fragrance of Indian culture has been there for a long time. Another significant aspect is that Yoga is extremely popular

there. You will be pleased to know that there are more than 30 Yoga schools in Santiago, the capital of Chile. The International Day of Yoga is also celebrated with great fervor in Chile. I have been told that the House of Deputies is full of ardent enthusiasm for the Yoga Day. In these times of Corona, with a stress on immunity and ways to strengthen it, through the power of Yoga, now they are attaching much more importance to Yoga. The Chilean Congress, that is their Parliament, has passed a proposal. There, the 4th of November has been declared as National Yoga Day. Now, you would be wondering, what is so special about 4th of November! On 4th of November 1962, the first Yoga institution in Chile was established by José Rafael Estrada. By proclaiming this day as National Yoga Day, a tribute has been paid to Estrada ji. This is a special honour by the Chilean Parliament, which every Indian takes pride in. By the way, there is another aspect about the Chilean Parliament, one which will interest you. The name of the Vice President of the Chilean Senate is Rabindranath Quinteros. He has been so named, inspired by Vishwa Kavi Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

My dear countrymen, I have been requested by Dr. Swapnil Mantri from Jalna, Maharashtra and Prahlad Rajgopalan from Palakkad, Kerala on MyGov to speak on 'Road safety' in Mann Ki Baat. This very month, from the 18<sup>th</sup> of January to the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, our country is observing Road Safety month. Road accidents are a matter of concern not just in our country

but also the world over. Today, in India, many efforts are being made for road safety at the individual and collective level along with the Government. We should all become active stakeholders in these efforts to save lives.

Friends, you must have noticed, passing through the roads that the Border Road Organization builds, one gets to see many innovative slogans. Slogans such as 'This is highway not runway' or 'Be Mr. Late than Late Mr.' are quite effective in promoting awareness about being careful on the roads. Now you can also send such innovative slogans or catch phrases on MyGov. Good slogans from you too will be used in this campaign.

Friends, whilst speaking about Road safety, I would like to mention a post received on NaMo app from Aparna Das ji of Kolkata. Aparna ji has asked me to speak on the 'FASTag programme'. She says that the experience of travel has changed with 'FASTag'. This saves not just travel time ; problems like stopping at Toll Plaza, worrying about cash payment are also over. Aparna ji is right too! Earlier, a vehicle used to take on an average 7 to 8 minutes to cross our toll plazas. However, since the emergence of 'FASTag', this time has reduced to around one and a half minutes to 2 minutes on an

