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Gandhi inspired King: US envoy

BANGALORE: The symbiotic link between Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr was brought alive by US Consul General, Jennifer McIntyre, who delivered a lecture on 'Martin Luther King Jr: The journey towards freedom' during the Sarvodaya Day celebrations at Jain University on Monday.

McIntyre said the legendary American Civil Rights leader's work had made a lasting impact on the United States not only for black Americans, but also in improving equal treatment and justice for all Americans. Mahatma Gandhi's teachings and philosophy, particularly the doctrines of non-violent resistance, service to the community and social justice, were a huge influence on King - and through him on the Civil Rights Movement in America.

King's first exposure to Gandhi's teachings came when he enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, one of America's leading historically black colleges. The then principal of Morehouse College, Dr Benjamin Elijah Mays, had visited

India and had become a disciple of Gandhi. Mays became a great influence on King, and passed on to him the light of Gandhian principles.

Though King never met Gandhi, he and his wife Coretta Scott King toured India for a month, studying Gandhi's philosophy, meeting with Prime Minister Nehru and other Indian leaders in politics, government, academia and across society.

The US Consular General recalled how King took the lessons he learned back to the United States, and renewed his faith in the unmatched moral force of non-violent resistance and its ability to achieve meaningful social change.

"With the support of countless men and women — of all races, creeds and colors — Dr King, who was only 26 years old then, led a movement to dismantle the barricades of bigotry and bridge historically bitter divides," she told the gathered students.

Over the last year, she said the world has witnessed major events in the Middle East in which citizens rejected author-

itarian regimes, demanding an end to lack of freedom and inequalities in their societies. "With the extraordinary global connectivity through internet and social media, we are seeing greater empowerment of the individual and the individual's ability to engage in and effect national and global change ranging from environmental actions to anti-corruption initiatives, and equality in rights and freedom in actions. These were tools that did not exist in the lifetimes of Dr King and Gandhi who nonetheless were able to both impact their nations and the world," she noted.

During her visit, the US Consular General also inaugurated a more spacious American Corner at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. The Public Affairs Office of the US Consulate General, Chennai, had established the American Corner in Bangalore in September 2004. The Corner offers up-to-date information about political, economic, cultural educational and social trends in the United States.

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