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Kiran Mazumdar Shaw Interacts With Sadhguru On Virus, Vaccine And Post-Pandemic World

27 June 2020, Coimbatore: Calling on young people to “stay alive, stay sane and stay young,” Sadhguru, Founder, Isha Foundation detailed how the pandemic can be leveraged to ensure that India catches up with its Asian neighbours in development. He was talking to Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, founding Chairperson and Managing Director of India’s leading biotechnology giant, Biocon.

Sadhguru began by asking Kiran Shaw what she thinks about the origins of the pandemic. She said the family of Corona viruses which include MERS and SARS and COVID-19 are transmitted from animals to humans. But COVID-19 was highly infectious, much more than the other two. She also clarified that all viruses mutate. Referring to the vaccine in development, Shaw said that it was aimed at neutralizing what is known as the “spike protein”, the most dangerous element of the virus. As this protein remains unchanged in all mutated versions, a single vaccine could work against all forms, she said.

The conversation then moved to a range of topics including how to decongest cities and provide a better quality of life for citizens, especially children. “I’m really concerned about this generation of children. They are living in two-bedroom or three-bedroom apartments. If they step out, they’re straight into the traffic. They don’t know what’s a playground, they don’t know what’s a forest, they don’t know what it means to swim in a lake,” Sadhguru said and recounted his recent conversation with realtors where he had suggested the concept of “one building city.” He said he had spoken to builders in

Bangalore and hoped it would be picked up by some of them. “Get 50 acres, let's say 50 km away on one of the highways. Only one acre you build, you can build 100 floors; 49 acres just plant trees, create a lake, walking spaces, everything. No waste comes out of this building. You (will) have residences, offices, small shopping areas, a small multiplex, you have a little school, everything. So nobody needs to drive anywhere. Once a week, go wherever you want to go. But every day you are not driving. You have a beautiful place to live.”

Speaking about the importance of agricultural reforms, Sadhguru acknowledged that the government was moving in this direction and said focusing on economies of scale would greatly benefit farmers by reducing their input cost and freeing their hands to engage in allied or new activities. “If you integrate agriculture and marketing processes, 65 days you can grow two successful crops. This is all it takes. That means 300 days, you will have 500 million people, hands free.” He said that this could be critical human capital that could be trained and skilled for a range of activities. Sadhguru has often spoken about how India is uniquely endowed with a latitudinal spread from Kanyakumari to Kashmir conducive to grow any kind of crop in the world. “Because of the latitudinal spread and 12-month agriculture and 60 percent of the population knowing this magic of transforming mud into food, we can become the breadbasket of the world,” he said if we focused on releasing the farmer from what he termed “the shackles” of market restrictions.

Responding to Shaw’s question on whether India needs to improve public healthcare infrastructure, Sadhguru asserted that the country should focus on preventive healthcare rather than establish a government-funded healthcare system that was neither practical nor necessary. “Healthcare should not be the business of doctors or healthcare industry as such, health must be the business of every individual. You becoming sick is hugely expensive for a country like this.” He cited the US model that spends 3 trillion dollars on public healthcare for 350 million people. “In my opinion, if anything sinks United States, it's going to be their healthcare. It's the most affluent country. Affluence means essentially choice of nourishment, choice of lifestyle. These two things, if you have, you must ensure you're healthy, isn't it? This is every human being's business,” he said.

Calling on the youth to take the lead in setting a new direction for India, Sadhguru made a compelling point about equipping oneself to leverage opportunities. “Right now, there is a certain upheaval. If you're fit enough to ride that wave, then you will see there are many many possibilities. Well, life may not be easy, but it will be exciting and wonderful. You must decide whether you want an easy life or a fantastic experience of life, because in this life, there is nothing other than the profoundness of our experience, and the impact we can create in the world.”

He emphasised India’s advantage as an agricultural economy. India could ensure that nobody starves by working to well-executed plan. He spoke about Isha’s efforts in preventing starvation by feeding thousands of people every day in rural Tamil Nadu. He also shared his own contribution to the effort: more than 9 crore raised from two of his paintings that were created to fund Isha’s outreach efforts. All proceeds are being used to fund Isha’s efforts to protect rural communities from starvation. A visibly excited Kiran Shaw wanted to know more about the paintings. Sadhguru spoke with enthusiasm about his new projects.

“In my life I had never really painted. Now I have turned into a painter, because I have to feed all these people you know,” he laughed. “My first painting sold for 4 crore and 14 lakhs. My second painting is out for auction. Already it has crossed 5.1 crore,” he said adding that the auction would close on Guru Purnima, 5 July. “I always paint pictures in my mind. I never thought my hand could translate that onto the canvas,” Sadhguru said and went on to detail his artistic techniques. “Initially, I used acrylic. After that I started using various natural material like soil background, filtered soil with tree resin - these are all my own innovations. I'm using turmeric as background, I'm using cow dung as background, doing charcoal, doing all variety of things,” he concluded clearly enjoying his new role. “I think I will ask them to send you a bunch of pictures,” he told a delighted Shaw.

The webinar was aired live on 26 June 2020.

If you would like to know more about this, please write to mediarelations@ishafoundation.org.