

SPEECH OF THE HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR, DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA ON THE OCCASION OF GANDHI JAYANTI ON 2nd OCTOBER, 2016 AT GANDHI MEMORIAL HALL, IMPHAL

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri O. Ibobi ji,
Hon'ble Council of Ministers,
Hon'ble MLAs,
Friends from Print and Electronic Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, the 2nd October marks the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and it is observed every year as National Cleanliness Day all over the country. He led the nation in its struggle for freedom from the British yoke using Non-violence (Ahimsa) as his most powerful weapon. The Day has also been observed as International Day of Non-violence since 2007.

Mahatma Gandhi stands tall in the gallery of great world leaders and thinkers. He belongs to the whole world and to all generations. His profound humanism is his message. An apostle of truth and non-violence, a symbol of indomitable human soul-power, Gandhiji firmly stood for the cause of the downtrodden and oppressed not only in India but also in other parts of the world. He lived and died for peace and welfare of mankind. His philosophy of non-violent agitation and civil disobedience not only led his own country to independence but also influenced political activists throughout the world. His “novel mode of mass mobilization and non-violent action” brought down colonialism, strengthened the roots of popular sovereignty including civil, political and economic rights, and greatly influenced many a freedom struggle and inspired leaders far and wide. He won affection and love of millions of people all over the world and from both friends and foes alike and he became the Mahatma – Great Soul – because of his doctrine – Ahimsa. He will be remembered as one of the greatest souls that ever walked on earth. The present generation should try to imbibe the virtues of tolerance and humanism from him for a better world order.

Gandhiji was vehemently against hatred between man and man. He once observed that he could not live when the atmosphere was marred with violence and hatred. What he wanted was the bridge that connects and not walls that divide man from man. Transcending the social barriers of caste,

creed, colour, language and religion, Gandhiji advocated universal peace, brotherhood and friendship. Peaceful co-existence was his perennial message.

Throughout his non-violent fight against British colonialism, my grand uncle Maulana Azad was his right hand. Whether it was Civil Disobedience or Quit India Movement, he was Bapu's associate and it gives me great pleasure and honour that I belong to the family which actively participated in freedom struggle side by side this great son of India.

For Gandhiji, political independence of India was not the end. It was the beginning of real freedom - economic freedom of the country. He was the champion of "Swadeshi" or home economy. He wanted to work for an India in which the poorest should feel that it was their country. To him, the spirit and soul of India rested in the village communities. He also wanted an India in which all communities live in perfect harmony. There could be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks or drugs. Women should enjoy the same rights as men. This is the India of Gandhiji's dreams.

Mahatma Gandhi always emphasized cleanliness for a healthy living. Healthy people make a healthy nation. He also believed in the spiritual purification of body, mind and soul. He said, I quote: "When there is both inner and outer cleanliness, it approaches God" Unquote. I also quote the words of Lord Buddha: "To keep the body in good health is a duty otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clean". A clean environment is essential for good health which will beget a pure mind. The "Swachh Bharat" initiative taken up by the Central Government is towards this end of keeping the environment clean. All should endeavour to make it a persevering campaign for a good health and mind.

The state of cleanliness which we maintain during the observance of the National Cleanliness Day, should be made a regular feature – a way of life. It should not be just a normal observance but a wake-up call for all of us to maintain high standards of cleanliness in our homes, work places, roads, streets and public places.

While celebrating the National Cleanliness Day, we should all remember the lofty thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and remind ourselves of the virtue of love, mercy and forgiveness. It would be paying true homage to the Father of the Nation if we strive to keep our body, mind and soul clean.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.