

At Indic Center Anniversary Gavaskar Emphasizes The Value Of 9-11 To Cricket As Much As To The Society

Bal Ram Singh

With an unassuming demeanor cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar went at length to describe the value of players 9-11 (generally bowlers) to the success of players 1-5 (in batting order) for scoring respectable runs or even centuries. Speaking as the Chief Guest at the Inaugural Anniversary of the Center for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Gavaskar began his speech by saying "everyone knows batsmen do not make speeches, it's the bowlers who do". He went on to elaborate his experience in the game of cricket to value the teamwork for the success of a society. "Those who lead the society must always realize that without the support of others positioned at the other end of the society, no one can build a successful society" said Gavaskar.

Gavaskar answered several questions from the audience on his cricket career, including one that asked him to name the best bowler he had faced. "If I were taking credit for 10,000 runs then I have to consider all the bowlers to be the best" replied Gavaskar.

Professor Sukalyan Sengupta introduced Gavaskar as someone who displayed such technical brilliance, courage, concentration, and grit that he became the leader by example of a whole generation of Indians who refused to accept that they were in any way, shape or form inferior to other peoples. "For this, we will ever remain indebted to Sunny", said Prof. Sengupta. When asked to give a reason for his great success, Gavaskar simply said "luck", and went on to elaborate how two simple catches were dropped by the opposite team during his very first match in 1971 against West Indies. Chancellor Jean F. MacCormack, on behalf of the Center for Indic Studies, presented a plaque of recognition to Sunil Gavaskar that read "for your unparalleled service to India as a Cricketer and in sincere appreciation for your dedicated and professional work in uplifting the image of India throughout the world. Your extraordinary efforts are a source of inspiration to youth in India, in the Indian Diaspora, and all over the cricket community."

Chancellor MacCormack compared Sunil Gavaskar to US sports icons such as Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretsky, and Pete Sampras. Describing the Center for Indic Studies as one of the Centers of Excellence, at UMass Dartmouth, she said academic institutions must honor recognition in all fields of human endeavors, including sports.

Prior to the Gavaskar's speech, there was panel discussion on "Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi and Indic Traditions to Life in the Modern Global Village", with Prof. R. Subrahmonia Ayyar, Rtd Dean, IIT Bombay, Prof. Romesh Diwan of RPI, Prof. Madhu Jhaveri of UMass Dartmouth, Mr. Prakash Shah of Greater Boston Jain Center, Prof. Donna Wulff of Brown Univ, as panelists.

The Panel discussion was organized to celebrate Mahatma Gandhi's Birth Anniversary of October 2, 2002.

In their presentations as well as during the open question sessions, each panelist addressed the issues related Gandhian values of tolerance, non-violence, righteousness, universal love and harmony, and truth. Professor Diwan suggested economic data to suggest that the gap between richest and the poorest people is steadily increasing and Gandhian economics is the only way out. On the other hand Professor Jhaveri said while he does not question Gandhis ideas and life, he questions the non-violence to be the answer to deal with violent people in today's world.

Mr. Shah presented Jainism as not an off-shoot of Hinduism, rather as a jewel in the crown of Hinduism. Jainism as part of Indic traditions highlights peaceful living and charity, widely practiced in Jain community of America.

Dr. Subrahmonia Ayyar spoke of Gandhi's work towards upliftment of lower castes and outcastes. He also quoted a Tamil poet who said the world is my village. According to Dr. Ayyar, Gandhian principles are not for the weak but require tremendous moral courage. Dr. Wulff presented data from other freedom struggles to prove how Gandhis methodology achieved freedom for India at a much less human cost. She also hypothesized how Gandhi would have been unfavorable to the present US administration policy over Iraq.

The Center for Indic Studies, formally inaugurated on October 6, 2002, "has come a long way within one year of its inception" said its Director, **Professor Bal Ram Singh, as highlighted by its works within the past year a panel discussion on Media Coverage of Terrorism in India and Pakistan at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, April 26, 2002; a three-day WAVES international conference on "India's Contributions and Influences in the World", July 12-14, 2002; research on Indic values in Indian-American businesses, Yoga and consciousness, and scientific basis of cultural festivals; plans for 8 courses in Indic Studies; and community service in the form of lectures, Kriya Yoga classes, lecture-demo programs in Music and Arts, etc.**

The celebrations were capped with Bharatnatyam performances by Vanisha Patel, Alisha Patel, and Felicia Patel, and Hindustani Classical Music (Sarod) played by Dr. Debojit Biswas who was accompanied by Dr. Nishikant Sonwalkar on the Tabla.

The crowd of over 125 people mostly from the New England area was thrilled with the presence of Sunil Gavaskar, mobbed him wherever he went for autographs and picture ops. Gavaskar stayed till the end of the program, providing plenty of opportunities for his young and old friends.