

**Ambassador of India Man Mohan Bhanot's message on the occasion of conclusion of the
150th Birth-Anniversary Celebrations of Gandhi
(2nd October 2020, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea)**

Dear all,

On this noble occasion, please accept greetings from India to His Excellency President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, his government, his people and fellow Indian Nationals living in this lovely country!



This day last year had marked the beginning of the worldwide celebrations of 150th birth anniversary of our beloved Gandhi. Today we are concluding a year of the activities, we were engaged-in keeping alive the Gandhian ideals and spirit. It was an opportunity to remind ourselves about the importance of non-violence, and of a conflict-free state of mind devoid of any fear. You may all be aware that this day is also marked as the United Nations International Day of Non-Violence in recognition of Gandhi's relevance.



The "Non-Violence" (or "Knotted Gun") sculpture by Swedish artist Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd on display at the UN Visitors' Plaza •

It has indeed been a heartening year for all peace lovers, the way activities all over the world took place in remembrance of Gandhi. Remembering him so enthusiastically reminds us of the words of Martin Luther King Jr.,

"If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk".

The commemorative celebrations of 150th anniversary started two years ago. In September 2019, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, many world leaders including UN Secretary-General António Guterres gathered to remember Gandhi at the UN Headquarters. The United Nations released a special commemorative stamp to mark 150 years since Gandhi's birth.

Gandhi spoke about the environment, *"The earth, the air, the land and the water are not an inheritance from our fore fathers but on loan from our children. So we have to handover to them at least as it was handed over to us."*

To carry forward his concern for environment, a *Solar Park* was set-up with 193 solar panels installed on the roof of the UN Headquarters in New York, one solar panel for each UN member state. Prime Minister Modi then made the following statement in his speech,

"Mahatma Gandhi never held positions of power. Yet, he motivates people around the world...Whether it was Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela, they were inspired by Gandhi,"



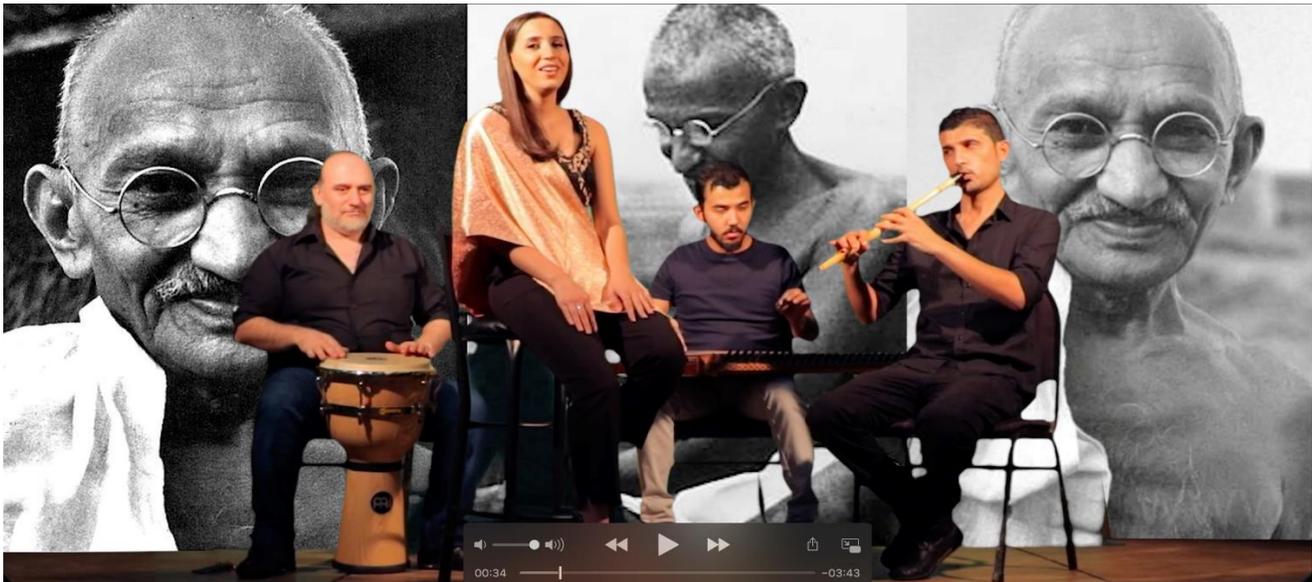
The way in which one and all, irrespective of their creed or race have embraced Gandhi, takes-us back in time when his contemporary Albert Einstein made the famous statement, *"Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."*

True to Einstein's predictions, Gandhi's universal acceptance today embodies him as a messiah. In the Indian beliefs, the messiahs appear to redeem the distressed human beings with extreme helplessness. Gandhi's making was routed in Africa where he shockingly witnessed the most brutal and ugly aspect of disregard for the human dignity. He struggled to comprehend as to how one human being can behave with another so un-empathetically! As he contemplated on this thought more and more, and thought of ways to redeem the unprivileged, he got transformed from a normal human being to a Mahatma. India would always feel indebted to Africa for giving her Gandhi the Mahatma. When Nelson Mandela was

awarded the Nobel prize for peace in 1994, he claimed that he owed his success to Gandhi, *“India is the Mahatma’s country of birth; South Africa his country of adoption.”*

As part of anniversary celebrations Gandhi’s favourite devotional song was sung by the prominent celebrity singers from more than 100 countries. The meaning of the first two stanzas of the song is,

*Call those people Vaishnav who Feel the pain of others,
Help those who are in misery, But never let self-conceit enter their mind.
They respect the entire world,
Do not disparage anyone, Keep their words, actions and thoughts pure,
The mother of such a soul is blessed.*



Syrian Singer Carmen and Simon Mresh’s music group singing ‘Vaishnav Jan’

Gandhi always believed that “Cleanliness is next to Godliness”. His concern for cleanliness was borne-out of the suffering of the poor and the underprivileged. The people contract diseases with the onset of the big industrialized cities forcing dwellings in crowded places or slums. Prime Minister Modi, as a tribute to Gandhi, motivated a nationwide, “Swatchh Bharat Abhiyaan” or “Clean India Mission” a country-wide campaign initiated to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management (SWM). Phase 1 of the mission lasted till October 2019. Phase 2 will be implemented between 2020-21 and 2024-25. To celebrate the uniqueness of Gandhi, Prime Minister Modi also released a commemorative coin of unusual denomination of Rs 150 on 2nd October 2019.

The sentient minds of today are disturbed with the paranoia of our age, raging against the conflicts, terrorism, economic disparities, narrow selfishness and moral debasement. Gandhi’s talisman carried a universal appeal in dealing with such situations, *“If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. We need not wait to see what others do.”*

Gandhi always held the sufferer in higher esteem than the one who inflicts suffering. The hero in bringing the social change was the self himself than his surroundings or controllers. The change in surroundings are automatic when there is a change in the self. This is in accordance with the age-old Indian philosophy of discovering the outer universe (macro) in the inner universe of self(micro).

Soon after opening of the Indian Embassy in Malabo, we began celebrations by organizing a seminar in remembrance of Gandhi on 2nd October 2019 with the active encouragement from the Equatoguinean Government and the diplomatic community in Malabo. This was followed by a joint event in coordination with the French Cultural Centre involving discourses and screening of documentaries on Gandhi. The Embassy also organized an essay competition on Gandhi. All the participants in these events owe our special gratitude in realizing the usefulness of Gandhi in present times. Even though with the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, we have been restricted in our activities, it has nevertheless failed to dampen our spirits in imbibing the Gandhian ideals.



Remembering Gandhi in Malabo

“Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment”- Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhi always advocated the importance of means than the end result. He always believed in the pure and self-motivated action rather than the awards attached to the end. It is the process that makes our lives better than the goal we achieve. The quality of life in a person, irrespective of the humility of his profession depends on the creativity involved in his action. While a motivated street sweeper ever finding ways to excel in the cleaning of his street may be living a king’s life, a king devoid of any creativity of doing good of others may actually be living like a pauper, when measured on the scale of value.

To mark the 150th anniversary, the Government of India proposed publishing of an anthology of articles on “What Gandhi means to me” from people across the world. It is a matter of great pride for us to divulge that Equatoguinean Oscar A. Nchaso Bekari’s article has been selected for publishing in this compendium.

Let us also pay our homage on this august day, to the India’s beloved former late Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri who shares his birthday on 2nd October 2020.

Thank you and wish you all very happy birth anniversaries of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastriji!

(Man Mohan Bhanot)
Ambassador of India in Malabo
2nd October 2020
