

November 1, 2025

Press Release

JMI hosts a workshop on “Mahatma Gandhi ka Swaraj”; Remembers Gandhi’s contributions in the founding of Jamia Millia Islamia in 1920

A thought-provoking and enriching workshop on “Mahatma Gandhi ka Swaraj” was organized today by the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (NMCP CR), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) as part of the 105th Foundation Day celebrations at JMI. An eminent panel comprising of Shri K. Satish Nambudiripad, Director General, Doordarshan; Prof. Sanjeev K. Sharma, Former. Vice Chancellor Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, and Dean Charan Singh University, Meerut; and Prof. Sanjeev Kumar H. M., Department of Political Science, Delhi University addressed a room full of scholars, faculty members and officials at the university’s FTK CIT Auditorium in the presence of Vice Chancellor, JMI, Prof Mazhar Asif, Registrar, JMI, Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, and Dean of Students’ Welfare, Prof. Neelofer Afzal.

Prof. Abuzar Khairi, Director, NMCP CR, along with the other faculty members from NMCP CR, Prof. Kaushikee, Prof. Rajiv Nayan and Prof. Aslam Khan joined the programme. The workshop was convened by Dr. Binish Maryam along with Sudhanshu Trivedi as its co-convenor.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Mahtab Alam Rizvi said that as JMI turns 105 years old, it was important that we recall Mahatma Gandhi’s contributions to not just this nation but to the founding of this university with which he had a deep emotional connection. To that extent, having inspired the idea of JMI, one can say with utmost conviction that “Jamia Millia Islamia is a living expression of Gandhian ideals”. Drawing parallels between Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, Prof. Rizvi said that “Gandhi’s ‘Swaraj’ means much more than political independence; it signifies self-rule and freedom of the mind, body and spirit”. For Mahatma Gandhi, he said, “Freedom is not a license but it is an exercise of self-control”. Expanding on key Gandhian ideas, Prof Rizvi said, “Gandhi’s ‘gram swaraj’ is central to our understanding of democracy because it is a mechanism whereby the people become the real decision makers in a polity and only in such a system can real democracy thrive.”

Prof. Rizvi spoke extensively on key Gandhian philosophy and its contemporary relevance, including swaraj, khadi, rural development, and Panchayati Raj institutions explaining how they form the philosophical core of the Government of India’s flagship

initiatives like 'Skill India' and 'Make in India'. Prof. Rizvi referring to JMI's significant role in shaping educational and social landscape of the country, especially through its ideation of the concept of Nai Taleem, and the role of the university in experimenting with an inclusive and composite educational system quoted Dr. Zakir Husain, former President of India and JMI's founding member and VC from 1926-1948, likening JMI to "a laboratory for the nation".

Prof. Sajeew Kumar, in his address that drew upon a rich and complex moral and ontological theoretical framework, focusing on the core philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and its relevance to contemporary India, said that Gandhi espoused the 'Sanatani Parampara' and a pluralistic vision of religion. "Gandhi believed in faith rather than religion, as the bedrock of his Ram Rajya approach which has to be understood as a distinction between a functionalist or an instrumental view of religion-- from that of an axiological postulate called 'faith' -- which is abstract, subjective and transcendental." In such delineation, the empirical notion or the material and objective view of society become secondary and the Gandhian idea that 'the weakest have the courage to tell the truth' becomes apparent". In his engaging and philosophically enriching talk, he explored Gandhi's views on the Bhagavad Gita and Hind Swaraj, ideas of truth, ethical living and the complex and dialectical notion and ontology of suffering and self-realisation. He also spoke on the Gandhian understanding of government as a morally ordained, self-textual practice that worked by non-institutionalised notion of consensus. He ended his talk by pointing out that Gandhi's Swaraj presupposed fearless critique.

The Chief Guest, Shri K. Satish Nambudiripad, congratulated JMI for completing its 105 years calling it a lofty achievement especially as the institution has played an important and indelible role in India's history, freedom struggle and growth. Alluding to the Yajur Veda and Kalidas, Shri Nambudiripad focused on the concept of living with nature and as a part of nature, flagging that unfortunately, "among the 15 billion living organisms that inhabit the world, it is the human beings who cause maximum amount of destruction to the world in order to create their own living and material comforts.... Some scientists fear that at this rate human beings might also be extinct just like dinosaurs". In such an imagining, Gandhian thought and philosophy becomes even more relevant, more so his concept of sustainable development, as he asked scholars to engage critically with the ideas of mindless consumption, the notion of development and materialism in the light of the often quoted lines from Gandhi, "There is enough for everyone's needs but not for anyone's greed".

Prof. Sanjeev K. Sharma, delivering an illuminating lecture wove a rich history of Gandhi's years in Durban, South Africa where he founded the Phoenix ashram, and explored his key ideas on education and culture. Stating that the Gandhian philosophy and practice was rooted in Indian culture and thought, he said that Gandhi always maintained that the new India "will not be a replica of Britain". Prof. Sharma pointed out that Gandhi ji always accepted criticism and kept his critics close to him which shows his

humility and openness to self-criticism and self-evaluation. He added that freedom of expression and freedom to critique don't just flow from the Constitution of India but are an inalienable and historical part of Indian tradition and culture. Arguing that Gandhi's personality had an extraordinary character and appeal, he said, "Gandhi's journey from his years in South Africa to becoming a Mahatma was long and full of ardent labour and hardships". He concluded by stating that the "aim and purpose of education should be to make human beings great and not just about giving out degrees. Education should make good citizens and human beings." JMI, he said, was an institution which he believed would do this and in that it will carry forward the legacy of Gandhi's vision of education and its role in the life of the nation.

Vice Chancellor, Prof. Asif said that his connection with Gandhi was not just scholarly but also experiential as he hails from the place where Mahatma Gandhi began his Satyagraha and is now serving as Vice Chancellor of a university, JMI, in whose founding Mahatma Gandhi played a tremendous role. Prof. Asif said that Gandhi ji's two major contributions to JMI were: one, the idea of nai taleem and experimentation with education; second, that Mahatma Gandhi went out of his way to support JMI financially at a time when it was in deep economic crisis and had said that he would personally go about with a begging bowl if the institution was worried about its finances, emphasizing that the university "has to run". He reminded the students to follow Gandhi's ideals, especially the principles of satyagraha and integrate truth in their lives.

The program was conducted by Dr. Binish Maryam, Associate Professor, NMCPDR and concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

Prof. Saima Saeed
Chief Public Relations Officer





