

Prof. Lia Diskin

Recipient of the International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India

Born : 27th October, 1950

Academics : Graduation in Journalism from Instituto
Superior de Periodismo Jose Hemandez, Specialization
in Literary Criticism

Prof. Lia Diskin is the founder of the Palas Athena Association. It is a Brazilian NGO dedicated to developing, fostering, and managing community-oriented programs and projects in the fields of Education, Healthcare, Human Rights, Environmental Preservation, Social Welfare and Culture of Peace.

Prof. Lia Diskin has been creating, supervising, and carrying out many programs and actions along Gandhian ideology. One of them is organizing Gandhi Week every year since 1982 without a single interruption. The objective is to promote a continuous revival of Gandhi's ideas and invaluable examples. Every year, the theme for reflection and activities would vary both in content and presentation – Truth, Non-violence, Prayer; the religious, spiritual and political aspects of Gandhi and their integration; “Gandhi and Politics”, “Gandhi and Faith”, “Gandhi and Himself”; “Gandhi – a man ahead of his time”; “Tolerance through daily practice in action, feelings and words”; “Peaceful Conflict Resolution”; “Role of Gandhi in the Independence of India” etc.

Panel discussions and conferences have also been held with social and Gandhian philosophers.

Art, drama, songs, dance and visual media were extensively used to impart the ideas and life experience of the Mahatma. These included projection of film “Gandhi” by Sir Richard Attenborough, screening of the documentary “A Force More Powerful – One Century of Non violent Struggle” by Steve York, exhibition of historical documents, hosting of an event by the Modern Art Museum of Sao Paulo. Concerts, dance workshops, and meditation meetings were designed to highlight aspiration for peace and transformation.

Two notable events of Gandhi Week were the launch of the translation of the Mahatma's autobiography “Autobiografia – Minha Vida e Minhas Experiencias com a Verdade” and a special event at the Agua Branca Park for all ages designed to teach and inspire simpler living, solidarity, responsibility, and tolerance.

There have been many 'firsts' too by way of Gandhi Week. In 2003, for the first time Gandhi Week was integrated to the activities of the Social Health Forum of the Sao Paulo University.

In 2004, for the first time the activities formerly held only in Sao Paulo started being offered to other cities of the state.

In 2005, the Social Health Forum at the Sao Paulo University, and the inauguration of Gandhi Square's remodeled layout were integrated to the celebrations that were held in 12 cities of 3 Brazilian states. Very next year, over 150 activities were held in 14 cities, involving 5000 children, over 1100 teachers, 30 non-governmental organizations.

In 2007, the UN General Assembly declared October 2 as the International Day of Non-violence. The first activity of this Gandhi Week was a speech by Prof. Lia Diskin on the “Application of Gandhi's principles to the modern social structure” at the United Nations in New York. Besides, over 400 activities were carried out during the month of October in 16 cities of 6 Brazilian states, involving 89 schools, 4 universities and dozens of governmental agencies and civil society organizations.

Gandhi Square

As an acknowledgement of the work done by Association Palas Athena under the leadership of Pro. Lia Diskin in disseminating the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi over the last 25 years, the Government of India presented the State of Sao Paulo with a full size bronze statue of the Mahatma. The statue was

placed in the centre of the Tulio Fontoura square, beside the Sao Paulo State Legislative Assembly and in front of the largest Park of the city. The square, now renamed as Gandhi Square, is the stage for peace manifestations of the local community.

Peace Wants Partners

In 2009, under this programmes Prof. Lia Diskin, carried out in public spaces as parks, squares, prisons and schools, offering the population several cultural and recreational activities designed to show and allow participants to experience the three basic principles of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy.

Priceless Values Educational Program

The purpose of this program which commenced in 2000 was to provide support for teachers working in communities affected by violence and weakened by material and social needs. In association with the “Priceless Values” program, the “Gandhi and Non-violence” program has already trained 40,000 teachers of the public network of schools, providing them information on pacific resolution of conflicts and the fostering of dialogue as a means to approach persons and create a means by which they can be together, form bonds and co-operate.

Gandhian Practices for the Civil and Military Police Corporations

Under this program, 2 Literary Contests were organised on Non-violence during 1998 and 1999 for Military and Civil Police followed by seminars during 1999-2000 on “Reflections on Non-violence from biology to culture” and “Gandhi's example – leadership as educational action”.

Peace in Action

In partnership with UNESCO, this program was created in 2003 in order to provide training for teachers, principles, and other education professionals who are willing to create 'Culture of Peace and Non-violence Dissemination Centers' in their schools.

Training in Universal Values

Training was imparted for UNESCO's “Peace Schools” in Brazil . Teachers and multipliers were trained for UNESCO's pilot project of Peace Schools in Rio de Janeiro.

Ethics of Welcoming

This project was developed as a training course for the staff of the Municipal network of health facilities in Sao Paulo mainly to create awareness, within the Municipal Health Network, of the harmful consequences of considering human and subjective aspects less important than technical, scientific, and operational ones when working with patients.

Gandhi Network

Under this initiative 1500 participants attended as representatives of over 500 Brazilian cities. The constitution of the Gandhi Network was approved by 14 states, Its goals are to impart training, information, and guidance on Culture of Peace-oriented activities and knowledge and to promote and disseminate Culture of Peace skills, abilities, and talents.

Awards and Honours

Gibran International Cultural Association (ACIGI) for “Adding the Wisdom of the West to Progress of the East” in 1986 ; Sao Paulo World Trade Center award for Peace Builders ; Letter of Acknowledgement for her accomplishments in the field of Human Rights and Culture of Peace among others.

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