

REPORT

3rd ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE ON GANDHI

THEME : GANDHI AND FOOD

Indraprastha College for Women organized the Third Round Table Conference on Gandhi on the theme 'Gandhi and Food' on Friday, 8 April 2016. The session began with a welcome note by the Principal, Dr. Babli Moitra Saraf, who acquainted the audience with the idea of the Round Table Conference and the theme of the third edition. She mentioned that the incidents involving beef ban and the contentious issue of cow slaughter that gives rise to religious tensions, were, what triggered discussion on this topic. As per the Concept Note of the Conference, in the Gandhian discourse, food is not just what one eats, but visualized as a paradigm that exhibits a range of issues. The whole exercise of the conference was perceived to be useful to engage and confront many key quandaries of our times, and answer many conundrums ranging from diet control for personal reasons, being vegetarian on moral grounds, fasting for religious or political expediency, or to debate contestations between right to culture and food choices.

Shri Anil Nauriya, Advocate and Member, National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi, delivered the introductory remarks, and quoted instances and anecdotes of Gandhi's meetings with different people, Sam Higginbottom and Richard Gregg to name a few. This was followed by 12 well fleshed out paper presentations. Dr. Madhulika Banerjee, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi and Dr. Babli Moitra Saraf, Principal, Indraprastha College for Women judged these presentations.

The students presented a variety of riveting and thought-provoking presentations, ranging from a critique of Gandhi's moral basis of vegetarianism to food in the context of Brahmacharya as perceived by Gandhi in his times.

The First prize was awarded to Ms. Asmita Jagwani, who presented the paper on "Food Asceticism: The Gandhian Grammar of Diet" where she explored the idea of gastro politics, explaining that for Gandhi vegetarianism was a way of life that was rooted in his moral convictions and not just an adherence to a filial vow. She was praised by the judges who mentioned that "such sophistication of rhetoric as a means of persuasion leaves you stupefied." The second position was bagged by a team comprising of Ms. Anamika Dass and Ms. Ateka Hasan who explored food from the perspective of untouchability. Ms. Prerna Mishra, who explored "Salt and Satyagraha" in her paper, was adjudged the winner of the third position. A Judges' Special Mention was awarded to Ms. Nihita Kumari who spoke on how food was a weapon for Gandhi. All winners have been give cash prizes.

Dr. Jyoti Trehan Sharma, the Conference Convener, also explained the philosophy behind the theme, and also drew the attention of the audience to the significance of the date when

the conference was being held, as the date coincided when Gandhi got arrested at Palwal in 1919, just a few days before the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Punjab. This was also the date when in 1929, Bhagat Singh, along with Sukhdev and Rajguru, made his motherland echo with the slogan “Inquilab Zindabad”.

The Judges congratulated the participants on building such relevant arguments that led to a very pertinent discourse. They also provided constructive feedback and inputs on the same.

Dr. Jyoti Trehan Sharma

Conference Convener