

Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George on the Occasion of the Gandhi Jayanti on Oct 2, 2021

Good Morning Everybody,

Let me begin by welcoming you all to this morning, on this important occasion when we celebrate the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of Nation of India and one of the greatest sons of India.

During the last one year, despite the many challenges of the Covid 19 pandemic we were all celebrating India in Kuwait as part of the celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait and also the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

Together we organized many events, together we took many initiatives, together we celebrated everything that is Indian in Kuwait. We celebrated all festivals. We also celebrated the lives of each one of our heroes. In all these celebrations there was one common thread that we were all proud of. That was our Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi. No day in our lives, no event in our community is complete without celebrating the life and messages of our Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji is someone who makes every Indian proud every day.

His eternal words 'My Life is My Message' continue to inspire billions, irrespective of their age, gender, religion or region. He is respected and adored across the continents for his contribution to humanity. He was one of those who spoke as he thought, and acted as he spoke, one of those few, on whom no shadow fell between word and deed. His words were deeds, and they built a movement and a nation and changed the lives of countless individuals, it continues to change many lives.

Gandhi's Talisman appears to be very simple in the complex world of today. But think about the power and depth of this eternal message. He said, I quote: "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man or woman whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to

be of any use to him/her. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.” Unquote.

This has been a guiding principle for each one of us in Kuwait during this Covid 19 crisis when we regularly came across many who needed support and guidance. What we witnessed here in Kuwait during the Covid 19 pandemic was an unprecedented campaign when the Indian community join hands with the Embassy transcending religious, regional and language barriers and work together to help their brothers and sisters in need. In fact, what was at display was what Mahatma Gandhi has taught us. An undercurrent of determination and commitment to help those in need has been part and parcel of the lives of every Indian in Kuwait.

Dear Friends,

Mahatma Gandhi is an embodiment of everything that India stood for for millennia, including its spirit of Vasudaiva Kudumbakam, world is one family. I am happy to recall that during the most difficult times of Covid 19 pandemic, when the entire world was facing challenges, India followed the message of Mahatma Gandhi and extended a helping hand to all countries across the world.

When the history of the Covid 19 period is written after several decades, India will be remembered as one of those countries which extended a helping hand to the world, 93 countries received Covid 19 vaccines from India and over 150 countries received Covid 19 related medicines from India. The pharmacy of the world, India made history as the Good Samaritan of the world.

Let's take a moment and recall the period in world history when Mahatma Gandhi actually lived on this earth. The world then saw several wars, including two World Wars. That period produced so many war heroes, so many who built empires and ruled them. But we don't see any celebrations on their birth anniversary anywhere in the world. But that is not the case with Mahatma Gandhi, we have seen how the whole world celebrated his 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi last year. Each year the United Nations celebrate his birth day as the International Day of Non Violence. His statues

and busts are erected in almost all the countries in the world, postal stamps are issued by almost all countries. For the world he is a Mahatma, a Great Soul. For us Indians, he is more than a Mahatma. Let me repeat, he is an embodiment of everything that India as an ancient civilisation and as a modern nation stands for.

For us pravasis he has been always an icon, who lived abroad as a pravasis for several years and returned to his motherland, as we all will return one day. As a pravasi abroad and during his life as the leader of our freedom struggle he was a symbol of Indian values and ethos. In eighteen hundred and ninety three, standing in front of thousands of Indian laborers in South Africa, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a young lawyer from India said, "There are several causes for which I am ready to die for, but there are no causes for which I am ready to kill for."

This was a vow of non-violence in body, spirit and mind. It is with this weapon of non- violence Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Indian nation, defeated the mightiest nation of the world and ended two hundred years of colonial rule. Today, even after several decades of his death, he continues to be the icon of Indian ethos, its values and continues to be a bridge connecting India to the world.

Today morning the Secretary General of United Nations said in his message, I quote, "Hatred, division and conflict have had their day. It is time to usher in a new era of peace, trust and tolerance. On this International Day of Non-Violence - Gandhi's birthday - let's heed his message of peace, and commit to building a better future for all." Unquote.

Let me conclude by quoting what Hon'ble Rashtrapati Ji had said about Mahatma Gandhi, "Mahatma Gandhi belongs not just to India, but to the entire world. His universal teachings have a special resonance in all corners. In these times of strife, his powerful message of non-violence and peaceful co-existence stands all the more relevant." Unquote.

Once again, I welcome you all and thank you all for joining me today in celebrating this anniversary.
Thank you.