

**Embassy of India
Tokyo**

**Opening Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George
at the Martyrs' Day - January 30, 2023**

Ven. Mikio Asai, members of Japan - Bharat Sarvodaya Mitrata Sangha, Distinguished speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, we gather here on the solemn occasion of Martyrs' day to pay our tributes and homage to our Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. I thank Japan Bharat Sarvodaya Mitrata Sangha for taking the initiative to observe this day to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi.

Today we remember, Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation of India. On Martyrs' Day we also recall the heroic sacrifices of all those great women and men who devoted themselves towards India's freedom and wellbeing of every Indian. Gandhiji is an immortal universal treasure whose life actions, values and principles, and words of wisdom continue to be followed by billions of people around the world. In today's turbulent and challenging times, it is imperative that we 'Remember Mahatma Gandhi' and imbibe his noble thoughts, emulate his teachings and follow the peaceful path he had shown us.

While we recall his leadership, one of the earliest events in Gandhi ji's life stands out. 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. On another occasion, challenging the colonial rulers Mahatma Gandhi said, “They may torture my body, break my bones, even kill me, then they will have my dead body, not my obedience.” He has proved that non-violence is not running away from the challenges that we face. It is not running away from our responsibilities. It is facing these challenges with courage and discipline. It is with this weapon of non - violence that Mahatma Gandhi won India freedom, a freedom that we continue to cherish in India as the world’s largest democracy with 900 million voters.

Non-violence is a philosophy evolved over several centuries in India. It is part of the conscience of Indian life and society. Non-violence is not a weapon for the weak. It is the weapon for the strong. It requires greater heroism than of the bravest soldiers. It is the expression of the deepest love for all humans including one’s enemies. It is not only the lack of the physical harm towards others. It also lacks hatred and ill will towards them. Non-violence is not running away from the challenges that we face. It is not running away from our responsibilities. It is facing these challenges with courage and discipline.

In a world dominated by violence and hatred, Mahatma Gandhi reincarnated the Indian concept of non-violence. We also remember the Non- Violence that Lord Buddha preached. Gandhi ji’s example influenced and inspired many later freedom struggles. I recall the words of Martin Luther King Jr. who said, “Gandhi was inevitable. 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.” Unquote. He continues to inspire millions across the world. His catchwords, now or never, do or die continue to evoke fear in the minds of oppressors. His famous words, “An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind,” remains a guiding principle for humanity. It is in recognition of this contribution that, in 2007 the United Nations General Assembly unanimously, I repeat, unanimously adopted a resolution to observe October 2nd every year as the International Day of Non-violence.

Gandhiji said; ‘My Life is My Message’. 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.

Gandhi ji gave us a Talisman, which everyone who holds any public office needs to remember every day. 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 should be a guiding principle for each one of us.

Gandhiji’s also laid a lot of emphasis on self-reliant, self-sufficient villages. This idea has special relevance today, as India has now charted on a vision of building a self-reliant nation (Aatmanirbhar Bharat) and turning Gandhi ji’s dreams into reality.

The One District One Product (ODOP) program that Government of India has adopted also has its origin from Gandhi ji's vision of self-reliant villages.

COVID-19 pandemic has taught us a number of lessons and one amongst them is to be self-reliant and sympathetic to others. I am proud of the fact that during the COVID 19 pandemic India has risen to the challenge and have fared admirably upholding our civilizational ethos of 'Vasudaiva Kudumbakam'. During the pandemic India came forward and supplied 'Made in India' vaccines to over a hundred countries across the world. By doing this we were living upto the expectations of Mahatma Gandhi.

I once again thank you all for your overwhelming participation today. Once again I thank Japan Bharat Sarvodaya Mitrata Sangha for organizing this commemorative event.

Thank you and good evening.
