

It is appropriate that we should join with people all over the world to celebrate the Centenary of Mahatma Mohandas Karanchand Gandhi. Though an Indian national, he was a world citizen. By any standard, he would be categorized as great.

The Mahatma's greatness lay, above all, in his dedication to serve. He was prepared to go to any lengths and to make any sacrifice in order to eradicate the evils in society, which prevented human brotherhood from being achieved in the real world.

His custom was not merely to preach, but also to practise, to set the example. It is said that his explanation for his simple loin cloth attire was

that if he were to represent the countless millions of India, he must be one with them; he must look and feel like them.

He not only fought against the evils of the cast system, but brought one of the so-called 'untouchables' into his own home. Though an ardent Hindu, his devotion to Hindu-Muslim unity resulted in his death from a religious fanatic's bullet.

In the battle against British imperialism, his high moral scruples sometimes dismayed his closest lieutenants.

The Mahatma was essentially a man of peace. But

he realized that peace could only come from struggle. He made it clear that his belief in non-violence was not to be confused with cowardice and pacifism. I heard one of his closest associates say that non-violence was for him not a creed; that non-violence, passive resistance and civil were the only methods open to him and the movement he led in the struggle against the British Raj under the then conditions prevailing in India.

In the course of his political struggle in India, he influenced and reared a school of selfless fighters for the people's freedom.

But his influence was not limited to India.

His example in the struggle against British imperialism was an inspiration to many others in the far-flung British Empire and beyond.

The late Christian Martin Luther King was virtually a disciple of the Hindu Mahatma. I myself, during my student days in the USA was largely influenced by his great struggle.

Gandhi did not live to see the complete fulfilment of his dreams. He spearheaded and saw the achievement of the first stage - national independence for India. The winning of social justice in India and on a world scale is yet to be. Others have taken up the fight in new conditions.

The battle for some of the Mahatma's ideals are now being waged inside the party which he developed. It is regrettable that his advice was not heeded for the disbandment of the Congress Party after independence. Had this been done, perhaps India would have avoided some of her present-day difficulties and still hold the moral leadership of the third-world.

In doing homage to the Mahatma's great personality, let us hope that his ideals would help the Indian people and government to clean our some of the parasites and barnacles which have attached themselves to the Indian political bandwagon. A people who have fought so bravely

deserves a better reward.

Let us also hope that his ideals will illumine
and encourage in other lands.

LONG LIVE THE MAHATMA

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