

## **Mann Ki Baat English - Episode 81**

My dear countrymen, Namaskar. You are aware that for an important programme, I have to leave for America...hence I thought it would be apt to record Mann Ki Baat, prior to my departure to America. The day of Mann Ki Baat this September is important on another count, date wise. Routinely, we do remember a lot of days; we even celebrate myriad Days...and if you ask young sons-daughters at home, they are likely to furnish out an entire list of Days of the year with their chronological relevance! But, there is one more day that all of us must remember; this day is one that is immensely congruent to the traditions of India. It's one that connects us with our traditions that we have been following for centuries. That is – World Rivers Day.

It has been articulated here – Pibanti Naddhah, Swayameva Naambha...meaning that rivers do not drink their own water...they give it away altruistically. For us, rivers are not mere physical entities; for us a river is a living unit...and that is exactly why we refer to rivers as Mother! Numerous festivals, festive occasions, functions of ours, occasions to rejoice take place in the very laps of these mothers.

All of you are aware – with the advent of the month of Magh, in our country, a lot of people perform Kalpvaas on the banks of mother Ganga or other rivers for an entire month. This tradition has ceased

now...but in earlier times, it was customary to remember rivers while bathing at home. This tradition of remembering rivers may have gone extinct or exists sparsely...but there used to be a great tradition that would take one on a tour across the vastness of India while bathing early morning...a cerebral pilgrimage! It used to be a source of inspiration to connect with every nook and corner of the country. And of course, in India, it has been customary to chant a Shlok while bathing:

Gange cha yamune chaiva Godavari saraswati

Narmade Sindhu Kaveri Jale asmin sannidhim kuru

Earlier, at our homes, the elderly in the family would make children memorise the Shlok ...this also led to germinating Aastha, faith towards rivers in our country. It would inscribe an illustrated map of the great land of India on the psyche. That used to establish an emotional connect with rivers. It would result in nurturing a harmonious credence towards the very river that embodied the Mother, sentimentally as well as visually...as a way of life too! It was a way to instill 'Sanskaar'; the value system gamut.

Friends, now that we are discussing the significance of rivers in our country, it is but natural for everyone to raise a question...one, in fact, has the right to do so...and answering that question is our responsibility

too! Anyone can question – “you are singing so many songs dedicated to rivers, referring to a river as a Mother...then why is it that the river gets polluted? Our scriptures distinctly disapprove of polluting rivers, even a bit! And our traditions have been synchronous with the thought. You know, of course, that the western region of our India, especially Gujarat and Rajasthan, suffer from scarcity of water. They face famines, many a time. Now that is why, a new tradition has developed in the social life there. For example, when it starts raining in Gujarat, Jal-Jeelani Ekadashi is celebrated there. This means, it is synonymous with what we term as ‘Catch the Rain’ in today’s times...accumulating each and every drop of water...Jal-jeelani. On similar lines, after the rains, in Bihar and other regions of the East, the great festival of Chhatth is celebrated. I hope that keeping the Chatth Pooja in mind, preparations for cleaning and repairing riverbanks and Ghats would have commenced. We can very well undertake the endeavour of cleaning rivers and freeing them of pollution with collective effort and support. The Namami Gange Mission too is making advances today...collective efforts of all, in a way, mass awareness; a mass movement has a major role to play in that.

Friends, when one is referring to the river; when Mother Ganga is being talked about, one is tempted to draw your attention to another aspect. When Namami Gange is being referred to, one thing is certain to draw

your attention...especially that of the youth. These days, a special E-auction is being held. This electronic auction pertains to gifts presented to me by people from time to time. The money that accrues through this E-auction is dedicated solely to the Namami Gange Campaign. The affectionate, warm spirit, with which you present me gifts ...that very sentiment gets bolstered through this campaign.

Friends, in order to rejuvenate rivers throughout the country; in order to cleanse waters, the government and social service organizations keep undertaking one endeavour or the other. And this is not about the present day; it is going on for decades now. There are some people who have dedicated themselves to these causes. And it is this very tradition, this very endeavour, this very faith that has saved our rivers. Whenever such news come to my notice, from any corner of India, it evokes immense respect in my heart for people who embark upon such tasks...and I also feel like sharing that with you. Take a look at Vellore and Thiruvannamalai districts of Tamilnadu, whose example I wish to cite. A river named Naagnadi flows there. Years ago, the Naagnadi had all dried up. Because of that, the water level there had terribly gone down. But, the womenfolk there took up the cudgels to rejuvenate their river. And then...lo and behold – they got people connected, dug up canals through public participation, constructed check dams and recharge-wells. Friends, you too would be glad to know that today, the

river is brimming with water. And truly, when a river is full of water, it lends such tranquility to the mind...I have actually, witnessed the experience...

Many of you might be aware that on the very banks of river Sabarmati, Mahatma Gandhi set up the Sabarmati Ashram...during the last few decades, the river had dried up. 6 to 8 months a year, no water was even visible there. But river Narmada and river Sabarmati were linked...today, if you go to Ahmedabad, the waters of river Sabarmati fill one's heart with such joy! Similarly, our sisters from Tamilnadu are undertaking myriad such tasks...many such tasks are being done in various corners of the country. I know for sure that many of our saints, our gurus associated with our religious traditions are doing a lot for the sake of water and rivers, along with their spiritual pursuits...many of them are running campaigns to plant trees along riverbanks...at places, dirty water is being prevented from flowing into rivers.

Friends, when we are celebrating 'World River Day' today, I praise and greet all dedicated to this work. But to all people living near every river; to countrymen I will urge that in India in all corners at least once in a year a river festival must be celebrated.

My dear countrymen, never make the mistake of treating minor issues, little things as small. Through tiny efforts, at times, very

significant changes occur, and if we look towards the life of Mahatma Gandhi ji we will find every moment how even small things had so much importance and how using small issues he accomplished big resolutions. Our youth today must know how the campaign for cleanliness continuously gave energy to our freedom movement. It was Mahatma Gandhi who turned cleanliness into a mass movement. Mahatma Gandhi had connected cleanliness to the dream of Independence. Today after so many decades, the cleanliness movement has once again connected the country to the dream of a new India. And this is also becoming a campaign to change our habits too and we must not forget that this cleanliness is a programme. This cleanliness is a responsibility of the transition of sanskar from generation to generation and when the campaign for cleanliness continues generation after generation in the entire society cleanliness as a trait gets imbibed. And that is why this is not a subject of a year or two; of one government or the other government. Generation after generation, with alertness, continually, without being tired or stopping, with high reverence we have to remain associated with cleanliness and continue the campaign for cleanliness. And I have said earlier too that this cleanliness is a great tribute by this country to revered Bapu and we have to keep paying this tribute every time;

continuously.

Friends, people know that I don't ever let go any chance to speak in connection with cleanliness and possibly that is why a listener of 'Mann Ki Baat', Shriman Ramesh Patel ji has written to me that learning from Bapu, in this "Amrit Mahotsav" of freedom, we should take the resolve of economic cleanliness too. The way building of toilets enhanced the dignity of poor, similarly economic cleanliness ensures rights of the poor; eases their life. You are aware of the campaign that the country started regarding Jandhan accounts. Today, because of this the rightful money of the poor is getting credited directly into their accounts and because of this, obstacles like corruption have reduced very significantly. It is true that technology can help a lot in economic cleanliness. It is matter of delight for us that even in villages, the common person is getting connected in the direction of digital transactions through fin-tech UPI... its prevalence has begun increasing. I will tell you a figure which will make you proud; during last August, 355 crore UPI transactions took place in one month, that is more than nearly 350 crore transactions, that is, we can say that during the month of August UPI was used for digital transactions

more than 350 crore times. Today, on an average, digital payments of more than 2 lakh crore Rupees is happening through UPI. Through this the economy of the country is acquiring cleanliness and transparency, and we all know that now the importance of fin-tech is increasing a lot.

Friends, Bapu had connected cleanliness with independence; the same way he had made khadi the identity of freedom. Today in the 75 th year of freedom when we are celebrating the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence, we can say with satisfaction today that our young generation today is giving khadi the place of pride that khadi had during freedom struggle. Today the production of khadi and handloom has increased multiple times and its demand too has increased. You too know that there were many such occasions when business of more than a crore rupees has been transacted in the khadi showroom in Delhi. I too would like to remind you again that on the 2 nd of October, on revered Bapu's birth anniversary, let us together aim for another new record. In your city wherever khadi is sold, handloom is sold, handicraft is sold and now that the festival of Diwali is there.., for the

festive season, every khadi, handloom, cottage industry purchase of yours should strengthen the campaign for 'Vocal for Local', it should break all old records.

Friends, in this period of Amrit Mahotsav, a campaign to disseminate to everyone the untold stories of the history of freedom is also going on... and for this, upcoming writers, youth of the country and the world were called upon. For this more than 13 thousand people have registered till now and that too in 14 different languages. And for me a thing of joy also is that non-resident Indians from more than 20 countries have expressed their wish to join this campaign. There is another interesting information- more than nearly 5000 upcoming writers are searching out tales of struggle for freedom. They have taken the lead to write something on those who are unsung heroes, who are un-named, whose names don't appear on the pages of history, on the theme of such unsung heroes, on their lives, on those events, that is the youth of the country have decided to bring forth the history of those freedom fighters who were not even discussed during the last 75 years. I appeal to all the listeners; I appeal to all those connected with the field of education. You too motivate the youth. You too come forward and it is my firm belief

that during the Amrit Mahotsav of Independence the people who are working for writing history will make history as well.

My dear countrymen, we all know about the Siachen Glacier. The cold there is so terrible that it is beyond capacity of a common person to live there. With snow spread far and wide, there is no sign of any vegetation anywhere. The temperature here dips to even minus 60 degrees.

A few days ago, the feat that a team of 8 Divyang persons performed in this inaccessible region of Siachen is a matter of pride for every countryman. This team created a world record by hoisting its flag on the Kumar Post situated at an altitude of more than 15 thousand feet at the Siachen glacier.

Despite the challenges of physical ability, the feats that these Divyangs have achieved are an inspiration for the whole country and when you get to know about the members of this team, you will also be filled with courage and enthusiasm, just like I was. The names of these brave Divyangs are – Mahesh Nehra, Akshat Rawat of Uttarakhand, Pushpak Gawande of Maharashtra, Ajay Kumar of Haryana, Lobsang Chospel of Ladakh, Major Dwarkesh of Tamil Nadu, Irfan Ahmed Mir of Jammu and

Kashmir and Chongjin Ingmo of Himachal Pradesh. This operation to conquer the Siachen Glacier has been successful because of the veterans of the special forces of the Indian Army. I commend the team for this historic and unprecedented achievement. It also shows the spirit of our countrymen to tackle every challenge with a “Can Do Culture”, a “Can Do Determination” and a “Can Do Attitude”.

Friends, today many efforts are being made for the welfare of Divyangjan in the country. I got a chance to know about one such effort being made in Uttar Pradesh - “One Teacher, One Call”. This unique effort in Bareilly is showing a new path to the Divyang children. This campaign is being led by the principal of a school in Dabhaura Gangapur, Deepmala Pandey ji. During the Corona period, due to this campaign, not only did the admission of a large number of children become possible, more than 350 teachers have also joined it with a spirit of service. These teachers go from village to village calling for Divyang children, looking out for them and then ensuring their admission in one school or the other. I deeply appreciate this noble effort of Deepmala ji and her fellow teachers for the sake of Divyangjans. Every such effort in the field of education is going to shape the future of our country.

My dear countrymen, the condition of our lives today is such that the word Corona resonates in our ears many times a day... the biggest global pandemic in a hundred years, COVID-19 has taught every countryman a lot. Today there has been an increase in curiosity and awareness about Healthcare and Wellness. Traditionally natural products which are beneficial for wellness and health are available in abundance in our country. Patayat Sahu ji, who lives in Nandol, Kalahandi, Odisha, has been doing unique work in this area for years. He has planted medicinal plants on one and a half acres of land. Not only this, Sahu ji has also carried out documentation of these medicinal plants. Satish ji of Ranchi has shared another similar information to me through a letter. Satish ji has drawn my attention to an Aloe Vera Village in Jharkhand. The women of Deori village near Ranchi had undergone training in Aloe Vera cultivation from Birsa Agricultural School under the leadership of Manju Kachhap ji. After this they started cultivating aloe vera. Not only did this farming benefit in the field of health; the income of these women also increased. They had good income even during the Covid pandemic. One of the major reasons for this was that the companies making sanitizers were buying Aloe Vera directly from them. Today a team of about forty women is involved in this work. And Aloe Vera is cultivated over many acres. Whether it is Patayat Sahu ji of Odisha or this team of women in Deori, the way they

have linked agriculture with the field of health is an example in itself.

Friends, the 2nd of October also marks the birth anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri ji. In his memory, this day also teaches us about those who attempt new experiments in agriculture. To promote start-ups in the field of medicinal plants, an Incubator by the name of Medi-Hub TBI is operational in Anand, Gujarat. In a very short time, this Incubator associated with medicinal and aromatic plants has supported the business idea of 15 entrepreneurs. Sudha Chebrolu ji has launched her start-up only after getting the help of this Incubator. Priority is given to women in this company and they are also responsible for innovative herbal formulations. Another such entrepreneur is Subhashree ji who has also received help from this Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Incubator. Subhashree ji's company is working in the field of herbal room and car fresheners. She has also created a herbal terrace garden which has more than 400 medicinal herbs.

Friends, the Ministry of Ayush has taken an interesting initiative to increase awareness about Medicinal and Herbal Plants among children and Professor Ayushman ji has taken the lead. It is possible that you must be wondering who Professor Ayushman is! Actually Professor Ayushman is the name of a comic book. In this, short stories have been

prepared through different cartoon characters. Along with this, the usefulness of healthy medicinal plants like Aloe Vera, Tulsi, Amla, Giloy, Neem, Ashwagandha and Brahmi has been mentioned. Friends, in the current context, with the trend of people around the world regarding medicinal plants and herbal products increasing, India has immense potential. In the past, there has been a significant increase in the export of Ayurvedic and herbal products.

I urge scientists, researchers and people associated with the start-up world to pay attention to such products, which not only increase the wellness and immunity of the people, but also help in increasing the income of our farmers and youth.

Friends, moving beyond traditional farming, novel initiatives and options are being done in agriculture and are continuously creating new means of self-employment. The story of two brothers from Pulwama is also an example of this. The way Bilal Ahmed Sheikh and Munir Ahmed Sheikh found new avenues for themselves in Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, they are an example of New India. 39 years old Bilal Ahmed ji is highly qualified, he has obtained many degrees. He is now using his experience of higher education by launching his own start-up in agriculture. Bilal ji has installed a unit of Vermi composting at

his home. The bio-fertilizer prepared from this unit has not only benefited a lot in agriculture ; it has also brought employment opportunities to the people. Every year, farmers are getting about three thousand quintals of Vermicompost from the units managed by these brothers. Today 15 people are also working in this Vermicomposting unit. A large number of people are reaching to see this unit, and most of them are young people who want to do something in the agriculture sector. The Sheikh brothers of Pulwama took a pledge to become a job creator instead of a job seeker and today they are showing a new path not only to Jammu and Kashmir, but to the people across the country as well.

My dear countrymen, the 25th of September is the birth anniversary of a great son of the country, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay ji. Deen Dayal ji is one of the greatest thinkers of the last century. His economic philosophy, his policies aimed at empowering the society, the path of Antyodaya shown by him remain as relevant in the present context and are also inspirational. Three years ago, on his birth anniversary, the 25th of September, the world's largest health assurance scheme – Ayushman Bharat scheme was implemented. Today, more than two and a half crore impoverished people of the country have got free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh in the hospital under the Ayushman Bharat

scheme. Such a massive scheme for the poor is dedicated to the Antyodaya philosophy of Deen Dayal ji. If the youth of today inculcate values and ideals into their lives, it can be of great benefit to them. Once in Lucknow, Deen Dayal ji had said – “How many good things, good qualities there are – we derive all these from the society itself. We have to pay the debt of society, we must think on these lines .” That is, Deen Dayal ji taught us that we take so much from society, from the country, whatever it be, it is only because of the country ; thus we should think about how we will repay our debt towards the country. This is a significant message for today's youth.

Friends, from the life of Deen Dayal ji, we also get a lesson to never give up. Despite the adverse political and ideological circumstances, he never wavered from the vision of a Swadeshi, home grown model for the development of India. Today many young people want to move ahead by breaking away from the oft-treaded paths. They want to do things their own way. Deen Dayal ji's life can teach them a lot. That is why I urge our youngsters to definitely know about him.

My dear countrymen, we touched upon many topics today. Like we were discussing, the time to come is of festivals. The whole country is also going to celebrate the festival of the victory over untruth by

Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram. But during this festival we have to remember about one more fight - that is the country's fight against Corona. Team India is making new records everyday in this fight. With regards to Vaccination, the country has made many such records which are being talked about the world over. Every Indian has an important role in this fight. We have to get the vaccine administered when our turn comes, but we also have to take care that no one is left out of this circle of safety. Those around you who have not got vaccinated also have to be taken to the vaccine center. Even after getting vaccinated, the necessary protocol has to be followed. I hope that once again Team India will keep the flag flying high in this fight. Next time, we will discuss some more topics in 'Mann Ki Baat'. Wishing you all, every countryman the best for the fortcoming festivals.

Thank You!