

Smt. Kamala

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India-1995

Smt Kamala is an American born on December 20, 1945 in Madison, Wisconsin, her original name was Sally Slack and her father was Vice-President of the Philips Petroleum Co. She studied at the University of Rouen, France, St. Lawrence University, New York (B.A.) and the University of Maryland where she completed the Master's Degree with Honours in Special Education.

She settled in Washington in 1968 identifying herself with the ideals of the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism and the Gandhi Memorial Foundation both of which were founded by Swami Premananda of India who came to America in 1928. In Washington, she taught for 5 years in the State of Maryland (High School) and in the poorest sections of the District of Columbia (Elementary School).

She is at present Administrative President of the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation and the Director of the Gandhi Memorial Centre. As Director of the Gandhi Centre, since its construction and dedication on January 30, 1976, Kamala organizes and directs a group of some 50 regular workers including 30 residents of the Ashram who maintains its activities and services.

She has organized for the first time in the United States a Correspondence Course on the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi leading to a certificate from the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad. Students from as far away as Hungary and Johannesburg (South Africa) have completed the course. Her addresses each year for Gandhi Jayanti and Gandhi Maha Samadhi have been presented on New York's "Bharat Vani Radio" Broadcast each year since 1976. The Gandhi Centre's programme on October 2nd is taped by the "Voice of America" for broadcast in India.

In 1979-80 (November to January) Kamala journeyed through India to visit Institutions established or inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. During her subsequent visits to India in 1983, 1986 or 1989, she was invited to speak on the work of the Gandhi Centre and Gandhi Peace Foundation at several places in India including Government and Nationalised Banks, Gandhi Ashrams in India, at the Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad, at Sevagram and at Gandhigram, Tamil Nadu.

The Gandhi Memorial Centre is principally concerned with the propagation of Gandhian values and the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts and activities for non-violence, peace and harmony between nations. It has an excellent library containing 3000 volumes, a hall where films, lectures, programmes presenting Gandhi's life and India's cultural heritage are held. The Gandhi Centre is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

Smt. Kamala is the author of several books and a prolific writer of articles in many distinguished journals. Among the most important of her books are : 1. Frontiers of the spirit (1982). 2. Mahatma Gandhi : An American Profile (1987). 3. I am an Absolute Monist (1991) 4. The Mystic cross (1992).

The Gandhi Memorial Centre also publishes periodically a "Gandhi Message" which is a quarterly and which also apart from distinguished writers who contribute very scholarly articles also has some of the speeches and writing of Mrs. Kamala herself.

Kamala's book, Mahatma Gandhi: "An American Profile" has been dedicated to the "Spiritual Kinship of America-Land of my birth and my vocation; and India-Land of my rebirth and my illumination; and the Gandhian of my dream

For Smt. Kamala the Gandhian of her dreams is a businessman who works for what Gandhiji called “commercial peace”; for ethics in business; he is a technologist who realizes that machinery has its place, but to be well used it has to help and ease human effort.' He is a lawyer who believes that “Society will be much cleaner and healthier if there were less resorts to lock outs than there is.” He is a parent or teacher who perceives that “Man is not a body but something infinitely higher and all education is in vain if one does not learn good manners.” He is a student who expects that “Character cannot be built by other hands than your own”. He is a patriot whose patriotism “includes the good of mankind in general “. He is in every field a Satyagrahi who adheres to truth by the practices and virtues of “self purification, self sacrifice and faith in God.”

In recognition of her outstanding contributions in representing India's spiritual heritage, she received an Award as “Ambassador of Indian Philosophy and Ideals of Mahatma Gandhi in U.S.A.” from the Association of Indian in America (Washington 1980).

At the second convention of Asian Indian in North America (Chicago 1982) Kamlaji was given the Special Friend of India Award and a citation for fostering the cultural and spiritual heritage of India in North America. This recognition has been given to only two Americans.

