

# National Seminar

Organized by  
Department of Political Science, Presidency University and Council for Political Studies,  
Kolkata

## Rethinking Gandhi at 150

28 January 2020  
Presidency University

### Concept Note

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, one of the greatest and admired personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has a lasting legacy for India and the world. He successfully led India's national movement with his unique style of leadership, and is well regarded for his commitment and contribution to 'Ahimsa' and 'Satyagraha'. This is attested by a sustained flow of scholarship on his life and thought, and the relevance of his approach continues to draw huge attention even today. As one of the most analyzed and invoked thinkers, of contemporary times and for decades, Gandhi has been appropriated and revised in different and often contested manner. His position on caste, women, religion have been some of the themes subjected to intense scrutiny.

Gandhi respected the traditional role of women in home keeping and it was he who brought into focus the idea of mass politics that brought the subaltern masses into the vortex of politics and paved the way for women participation in large scale in national movement. He approved of the *varna* system while expressed aversion to untouchability as a distortion of religion. Such a view has been subject to denunciation from critics who view untouchability as intrinsic to caste system. Gandhi's philosophy is open-ended and heuristic in nature and that makes it difficult to treat him as a representative of any known form of philosophical stream.

This seminar intends to understand and appreciate the relevance of Gandhian thoughts and idea in the contemporary social-political thinking. This is necessary in the sesquicentennial year of Gandhi's birth when *satyagraha* has become a chosen tool of movement against oppression, gender question has become central, religion has become intertwined with politics, and liberal state and models of development face increasing challenges and hostility. What is the relevance

of Gandhian ideas, how do they correspond to contemporary challenges and what political and ideational directions can they provide for India and civilization at large ? We invite papers critically engaging with Gandhian ideas situating them in the contemporary scenario either at the level of discourse or practice. The broader aim is to engage in the debate on the relevance of Gandhi's thoughts and action as significant and urgent for addressing contemporary religious, economic, environmental, social, and moral challenges.

The seminar would focus on the relevance of Gandhi in the following five sub-themes:

1. Gandhi on Untouchability
2. Gandhi on *Swaraj* and Democracy
3. Gandhi on Religion
4. Gandhi on the Women Question
5. Gandhi and *Satyagraha*

Interested participations are invited to submit a 300 word abstract to [presidencyseminar@gmail.com](mailto:presidencyseminar@gmail.com) by 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Selected participants will be informed by 15 January, 2020. We do not require a full paper for this seminar at this stage. We cannot provide T.A/D.A to participants.

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