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Sadhguru and Prof. Borst speak at the 2018 Ahinsa Lecture at UNESCO in Paris

UNESCO commemorates 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi

2 October 2018, Mumbai: Sadhguru, Founder of Isha Foundation, and Gregoire Borst, Professor of Developmental Psychology and Neuroscience participated in “A Dialogue on Peace, Neuroplasticity & Education” at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 2 October 2018. Organized by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace (MGIEP), a category 1 research institute established by UNESCO and funded by the Government of India, the dialogue was part of the Ahinsa Lecture series which was launched in 2016 by MGIEP under its Distinguished Lecture Series program. MGIEP works towards transforming education systems to create peaceful and sustainable societies.

In its 3rd edition this year, the Ahinsa Lectures began in 2016 and have invited leading intellectuals and policy makers each year to speak about transformative ideas that can create more peaceful communities.

Deputy Director General of UNESCO Qu Xing welcomed the guests and the audience and spoke about the relevance of the Mahatma’s message in an increasingly volatile world. The Indian Ambassador to France, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, spoke briefly about the importance of building a culture of peace in the world and about the Mahatma’s legacy of peace both in South Africa and in India. The 2-hour long dialogue was moderated by Dr. Anantha K. Duraiappah, Director of MGIEP.

“Unless we create peaceful human beings, there cannot be a peaceful world because minus the human beings, the world is just great as it is,” said Sadhguru adding that Yoga was a scientific tool “to create a chemistry of peacefulness” within human beings. Asserting that human beings are intrinsically altruistic, Prof. Borst quoted a study in which 6-month-old babies demonstrated this hypothesis to be true. The babies were exposed to two kinds of puppets: those that demonstrated altruistic and selfish

behaviour. The babies always chose the better behaved puppets, said Pro. Borst adding that as the brain evolves in the social environment it is exposed to, it is imperative to foster a culture of peace in each and every individual.

Sadhguru and the Professor also discussed the dire need to reform education systems to equip children to handle their thought, emotion and the world around them in a more balanced and compassionate manner. Both agreed that excessive competition in schooling systems were preventing the natural human genius in children, from blossoming.

The dialogue ended with an audience Q&A session, in which questioners were interested in solutions to the education crisis in Syria, alleviating human suffering, and alternative schooling systems. Sadhguru said that with the conflict in Syria nearing its end, educational institutions, non-governmental bodies and the UN should consider setting up institutions on a war footing that can “engage the children beyond what they have experienced.” Admitting that it was no mean feat, Sadhguru said that the most important thing is to make children understand from an early age that “my body and my mind should take instructions from no one else but me” and provide them with the necessary tools to make this a living experience in their lives.

Today’s lecture was the first event in a year-long series of events to celebrate 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Indian Independence struggle and known universally for demonstrating the power and influence of nonviolence as a conflict resolution strategy.

Sadhguru - Founder, Isha Foundation

Ranked amongst the fifty most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru was conferred the; Padma Vibhushan; by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service.

Three decades ago, Sadhguru founded Isha Foundation, a non-profit human-service organization, with human well-being as its core commitment. Sadhguru has initiated powerful yoga programs for human transformation as well as various outreach projects to uplift under-served communities in rural India.

Isha Foundation

Isha Foundation, founded by Sadhguru, is a volunteer-run, international non-profit, human service organisation dedicated to cultivating human potential. Isha Foundation is operated by over 9 million volunteers from more than 250 city-based centers spread worldwide. The Foundation is headquartered at Isha Yoga Center, set at the base of the Velliangiri Mountains in southern India, and at the Isha Institute of Inner Sciences on the spectacular Cumberland Plateau in middle Tennessee, USA.

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