



**6TH DR. THEO-BEN GURIRAB LECTURE SERIES BY H.E.
DR. SAM NUJOMA, FOUNDING PRESIDENT AND FATHER
OF THE NAMIBIAN NATION, UNDER THE THEME 150TH
YEARS: CELEBRATION OF THE VISION OF MAHATMA
GANDHI**

2 OCTOBER, 2019

**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(NUST)**

WINDHOEK

KHOMAS REGION

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great privilege and honour for me to have been given this exceptional opportunity to give a public lecture under the theme: "*150 years: Celebration of the Vision of Mahatma Gandhi*", a towering figure and struggle giant who inspired generations of freedom fighters the world over.

Indeed, recognizing the importance of non-violence in the life of Global community, the United Nations General Assembly resolved to observe October the 2nd, the birthday of Gandhi, as the international day of non-violence.

This was done in order to secure a culture of peace, tolerance, understanding and non-violence among the Nations of the world.

This resolution is the reflection of recognition of the Gandhian ideals and methods in today's world which is confronted with ever growing acts of terrorism and violence.

Thus, the comments I will make about him as we commemorate his birth will emphasise two matters. On one hand, Gandhi's Concept of Freedom and Non-Violence.

On the other Hand, India's contribution to Namibia's Freedom and Genuine Independence, before I conclude with the relevance of Gandhi's concept of Non-Violence in today's world and how Collective Efforts can bring about Freedom for All.

In January 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to his homeland after two decades of residence abroad. These years had been spent for the most part in South Africa, where he went as a lawyer, and in time became a leader of the Indian community in that country.

The India that Mahatma Gandhi came back to in 1915 was rather different from the one that he had left in 1893. Although still a colony of the British, it was far more active in a political sense.

Indians who wished colonialism to end were asked to stop attending schools, colleges and law courts, and not pay taxes. In a word, they were asked to adhere to a "renunciation of all voluntary association with the British Government".

During the Non-Cooperation Movement thousands of Indians were put in prison. Gandhi himself was arrested in March 1922, and charged with sedition. Nevertheless, through his revolutionary concept of non-violence, he led the Indians to freedom and independence.

Being a great statesman, thinker, humanist and an apostle of peace of the 20th century, through his concept of freedom, Gandhi never tolerated the subordination of one nation or individual to another.

He wrote in 1942, "No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man."

In Gandhi's philosophy we can also find an urgency for political freedom which he emphatically pleaded for in the sense of national independence. Gandhi accepted that freedom ("Swaraj") is the birth rights of the Indians.

Another notable feature of Gandhi's thought is advocacy of non-violence ("ahimsa"). The word "non-violence" is commonly understood as non-injury to living beings or dynamic harmlessness. But Gandhi presented non-violence in a new form and shape before the world.

Gandhi said, "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."

In this regard, it is essential to stress the significance of Gandhi's message which makes an appeal to the values of human being in an era when the humanistic structure has been savagely attacked by the might of weapons of mass destruction.

In this context, I am glad to hear that last month; the Indian High Commission has provided artificial limbs to Namibians, at no cost, in commemoration of the 150 birth of Mahatma Gandhi. This is commendable and I urge them to keep up the good work.

Indeed, the assistance of the people of India to the people of Namibia has a long and treasured history the origin of which is traced to Mahatma Gandhi.

The homeland of titans such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and others, has a track record of extending all-round support to the oppressed peoples of the world, and Namibia is not an exception in this regard.

The relationship between the peoples of India and Namibia dates back to the time of our bitter struggle for national independence and have been deeply rooted in the history and work of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In this regard, on 18 April 1985, on the eve of the New Delhi Non-Aligned Movement Summit, the apartheid regime of South Africa wanted to introduce an "Interim Government" in Namibia, in violation of the UN Security Council's resolutions.

Our support by the Non-Aligned Movement, especially by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was as solid as ever as India decided to accord full diplomatic status to SWAPO in New Delhi and we opened our Embassy on the 24th of May 1986 in India. Such status was also accompanied by all round material assistance.

In this regard, I recall that India gave us a Mahindra-Mahindra Jeep mounted with 106mm anti-tank rocket launcher (ATK).

Six Combatants of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's Military Wing, were sent to India in 1986 to be trained on how to operate the recoil gun. It was first used in a major counter-offensive in 1987, in the South of Cuando-Cubango Province in Angola.

India also took a strong and unwavering stand of promoting Namibia's just cause for our Freedom at the United Nations. This led to more support for SWAPO by other Asian, Arab and Latin American countries condemning apartheid colonialism.

When we attained our freedom and genuine independence on the 21st March 1990, India continued to assist Namibia in various sectors in general and the education sector in particular.

Against this background, the Government of India made a generous grant of about \$12.5 million US dollars towards the construction of the Departments of Mining and Computer Engineering facility, as well as Training Workshops and an Information Resource Centre at the University of Namibia in Ongwediva.

Over the past decades, India and other developing countries have been campaigning for dialogue between rich and poor nations, to remove the present imbalances in the world economic order through the promotion of South-South Cooperation.

In this regard, India and Namibia have signed landmark agreements on cooperation in wide-ranging sectors, including mining and nuclear energy.

In a world increasingly beset by violence and terror, and today more than any other time in history, peace seems remote and violence assaults our planet at every hand. Domestic violence, especially gender based violence has climbed to unprecedented proportions.

I am particularly concerned about the recent escalation of violence and senseless killings of women and children in Namibia.

Just recently, three women were killed by men while a young woman had to be transferred from Walvis Bay to Windhoek after being shot by a police officer.

These are but a few of many similar cases reported in our country and I thus strongly condemn the brutal ongoing killings of women and children in Namibia.

Under these circumstances, Gandhi's vision and gospel of non-violence summons us to be loving, tolerant, forgiving, selfless and compassionate. Let us therefore learn from Gandhi's concept of non-violence which is based on good will towards all human beings.

If at all we must learn something from Gandhi's teachings today is that a solitary act of heroism could not bring freedom to India, but collective and constructive efforts of all citizens could bring the desired result.

As I always say; A people united, striving to achieve common good for all members of the society, will always emerge Victorious!

I thank you for your kind attention!