



MEDIA COVERAGE

Event:

American Expert in peace studies Prof. Sudarshan Kapur visits Mysore, Bangalore and Chennai between March 20-25, 2009

Participation:

PAO Mr. Frederick J. Kaplan

Publication:

"Gandhi's Faith In Pluralism Inspired African Americans," The Hindu, March 25, 2009

"There is greater need for non-violence today," The Hindu 29, 2009

"Give peace a chance," The New Indian Express, March 24, 2009

"Gandhian principles inspired African American freedom movement," The New Indian Express, March 24, 2009

"Foreigner's borrows Gandhiji's ideas," The Times of India, March 22, 2009

"Gandhi and King Jr. were against greed," The Times of India, March 30, 2009



“GANDHI’S FAITH IN PLURALISM INSPIRED AFRICAN AMERICANS”



Interaction: Sudarshan Kapur, founder, Peace Studies Department, Naropa University, U.S., along with Frederick J. Kaplan, Consul for Public Affairs, U.S. Consulate General, Chennai, at **a function to mark the 50th anniversary of Martin Luthern King Jr’s visit to India in Chennai** on Tuesday. S. Pandian, Secretary, Gandhi Study Centre (left) is in the picture.

CHENNAI: Mahatma Gandhi’s faith in religious pluralism, spirit of sacrifice and placement of people’s welfare above self-interest were among the important traits that inspired millions of African Americans to raise their voice for equality and freedom from oppression, Sudarshan Kapur, founder, Peace Studies Department, Naropa University, Boulder, Colarado, US, said on Tuesday. Delivering a lecture on “Prelude to Martin Luther King Jr: The Image of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Independence Movement, 1921-54,” Prof. Kapur said the influence that the Mahatma’s qualities had was so intense that there were calls for a “Black Gandhi” who would lead oppressed African Americans to liberation.

The address was jointly hosted by the US Consulate General in Chennai and the Gandhi Study Centre here.

Prof. Kapur pointed out that the King himself was an adherent to Gandhian principles and employed civil disobedience as the rallying call for liberating African Americans from racial oppression.

“The two great leaders have created a river in which a host of non-violent struggles for social change continue to strive to make a difference to the world.” The lasting influence of these leaders, “who reshaped the history of the world in the second half of the 20th century,” is evidenced in the liberation struggles from Eastern Europe and the Philippines to South Africa, Chile and Argentina.



Prof. Kapur said Martin Luther King's admiration for the Gandhian philosophy and methodologies for resistance had opened up space for African Americans to consolidate and instilled new hope to create a better reality. In the interaction session that followed, Prof. Kapur stated that the **Mahatma's leadership evidenced the importance of action. Revolutions are not seeded in libraries or academic institutions, but are born in the grassroots where people experience pain and suffering.**

[Enormous impact](#)

Frederick J. Kaplan, Consul for Public Affairs, US Consulate General, Chennai, said Martin Luther King Jr's visit to India had **"an enormous impact on the history of my country."** The nine years that followed the historic visit led to such tremendous change that it was only fitting that the US Mission in India comprising the Embassy and Consulates was hosting a series of commemorative events through 2009. Lectures by Prof. Kapur were scheduled in Kolkata and New Delhi, he said.

S. Pandian, secretary, Gandhi Study Centre, Chennai, and S. Swaminathan, former professor, IIT, New Delhi, spoke. The audience had the privilege of going back in time to Martin Luther King Jr's epochal "I Have a Dream" speech that eventually fulfilled his exhortation of creating a "symphony of brotherhood."



“THERE IS GREATER NEED FOR NON-VIOLENCE TODAY”



Prof. Sudarshan Kapur



CHENNAI: Young people are always asking Sudarshan Kapur, founder of the Peace Studies department at Naropa University, Colorado, U.S., if he thinks there is an anachronism in today's world; preaching peace in an era of violence. They ask: 'In this age of terrorism, can non-violence work?' In an interview he says the answer to them is: "Yes. If it was possible then, it is more possible today."

“Today, the need is even greater. But it does not help to dismiss people as terrorists,” says Sudarshan Kapur, who is in India to deliver a series of lectures as part of the 50th year anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to the country.

“We need to look inward as a society and as individuals and find out if certain things that we might be doing contribute to rift, violence. Unless we face up to the mistakes we are committing, there is no hope for moving forward over issues of oppression.” He speaks as a disciple of the brand of non-violence Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. advocated to win their battle against imperialism and segregation respectively.

It is the young that Prof. Kapur loves to interact with. “I try to connect with young people, because I feel there is much disillusionment and lack of hope, perhaps with good reason. Among the many things that Gandhi and King can pass on to us is the sense of hope and purpose.” He says they also had a way of moving through the morass that surrounded them and find a safe place to stay.

Does he have a set of strategies then to make his theories work today? “More than strategies, we need practices, and positive techniques,” he says.

Both Gandhi and King always nourished a concern for the welfare of the people they were struggling against. The idea was to convert the heart of the opponent, says Prof. Kapur who is the author of the book **“Raising up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi.”**

That, he says, could be done today as well. **“What people can do is to create circumstances whereby the powers-that-be can begin to see their responsibilities differently,”** he explains.



In India, the key areas of intervention would be in the areas of improving public transportation, health care for all and adequate nutrition for infants. In the US, concerns are about health care and quality of education. Expenditure on military in both nations is yet another issue.

Inequities in society, lack of opportunities for people in India and the US are other concerns. **“I don’t think any society is free of these fundamental inequities that lead to people giving up hope. We do need to create structures and institutions that will offer opportunities to live by our best values, rather than by our least values,”** he says.



'Foreigners borrowed Gandhiji's ideas'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mysore: Mahatma Gandhi's life, works and principles not only influenced the Southern-based African American community during their struggle for freedom against racism but his philosophies hold a special value and priority among the community members even to this day. Several African-Americans, including peace activist Martin Luther King Jr, were so impressed by Gandhi, that they borrowed his ideas about religious collaboration, said American expert in peace studies, Sudarshan Kapur.

There is a strong connection between the African-Americans struggle against racism in the US and the Indian Independence struggle where Gandhi played a major role as several of the African activists not just paid special attention but also adopted the non-violence techniques followed by the Mahatma, he said.

Kapur was delivering a special lecture on 'Gandhi and non-violent African-American freedom struggle' at a function organized by the Gandhi Bhavan of the University of Mysore.

The Afro American community members, including the church leaders, social activists and church members, came to India to learn and understand it.

Also, religion helped them come

closer to Gandhi and relate to him better. Gandhi's simple life impressed them so much that they wanted their own leaders to live like him. They keenly observed the way he led the campaigns in India, he added.

The founder of the US-based Naropa University's peace studies department is presently in India on invitation by the US Embassy.

In 1942, to bring an end to the racial segregation in America, black civil rights activist James Farmer co-founded a group called the Congress of Racial Equality along with students which aimed at bringing an end to racism in the US through non-violence.

Gandhi Bhavan director Muzafar Assadi and the American consulate general chief of special services Meena Y Reddy were present.

Professor Kapur will deliver talks at Bangalore, Mumbai, Mysore, Chennai, Kolkata and New Delhi.

In Mysore, he will be part of a lecture-discussion programme on African American exploration of the Gandhian concept of non-violent resistance at the University of Mysore's department of history on Monday between 11 am and 12 pm.

Also, he will talk on the Mahatma, the Indian Independence Movement and 'the African American call for Black Gandhi' at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Vijayanagar between 6 pm and 7 pm.



‘Gandhi and King Jr. were against greed’

Expert Fleshes Out Leaders’ Thoughts

Bangalore: What do Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi have in common? Gandhian and peace studies expert Sudarshan Kapur from Napola University, Colorado, USA, recently in Bangalore at the invitation of the US embassy says both wouldn’t have liked Wall Street making money out of everybody else.

Excerpts from the interview:

How can Gandhi and King Jr. help us grapple with contemporary violence?

The nature of violence may not have changed, but the instruments of violence do more harm. But non-violence is as strong as before. There is no better example than Nelson Mandela shaking hands with De Klerk to usher in peace in South Africa. **That’s what Gandhi did earlier.** He dismantled a colonial power through non-violence. King Jr. fought for the rights of African-Americans through peaceful expression.



What specific lessons can we take from Gandhi for today’s problems?

The writer Sissela Bok in her foreword to a biography of Gandhi mentions three crucial lessons from the great man — no compromise on ideals, feel good about being in one tradition and yet accommodate another tradition and don’t ever be judgmental and learn from things as they happen. Social transformation can happen through these measures and India is best placed to head that with Gandhi’s legacy.

What can we take from King Jr.?

Three great lessons again — no racism, no materialism and no militarism.

What parallels do you see between Gandhi and King Jr.?

Both had dreams and both worked to give expression to them. **Both didn’t like materialism, which they perceived would give rise to violence.** Both believed that mankind had enough to meet everybody’s needs and we need to create a just society from what we have.

What would Gandhi and King Jr. have said about profit motive and the consequent economic crisis?

Both would have rejected the profit motive, reject greed in any form. They would have said the world has enough to meet our needs. But we have wants. **They would have asked whether we shouldn’t live with what we have. They wouldn’t have liked the fact that some people out of Wall Street made money out of everybody else.** Gandhian economics is about sustainable, community-oriented economics where everybody’s needs are fulfilled. Earlier wisdom is something we should and can draw from. **Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. didn’t like materialism, which they perceived would give rise to violence,** says Sudarshan Kapur .

