

Learning from Gandhi, the Practical Idealist in Japan

Seiichi Kikuya
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Tokyo, Japan - In commemoration of the UN International Day of Non-Violence, a lecture forum was organized in Tokyo jointly by UPF-Japan and the Council of Ambassadors for Peace-Japan on Oct. 11, 2014. Some 40 professionals, Ambassadors for Peace and youth leaders listened to the presentation by Mrs. Shobhana Radhakrishna, president of the Centre for Gandhian Vision and Values in India.

This UN day was proposed by the representatives of 140 nations to the UN and passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007, setting the date of October 2, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), who had advocated non-violence in India's struggle for independence.

UPF Japan's secretary general, Mr. Seiichi Kikuya, gave a briefing about visions and activities of Ambassadors for Peace as well as projects of UPF International. He introduced the UPF's proposals such as an interreligious council within the UN system, peace zones along conflict-ridden areas, and a day honoring parents. He stressed that these proposals are based on the core ideals of UPF's founders, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, related to transcending boundaries of nationality, religion, ethnicity and culture. He said that Rev. Moon's messages are very much common with Gandhi's ideals of peace and non-violence.

A short movie on Gandhi's footsteps was screened before the lecture entitled "Mahatma Gandhi: A Disciple of Peace and Non-Violence." Mrs. Shobhana had learned in the ashram (community) where Gandhi's philosophy was taught and practiced. She is actively engaged in disseminating Gandhi's thoughts and life at schools and Indian embassies around the world.

Mrs. Shobhana first paid tribute to Rev. Moon: "Rev. Moon's endeavors for peace and non-violence are connected with many of our activities, bringing together peoples of different faith traditions across generations."

It was because Gandhi sought for the truth throughout his life that he could become the compass to peace across generations and regions of the world, she stressed, adding that Gandhi did not resort to violence at all because "Gandhi had a profound and unwavering faith in God."

Using some slides, Mrs. Shobhana explained that young Gandhi had witnessed stark realities of injustices including rampant racial discrimination, human rights abuses and oppression in South Africa, realizing that it is indispensable to address peoples' internal problems in addition to changing external social systems. Such a realization reinforced Gandhi's persistence in his quest for truth, she said.

She summed up reasons why Gandhi has become a model for humanity by pointing out the power of love, the power of truth and the power of his soul. Describing Gandhi as "the practical idealist," Mrs. Shobhana urged the audience to practice the truth and become models for other people.

Rev. Shinobu Ishimaru, an interfaith minister, expressed appreciation for the opportunity of sharing the philosophy and footsteps of Gandhi who had practiced the universal truth in his personal life and for his social commitment. Quoting words of Jesus Christ in the Bible, he commented that such spiritual leaders must have grasped God's truth and pioneered the path for peace by overcoming incredible challenges.

Following some questions and answers, all the participants joined the lecturer in a commemorative photo, concluding the event.