

## Gandhi was a Man of the Information Age: Sam Pitroda



*L-R: Moderator: **Kishan Rana**, Professor Emeritus, Indian Foreign Service Institute/Former Ambassador of India to Germany; **Vinay Lal**, Associate Professor, Department of History University of California Los Angeles, USA; **Sam Pitroda**, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission; **Harsh Neotia**, Chairman of Ambuja Realty Development Ltd.; **Sugata Bose**, Gardiner Professor of History and Director of the South Asia Initiative Harvard University, USA Panel:*

"Gandhi was in reality a man of information age. He knew the power of information and how to utilize it in the most effective manner," said **Mr Sam Pitroda, Chairman, National Knowledge Commission.**

He was speaking at the session on **'Is Gandhi relevant today?'** during the **'Ideas India 2008'** seminar, conducted by **Aspen Institute India** here today.

Asserting the point that Gandhi is and will always be relevant, he said, "By all accounts, Gandhi was one of the greatest communicators of all time. It is difficult to imagine how he just pucked up simple salt and galvanized millions of people."

"Gandhi may mean different things to different people. Throughout his life he firmly stood for certain deep values, such as, simplicity, sacrifice, truth and love for all. These values helped him get rid of all the impulses of instant gratification and provided him immense courage of conviction."

**Mr Vinay Lal, Associate professor, Department of History, University of California, Los Angles, USA,** said: "In the context of where India is today, it is important to understand the tussle between India as nation-state and India as civilization. Long back Gandhi had shown a very clear way to this end."

"We have much to learn from Gandhi, from his understanding of the west and his relations and dealing with the world. Gandhi had embraced a radically different conception of metropolitanism," he added.

**Mr Harsh Neotia, Chairman of Ambuja Realty Development Ltd,** said, "Gandhi enunciated the ideas of trusteeship and inspired the corporate and business world of his time in really big way. We have the glowing examples of Birla and Bajaj who followed his teachings and did so much for the society."

"Today with the advent of modern technology and tremendous spread of information and communication technology in particular, it is more possible to realize the Gandhian dream of empowering rural India," he added.

**Mr Kishan Khanna, Professor Emeritus, Indian Foreign Service Institute and former Ambassador of India to Germany,** cautioned, "We should not try to just retrofit Gandhi of 20<sup>th</sup> century into 21<sup>st</sup> century India without understanding the subtle and deep meanings of his actions."

"Gandhi was an incredible communicator and a leader, who stripped the larger issues and ideas to a down-to-earth level in order to make it more compatible," he added.

The session was moderated by **Mr Sugata Bose, Gardiner Profesor of History and Director of South Asia Initiative Harvard University, USA panel.**

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