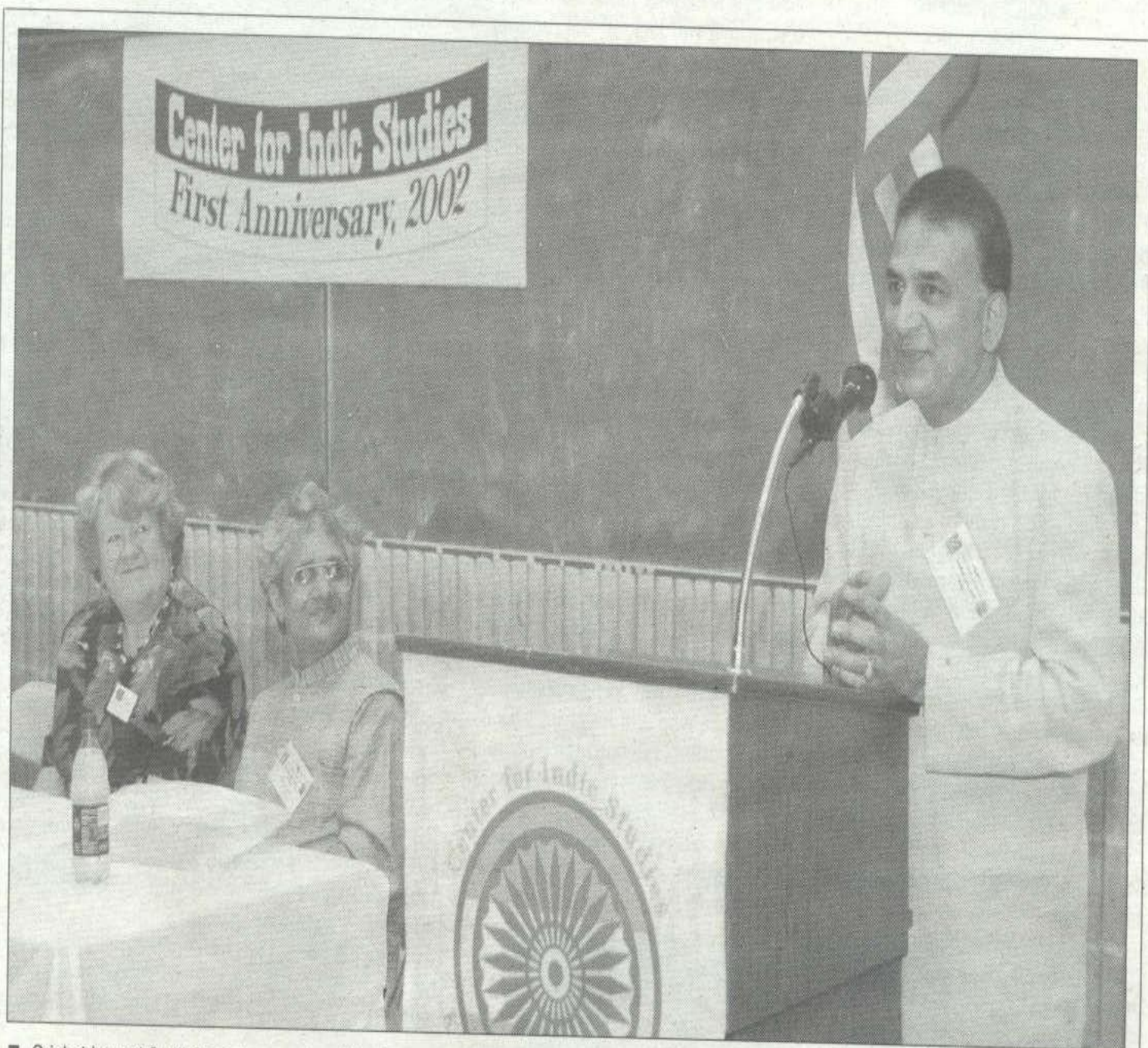


Community

Friday, November 1, 2002

C1



■ Cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar speaks at the first anniversary celebrations of the Center for Indic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. Seated, from left, are Chancellor Jean F MacCormack and Center Director Dr Bal Ram Singh. The center honored two great Indians, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Gavaskar, at the celebrations. **Report on C2**

Gayaskar honored by UMass Indic center

A CORRESPONDENT
in New York

The Center for Indic Studies at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, Mass, at its first anniversary celebrations October 11, decided to honor two great Indians from different generations: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, deified as the Mahatma, and cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, the first man in the world to score 10,000 runs in Test cricket.

Recalling the Mahatma's contribution to India's independence, the anniversary fete organized a panel discussion on the 'Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi and Indic Traditions to Life in the Modern Global Village.'

Chancellor Jean F MacCormack, on the center's behalf, presented Gavaskar a plaque of recognition, and compared him to sport icons such as Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretsky and Pete Sampras. The legend, who still holds the record for the most centuries in Test cricket, emphasized the role of teamwork in building a successful society.

Likening life to cricket, he said those who lead society must always realize that without support from others, positioned at the other end of society, no one can build a successful society, center director Dr Bal Ram Singh quoted him as saying. Gavaskar went on to answer audience questions about his cricketing career, including one that asked him to name the best bowler he had faced.

He said, 'If I were taking credit for 10,000 runs, then I have to consider all bowlers to be the best.'

Professor Sukalyan Sengupta of the center 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,' Professor Sengupta said.

When asked to explain his success, Gavaskar simply said 'luck,' and cited how opponents dropped two simple catches during his first Test in 1971 against the West Indies.

The inscription on his plaque 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.'

MacCormack described the Center for Indic Studies as a center of excellence at UMass Dartmouth and said academic institutions must honor recognition in all fields of human endeavor, including sports.

Panelists at the discussion on Mahatma Gandhi were Professor R Subrahmonia Ayyar, retired dean, IIT Bombay; Professor Romesh Diwan of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Professor Madhu Jhaveri of UMass Dartmouth, Prakash Shah of the Greater Boston Jain Center and Professor Donna Wulff of Brown University.

They addressed issues related to Gandhian values of tolerance, non-violence, righteousness, universal love and harmony, and truth.

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Professor Diwan cited economic data to suggest that the gap between the rich and the poor was steadily increasing, and Gandhian economics was the only way out.

Professor Jhaveri said while he did not question Gandhi's ideas and life, he questioned non-violence being the answer to deal with violent people in today's world.

Shah said Jainism was not an offshoot of Hinduism but a jewel in the crown of Hinduism. Jainism as part of Indic traditions highlights peaceful living and charity, widely practiced in the Jain community in America.

Dr Ayyar spoke of Gandhi's work towards the upliftment of lower castes and outcastes. According to him Gandhian principles were not for the weak but required tremendous moral courage for upholding them.

Dr Wulff presented data from other freedom struggles to prove how Gandhi's methodology achieved freedom for India at a much lower human cost.

'The Center for Indic Studies has come a long way within one year of its inception,' said Dr Singh.

Its recent activities included a panel discussion on Media Coverage of Terrorism in India and Pakistan; a three-day World Association of Vedic Studies; an international conference on India's Contributions and Influences in the World; and research on Indic values in Indian-American businesses, Yoga and Consciousness.

The celebrations were capped with a Bharata Natyam performance by Vanisha Patel, Alisha Patel and Felicia Patel, and Hindustani classical music on the sarod by Dr Debojit Biswas, accompanied on the tabla by Dr Nishikant Sonwalkar.