

**Report on the Joint International Conference on  
Remembering and Re-evaluating Mahatma Gandhi on his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary  
8-9 February 2019**

The KSKV Kachchh University, Kachchh-Bhuj, and CoHaB Indian Diaspora Centre, University of Mumbai, had jointly organised an Interdisciplinary International Conference on *Remembering and Re-evaluating Mahatma Gandhi on his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary* on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2019 to commemorate the 150 years of the Mahatma's birth. The conference was held at the KSKV Kachchh University, Kachchh-Bhuj.

This conference sought to evaluate and re-evaluate the role Gandhi played in the socio-economic growth of India. Gandhi has remained enshrined on India's currency notes but India's economic policies during the socialist period and then the capitalist, global era has nothing in common with Gandhi's ideals of small-scale, village level development. The joint conference was primarily organised to remember and re-evaluate the life, philosophy and the social messages of Mahatma Gandhi. This year is also his wife, companion and political associate Kasturba's 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary and it is appropriate that she too was remembered and recalled at this conference.

The conference was inaugurated on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2019 in the presence of the Vice Chancellor Dr. Dholakia and the Guest of Honour, Shri Kantisen Shroff, Founder Trustee of the Shrujan Trust. The conference began with a soulful rendition of the famous bhajan by the Mahatma - Vaishnav Janato by Shri Kamlesh Solanki. Shri Pheroze Nowrojee, Lawyer, Author and Human Rights Advocate, Nairobi, Kenya, delivered the Inaugural Address. Dr. Pushpa Motiyani and Dr. Dholakia also garlanded the painting of the Mahatma with the thread spun on a charkha at the Gujarat Vidyapith.



**Shri Kamlesh Solanki**



**Dr. Motiyani and Dr. Dholakia**



**Shri Kantisen Shroff**



**Mr. Pheroze Nowrojee giving the Inaugural Address**

All the keynote presentations at the conference were made by invited speakers from India and abroad who spoke on various aspects of Gandhi in Diaspora. Day two of the conference saw 200 participants making their presentations at parallel sessions organised at the venue.

The first keynote session had three papers presented by speakers from Kenya, South Africa and India. The first paper of the conference was presented by Ms.KanyaPadayachee, ECD Project Coordinator at the Gandhi Development Trust, South Africa. Her paper was entitled, 'Relevance of Gandhi 150 years after his birth.' Padayachee spoke about how Gandhi's twenty one years in South Africa made an indelible impact on him and the country, shaping his politics and influencing, in no small measure, the politics of that country. In detailing Gandhi's South African journey and the resultant legacy programmes, she substantiated Gandhi's current relevance in South Africa. Padayachee's presentation outlined the Gandhian vision of a society of diverse people based on mutual understanding, cooperation and respect.



**Ms.KanyaPadayachee making her presentation**

The second paper was presented by Dr. Siby Joseph, Dean, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha. His paper was entitled - 'Contribution of Lanza del Vasto in Spreading the Message of Gandhi in the Western Society.' His paper focussed on Lanza del Vasto, an Italian aristocrat who came to India in 1937 to meet Gandhi and find answers to some of the fundamental questions. Lanza's meeting with Gandhi and three months stay with Gandhi was significant in terms of understanding the life, philosophy and methods of action of the Mahatma. On request from Lanza, Gandhi had given him a new name *Shantidas* meaning servant of peace, which set the goal and mission of life of this philosopher. Siby's paper traced the life of Lanza del Vasto and his contribution in spreading Gandhiji's message in the West.



**Dr.Siby Joseph presenting his paper**

The first keynote session was chaired by Dr. R. V. Basiya, KSKV Kachchh University.



**Dr. R. V. Basiya**

Keynote Session Two began with a paper presentation by Professor Dr. Vibhuti Patel, Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Her paper was entitled - 'Satyagraha as a Peaceful Method of Conflict Resolution.' She had focussed on how Gandhian Satyagraha should be squarely located within conflict resolution discourse. She spoke of how in the principle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the technique of resistance to evil and untruth. His Satyagraha was inspired by boundless love and compassion. It was opposed to sin, not the sinner, the evil, not the evildoer. For him truth was God. Many thinkers and activities in the world today have begun to turn to the life, thoughts and methods of Mahatma Gandhi to look for solutions that can take humanity in this direction. Many countries have witnessed popular movements for freedom, equality and peace, which drew inspiration from the life and methods of Gandhi, such as the Civil Rights Movement, led by Martin Luther King Junior in the USA and anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. Vibhuti's paper discussed how in a time of tense conflicts based on caste, class, ethnicity, race, gender, religion and territory, forgiveness may have an extraordinary value as a daily ethic as well as a practical process.

Professor Patels' presentation was followed by Dr. Pushpa Motiyani, Gandhian Study and Peace Research, Gujarat Vidyapith. Her paper was entitled - 'Gandhian Nonviolence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.'

The second keynote session was chaired by Shri Haresh Dholakia, Writer and Columnist



**(l-r): Dr. Vibhuti Patel, Dr. Pushpa Motiyani, Shri Haresh Dholakia**

The third keynote session, chaired by Professor Dr. Vibhuti Patel, had Dr. Roxana Marinescu, The Bucharest University of Studies, Romania, presenting her paper entitled - 'Glocalising Gandhi.' Roxana attempted to present the potential of Gandhi's theories for transfer to the Romanian postcommunist context, within the larger re-evaluation taking place in India at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. While Gandhi's relevance for the Indian youth today is being questioned, she tried to focus his relevance for another space, with many interferences with the postcolonial condition, i.e. the postcommunist one. In an attempt to glocalise Gandhi, Marinescu presented some instances in

which Romanian citizens candidly used the Gandhian instruments in practice, in non-violent marches and protests, when they were met with state violence. Her paper discussed how Gandhian philosophy has a straightforward relevance for the postcommunist space, as it has been adopted (although not always consciously) in its own struggle for decolonisation.



**Dr. Roxana Marinescu presenting her paper**

The last paper for the day was presented by Professor Dr.Somdatta Mandal, Visva-Bharati University, Shantiniketan. Her paper was entitled - “The ‘Mahatma’ and the ‘Gurudev’: Gandhi, Tagore and Santiniketan.’Somdatta’s paper focussed on a lesser-known and less-discussed perspective in the Gandhi-Tagore relationship. Though poles apart in their social and political beliefs, not just in their daily mode of living, one is intrigued by Gandhi’s several visits to Tagore’s ashram at Santiniketan. Gandhi continued to visit the Santiniketan ashram in the early 1920s even during the time that Tagore began to voice his opposition to the former’s politics of non-cooperation. Nevertheless Gandhi continued to reverentially listen to Gurudev, whom he had called ‘The Great Sentinel’ in *Young India* of 13 October 1921 and Tagore continued to call him Mahatma in spite of what he considered to be his dubious politics. The paper also highlighted the role played by Charles Freer Andrews and the correspondence between the three of them in bonding this relationship.



**Dr.SomdattaMandal making her presentation**



**Dr.Vibhuti Patel chaired Keynote Session Three**

Day Two of the conference began with Keynote Session three, chaired by Professor Dr.SomdattaMandal. The first paper for the day was presented by Dr. Nishikant Kolge. His paper was entitled - 'How to Understand Life and Philosophy of Gandhi: Some Suggestions.' His paper discussed how a student of life and thoughts of Gandhi encounters difficulties while reading, understanding, and making sense of life and philosophy of Gandhi and how he resolved them for himself. Kolge attempted to make some suggestions that need to be kept in mind while reading Gandhi for comprehensive understanding of life and philosophy of Gandhi.



**Dr. Nishikant Kolge presenting his paper**

This keynote session was followed by parallel sessions for registered participants of the conference. Almost 200 participants had registered for this conference and made their presentations in pre-decided clusters.



**Parallel Sessions**

The final keynote session was chaired by Dr.Kashmira Mehta, KSKV Kachchh University. Dr.Sooshilla Gopaul, Open University, Mauritius, presented her paper entitled - 'Impact of Gandhiji in Mauritius.' Sooshilla recalled the circumstances around Gandhi's visit to Mauritius and pointed out the visible and concrete signs of Gandhi's presence in the island today. She also touched upon the elements of his philosophy that have shaped the Mauritian society in its daily life and ethos and probed into the cosmopolitan aspects of this phenomenon. Gopaul examined its roots and exposed the development of the Gandhian impact through the concept of home and memory and identity building. Her paper concluded by evaluating the way in which the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi defies space and time in today's globallocalised world.



**Dr. Sooshilla Gopaul presenting her paper**

Dr. Gopaul's paper was followed by a paper by Dr. Vijay Kumar of the Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology, Bhuj. His paper was entitled - 'Gandhi's Thoughts on the Environment.'



**Dr. Vijay Kumar making his presentation**

The valedictory session was chaired by the former Vice Chancellor of KSKV Kachchh University, Dr. Kanti Gor. The valedictory speaker, Shri Ramesh Sanghavi, spoke on 'The Foundation of Gandhiji's Life and Philosophy.' He highlighted Gandhiji's practice of self-realisation and the tenets he followed.



**Dr. Kanti Gor, Former VC, KSKV Kachchh University, Chairing the Valedictory Session**



**Shri Ramesh Sanghavi giving the Valedictory Address**

The valedictory session was followed by feedback from the delegates. Invited speakers and registered participants gave their feedback about the conference.

Dr. Kashmira Mehta gave the concluding remarks, followed by a vote of thanks by Dr. Mahesh Thacker, I/C Registrar, KSKV Kachchh University.



(l-r): Dr. Kanti Gor, Dr. Roxana Marinescu, Shri Ramesh Sanghavi, Dr. Dholakia, Dr. Mahesh Thacker

A cultural evening had been organised at the end of the academic proceedings on Day 1 of the conference:

