Sharath Srivatsa

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It was nearly 50 years ago that Suraj Sadan finished the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi with Kasturba that later won him international accolades. To this day, his sketches of the Mahatma continue to impress people.

For the 78-year-old Mr. Sadan, who created the iconic portrait that went on to become the 20 paise stamp released to commemorate the centenary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi in 1969, spreading awareness about the non-violence principles has been a mission. He has been part of all Pravasi Bharatiya Divas since its inception in 2003.

Twenty of his portraits of the Mahatma displayed at the venue drew inquisitive visitors. Recalling the days of 1968, Mr. Sadan said that since he was passionate about creating portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, he entered into the contest that had been called to select the best portrait for the postal stamp.

“My sketch was finally selected and the same was sent to UNESCO, which released the stamp in 10 languages,” said Mr. Sadan, a resident of Montreal, Canada, for over four decades.

His drawing was also featured on the cover of UNESCO magazine.

Mr. Sadan’s interest in portraits of Mahatma Gandhi started as a young boy. His family, along with him, had been displaced from Quetta, now in Pakistan, and were in the post-Independence refugee centre at Kingsway Camp in Delhi when the Mahatma visited it. “I was around nine years old when he came to the camp and since then I paint his portraits,” he said, adding that he tries to create awareness of Gandhi’s principles.

He has also drawn portraits of former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, and former Presidents Rajendra Prasad, S. Radhakrishnan, and V.V. Giri.