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Relevance of non-violence

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, JAN. 12. "Non-violent struggle is gaining recognition all over the globe as an alternate way of waging conflicts without bloodshed and the revolution in Serbia this past October proves just that," Ms. Mary King, Professor, St. George's University, Grenada, West Indies, said here today.

Delivering the 15th anniversary lecture organised by the Institute of Social Sciences here on "Is the non-violent struggle of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King relevant today?", Ms. King said the thoughts, words and action of Gandhi and Martin Luther King were absolutely alive and pulsating throughout the world.

An associate of Martin Luther King and author of "Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King: The Power of Non-Violent Action", Ms. King said the Serbian revolution has been brought about by a two-year-long grassroots youth movement, members of which were trained in non-violent strategic action by a group of trainers in the United States.

Whether it was the Czech and Slovak "Velvet Revolution" or the Pastor's Movement in East Germany or the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the influence of Gandhi's thoughts and ideas through



Prof. Mary King of St. George's University, Grenada, delivering the 15th anniversary lecture of the Institute of Social Sciences in New Delhi on Friday. —

Photo. S. Aroeja.

books and workshops was very much the nerve-centre of protest action. "The idea of replacing passivity with Constructive action and laying the ground of reconciliation are just two of the strategic principles of non-violent action that these movements picked up," Ms. King said.

Pointing out that the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s was indirectly influenced by Gandhi and his thoughts, Ms. King said much of what Martin Luther King did exemplified and disseminated Gandhi. "Not many know that during the Montgom-

ery bus boycott, King carried a gun. However, after reading Gandhian books and after being trained in non-violent strategic action, he gave it up."

According to the veteran civil rights activist who was active in the students movement when Martin Luther King was waging his Civil Rights struggle and who later became a member of the Peace Corps in the Carter Administration, "Martin Luther shows the way to look at Gandhi through a lens which is more readily received".

Echoing Ms. King's sentiments, Mr. Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, said "Martin Luther King is necessary for young people in India to understand Gandhi". His life had four central messages, he pointed out. First, of course, was non-violence. His second message was "keep the poor in the forefront", third was "all humanity is one" and fourth, "Obey your conscience".

Mr. B. R. Nanda, eminent historian, said Gandhi's passion for non-violence was echoed by King when he said, "The choice is not between violence and non-violence. It is between non-violence and non-existence". Mr. George Mathew, Director, Institute of Social Sciences, also spoke of Gandhi's relevance in today's strife-torn world.