

Granddaughter wants auction of Mahatma's memorabilia withdrawn

Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee Wednesday urged the auctioneers of his personal belongings to withdraw the process and hand them over to India, respecting the sentiments of hundreds of millions of its people.

'In this particular case, going by the sentiments of the people of India, the stake-holders in New York should give these objects back to India, without resorting to any sale,' said Bhattacharjee, vice chairperson of the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti.

Bhattacharjee, who oversees some of the institutions that seek to preserve the rich legacy of the Father of the Nation, also termed the proposed auction process as objectionable, and called for the stakeholders to respect the non-violent principles set by Gandhi.

'Auction is an objectionable act. Returning these belongings to India with grace, and without selling, will be the non-violent approach of Gandhi. We should also try to get them back in the same non-violent spirit,' she said.

'Selling and buying of these objects will be the violent method.'

Her comments came in the wake of California-based collector James Otis planning to sell some personal possessions of Mahatma Gandhi, rejecting so far India's offer to acquire them ahead of auction planned Thursday.

The New York auction house, Antiquorum Auctioneers, with whom Otis has signed a contract to sell these items, confirmed that the 'auction was going ahead tomorrow (Thursday) with the reserve price for the memorabilia set between \$20,000 and \$30,000.'

The items include Gandhi's Zenith pocket watch, his steel-rimmed spectacles, a pair of sandals, an eating bowl and a plate.

'I appeal to the stakeholders to go in for their introspection,' said Bhattacharjee.

'Getting back these objects through the non-violent approach will be the responsibility for us in India, as the possession of these items will be a challenge to our conscience for satyagraha and non-violence,' she said in a statement.

She said that her grandfather had continuously discarded possessions throughout his life and had lived with 10-15 essential items in the last decade of his life. Gandhi belonged to entire humanity and his possessions were also priceless objects of human heritage.

She also expressed her willingness to speak to the stakeholders of the auction process and appeal to them personally.

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