

Colloquium on

Truth and Non-violence

Gandhi in the Post-Truth Era



January 8-9

2020

Organised by
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
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**YEARS OF
CELEBRATING
THE MAHATMA**

Colloquium on
“Truth and Non-violence: Gandhi in the Post-Truth Era”
IIT Guwahati, January 8-9, 2020

“Generations to come,” said Einstein on Gandhi’s demise “will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.” It seems a dream now to think of the exemplary moral leadership based on an ethical understanding of public affairs with which Mahatma Gandhi led the movement for swarajya in the early decades of the twentieth century. He spoke for and represented the voices of hundreds of millions of people long suppressed by the oppressive regime of the British and beset within by exploitative social and religious structures. India’s struggle for independence was also an experiment – widely acknowledged and revered – an assertion of what Gandhi called ‘soul force’ over ‘brute force’ or ‘truth’ over ‘untruth’. This experiment was the fountainhead of inspiration, as has been well documented, for the movements led by Martin Luther King in the USA and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Gandhi’s moral philosophy and the forms of protest which he generated continue to guide a wide range of social, political and ecological movements in India and abroad.

As the late capitalist world order gathers its politico-technological might through mass media and social media with their various capacities to alter the real, influence minds and direct trends, how may the small still voice of truth prevail? How may truth be lived and practiced in a world spectacularly marked by its absence? Are we really living in this era of ‘Post truth’? Or is it merely a byproduct of populist regimes across the world and their seeming disregard for facts and reasoned debate? How do the wise strategies of Gandhi, hammered on the anvil of truth and non-violence, still offer creative challenges to this new ‘Post-Truth’ society, where every sphere of our collective lives: social, religious and political, is marred by insecurity, polarization and violence? How indeed do some people and organizations carry forward their work inspired by the ideals of truth and the collective good?

Given this context, this seminar/colloquium intends to revisit Gandhian ethics of non-violence and satyagraha on the occasion of the Mahatma’s 150th birth anniversary, and to debate their relevance to contemporary challenges. Selected scholars from a wide range of disciplines working on Gandhi, as well as practitioners on the field whose work emanates from a Gandhian context will be invited to speak on the theme outlined above and the sub-themes that it generates.

Session Schedule

Day One: January 8, 2020 Session I

Inaugural (9:00 am - 9:30 am)

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Opening Remarks by Professor A. Barua
(Convener)

Welcome Address by Professor M. K. Dutta
HoD, HSS, IIT Guwahati

Address by Professor T. G. Sitharam
Director, IIT Guwahati

Address by the Guest of Honour Professor J. S. Patil
Vice Chancellor, NLUJA, Assam

Vote of Thanks, Dr M. K. Jha

Tea (9:30 am–9:45 am)

Day One: January 8, 2020

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Concept Note: Professor Rohini Mokashi-Punekar

HSS, IIT Guwahati

(9:45 am - 10:00 am)

Session II

Chair: Professor Arupjyoti Saikia

HSS, IIT Guwahati

**“Gandhian Truth Against Colonial and Post-Colonial State
Power”**

Speaker: Professor Sugata Bose

Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs, Harvard University

(10:00 am-11:00 am)

Discussion

(11:00 am-11:15 am)

Tea (11:15 am – 11:45 am)

Day One: January 8, 2020
Session III

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Chair: Professor Alaka Sarma

*Dean, School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Science & Technology
Meghalaya*

“Gandhi’s Ethical Realism and Transformative Politics”

Speaker: Professor Manindra Nath Thakur

Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nebru University

(11:45 am- 12:45 pm)

**“Gandhian Basic Education in Theory and Practice: Some
Reflections from Bengal”**

Speaker: Professor Samantak Das

*Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the School of Cultural Texts &
Records, Jadavpur University*

(12:45 pm- 1:45 pm)

Lunch (1:45 pm – 3.00 pm)

Day One: January 8, 2020
Session IV

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Chair: Professor Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed

*Honorary Director, Banikanta Research Institute,
K. K. Handique State Open University, Assam*

**“Gandhian Notion of Peace and Conflict Resolution Among
Different Naga Tribes”**

Speaker: Niketu Iralu

Trustee, Centre for Northeast Studies & Policy Research, New Delhi and Gunabati

(3:00 pm- 4:00 pm)

Day One: January 8, 2020
Session V

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Chair: Professor Apoorvanand

Department of Hindi, University of Delhi

“वर्तमान स्थिति और गाँधीजी के ग्यारह व्रत”
(Current Situation and Gandhiji's 11 Principles)

Speaker: Vijay Diwan

Gandhian, leatherworker and author

(4:00 pm- 5:00 pm)

Tea (5:00 pm – 5:30 pm)

Day One: January 8, 2020
Session VI

Venue: Bhupen Hazarika Auditorium

Chair: Professor Faizan Mustafa

Vice Chancellor, NALSAR, University of Law, Hyderabad

“आज का समय और गाँधी का समय”
(Gandhi’s Times and the Contemporary Period)

Speaker: Ravish Kumar

Senior Journalist and Managing Editor, NDTV India

(6.00 pm- 8.00 pm)

End of Day One

Day Two: January 9, 2020
Session I

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Chair: Professor J. S. Patil

Vice Chancellor, NLUJA, Assam

“Gandhi and Public Interest Lawyering”

Speaker: Professor Faizan Mustafa

Vice Chancellor, NALSAR, University of Law, Hyderabad

(10:00 am - 11:15 am)

Tea (11:15 am – 11:45 am)

Day Two: January 9, 2020
Session II

Venue: Conference Hall No. 2

Chair: Professor Samantak Das

*Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the School of Cultural Texts & Records,
Jadavpur University*

“RTI as our Experiments with Truth and Non-Violence”

Speaker: Nikhil Dey

Founder Member MKSS

(11: 45 am-12:45 pm)

“Imagining Gandhi”

Speaker: Professor Apoorvanand

Department of Hindi, University of Delhi

(12:45 pm-1:45 pm)

Lunch (1:45 pm – 2:45 pm)

Day Two: January 9, 2020
Session III

Film Screening (2:45 pm - 5:30 pm)

Venue: Mini Auditorium

Chair and Moderator: Professor Rohini Mokashi-Punekar

HSS, IIT Guwahati

“Rubaru Roshni”

(Where the Light Comes In)

Filmmaker: Svati Bhatkal

Communications Professional and Film Director

Q & A Session

Tea (5:30 pm – 6:00 pm)

Day Two: January 9, 2020
Session IV

Valedictory Session (6:00 pm - 6:30 pm)

Venue: Mini Auditorium, IIT Guwahati

Address by

Professor M.K. Dutta

HoD, HSS, IIT Guwahati

Professor Archana Baruah

HSS, IIT Guwahati

Professor Rohini Mokashi-Punekar

HSS, IIT Guwahati

Dr Mithilesh Kumar Jha

HSS, IIT Guwahati

Bio-Notes of the Speakers

Sugata Bose is the Gardiner Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs at Harvard University. He has served as Director of Graduate Studies in History at Harvard and as the Founding Director of Harvard's South Asia Institute. Prior to taking up the Gardiner Chair at Harvard University in 2001, Bose was a Fellow of St. Catharine's College, University of Cambridge, and Professor of History and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Bose was educated at Presidency College, Calcutta, and the University of Cambridge where he obtained his Ph.D. His scholarship has contributed to a deeper understanding of colonial and post-colonial political economy, the relation between rural and urban domains, inter-regional arenas of travel, trade and imagination across the Indian Ocean, and Indian ethical discourses, political philosophy and economic thought. His books include *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, Social Structure and Politics* (1986), *Peasant Labour and Colonial Capital* (1993), *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (1998, 2004, 2011, 2017 with Ayesha Jalal), *A Hundred Horizons: the Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (2006), *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* (2011, 2019) and *The Nation as Mother and other Visions of Nationhood* (2017). He is currently writing a book on *Asia after Europe* and is general editor of *The Cambridge History of the Indian Ocean*. He was a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship and gave the G. M. Trevelyan Lecture at the University of Cambridge. In 2015 he was awarded the Rabindra Puraskar, the highest literary award of Bengal.

Bose is joint editor with Sisir Kumar Bose of the twelve-volume *Collected Works of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose* and joint editor with Krishna Bose of *Purabi: The East in its Feminine Gender* (2007), a book of translations by Charu C. Chowdhuri of Rabindranath Tagore's poems and songs. He has translated into English in *Tagore: The World Voyager* (2013) and published recordings of Bengali songs, including *Amaar Rabindranath* or *My Tagore* (2010). He has made three documentary films on modern South Asian history and politics that have been broadcast on public television in the USA and India. He is the Director of the Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata.

Sugata Bose served as a Member of Parliament in India elected to the 16th Lok Sabha (2014–2019) representing the Jadavpur constituency in Bengal and throughout that period as a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. His eloquent speeches in Parliament were widely heard and appreciated.

Manindra Nath Thakur is professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He offers courses on “Political Ideas in Indian Intellectual Traditions”, “Text in Political Philosophy: Gandhi, Marx and Ambedkar” and “Radical Movements in India”. He has been working on “Knowledge and Practice in India” and “Hindu-Muslim Relations in Seemanchal, Bihar”. He is one of the founder members of Creative Theory Group, which aims at using Indian experience as a springboard for doing social theory. He has published an edited volume *Wounded History: Religion, Conflict, Psyche and Social Healing*, which is a part of his larger project of intercommunity dialogue. His other edited volume *Democracy on the Move? Reflections on Moments, Promises and Contradictions* is a collection of articles analyzing the anti-corruption movement of Anna Hazare. His forthcoming books are *Gyan ki Rajniti: Samaj Shastra aur Bhartiya Darshan* and *Marxism and Religion: From Opium Thesis to Reflex Theory*.

Samantak Das is professor of comparative literature and director of the School of Cultural Texts & Records, Jadavpur University. He has written and lectured on 19th-century literature, translation, the relationships between the biological sciences and literature, environment, ecology, rural development and education in journals, magazines, and newspapers in India and abroad including *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, *Economic & Political Weekly*, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *The Times of India*, *The Statesman*, *The Telegraph*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindu*, *Biblio*, among others.

He has led, or jointly led, several national and international projects including on language learning, digitising ephemera, creating databases, and so on. For the past several years now he has worked as a volunteer for an NGO that provides vocational training for economic rehabilitation to impoverished young women and men.

Niketu Iralu studied in Shillong and Madras. He left college before completion of BA degree in 1957 to work full-time with Moral Re-Armament (MRA), now called Initiatives of Change (IofC), in all parts of India. He worked abroad with IofC's programmes/projects in various countries in Asia, Europe, North and South America. He was the Holding Trustee of Friends of Moral Re-Armament (India) for 25 years; Member of International Council of Initiatives of Change; Chairman of the short-lived Naga Reconciliation Commission; Member, also Chairman of Peace Committee of Nagaland Baptist Church Council; First Manager and Counsellor of Mount Gilead Home for counselling and rehabilitation of drug and alcohol addicts started by Naga Mothers Association and assisted by Kripa Foundation, Mumbai and Trustee, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong. He is currently the Trustee, Centre for Northeast Studies & Policy Research, New Delhi

and Guwahati, and the Member, Board of Trustees, Patkai Christian College, Chumukedi/Sithekie, Nagaland.

Iralu was awarded the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Award for National Integration 2005 and Upendra Nath Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award 2011. He continues to be actively involved in the search with others in the NE region for the creation of a wider common stability so that sound growth and development may become possible.

Vijay Diwan is a disciple of Vinoba Bhave. He is associated with 'Sarvodaya' since 1982. He has also worked for the Gramadan movement. He lives in Gagode village, Raigad, Maharashtra which is the birthplace of the social reformer Vinobha Bhave.

He skins dead cattle and cures the leather. He has chosen to do this work since the past several decades in order to change people's perceptions on caste and to generate awareness of Gandhi's thoughts on cow protection. He has also published a book addressing the same issue.

Some of his other published works in Marathi are, *Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Narbar Shambhuraao Bhave, Swami Kevalanand Saraswati, Parachureshastri* (the biography of a Sanskrit scholar who worked at Sevagram during Gandhi's times), *Vinobanchi Tapobhumi: Vaai, Mrutaguraanche Shavachhedana*, and an edited volume *Gandhi-Vinoba Patrayavahar*.

Ravish Kumar pursued his early interest in history and public affairs through postgraduate studies in history from Delhi University. He is currently the Managing Editor of NDTV India, the Hindi news channel of the NDTV news network. He hosts a number of programs including the channel's flagship weekday show *Prime Time, Hum Log* and *Ravish Ki Report*.

He is most vocal on insisting that the professional values of sober, balanced, fact-based reporting be upheld in practice. He has been recognized for his unfaltering commitment to a professional, ethical journalism of the highest standards; his moral courage in standing up for truth, integrity, and independence; and his principled belief that it is in giving full and respectful voice to the voiceless, in speaking truth bravely yet soberly to power, that journalism fulfills its noblest aims to advance democracy.

He has been twice conferred with Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award for the Best Journalist of the Year and became the fifth Indian journalist to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2019. He was honoured with the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2019 in Journalism, Literature and the Creative Communication

Arts for “harnessing journalism to give voice to the voiceless”. He is the first recipient of the Gauri Lankesh Award for Journalism, awarded by Gauri Lankesh Memorial Trust. He was also honoured with the first Kuldip Nayar journalism award for his contribution to the field of journalism in March 2017. He received the prestigious Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Award for Hindi Journalism and Creative Literature for 2010 from the President of India (awarded in 2014). He was included in the list of 100 most influential Indians 2016 by *The Indian Express*. Apart from that, he was also named the best journalist of the year in 2016 by Mumbai Press Club.

Some of his published books are *The Free Voice—On Democracy, Culture and The Nation*, *Ishq Mein Shabar Hona*, *Dehate Rabiye*, *Ravishpanti* and *Bolna Hi Hai: Loktantra, Sanskriti Aur Rashtra Ke Bare Mein*.

Faizan Mustafa senior professor of constitutional law is presently working as the Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR, University of Law, Hyderabad. He is also the President of Consortium of National Law Universities. He is the recipient of both Commonwealth as well as the Fulbright fellowships. He was conferred the SAARC’s Best Law Teacher Award in 2014. He was the President and the Vice-President of the prestigious Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI).

He is the Founder Vice-Chancellor of National Law University, Orissa and is the Advisor to National Law School & Judicial Academy, Assam. He is known for his institution building abilities and democratic leadership. He is also visiting faculty to several reputed institutions in India and abroad.

He has written eight books and contributed more than 200 articles. The Supreme Court of India has quoted him a number of times; most recently his research paper was cited in the Sabarimala judgement. His articles have also been cited in several other countries. He has contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Legal History* published by the Oxford University Press. He regularly writes in leading Indian newspapers and magazines on current legal issues. His fine analysis of legal issues may be seen in a several print interviews and TV shows where he is invited as a legal expert. Spearheading the Legal Awareness Web Series (LAWS) with its flagship motto: *Ignorantia Juris Non Excusat* (Ignorance of law excuses no one) single-handedly, Professor Faizan Mustafa’s contributions to spreading legal awareness in the country is seminal.

Nikhil Dey was educated in India and the USA. After working briefly with the Kheduth Mazdoor Chetna Sangathana in Madhya Pradesh, he joined Aruna Roy and Shankar Singh in Devdungrī, Rajasthan in 1987, where along with many others

they helped found the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). Since 1990, he has been a full time worker of the MKSS, and has been involved in struggles of the poor for justice, including grass root struggles for land and the payment of minimum wages. The MKSS has also played a pioneering role in the movements for two landmark national legislations- the Right to Information (RTI) Act, and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (now known as MGNREGA).

He has been a founding member of peoples' platforms like National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), and the Soochana Evam Rozgaar Adhikar Abhiyan (SR Abhiyan) who put together "peoples' drafts" of the Right to Information and Employment Guarantee Bills, and have consistently worked for their effective implementation. Nikhil Dey is also part of the effort by people's movements to build institutions of participatory democracy, where for instance, people's platforms for public audits are now being institutionalized by introducing statutory requirements of social audits and public hearings. He has been integrally involved in large state-wide campaigns for peoples monitoring of education (Shiksha Ka Sawaal) in Rajasthan in 2016, and the SR Abhiyan is currently planning a Swasthya Ka Sawaal Campaign in Rajasthan. The SR Abhiyan has also been campaigning across the State for a social accountability law, to follow up on the connections between transparency and accountability.

He has been a member of the Central Employment Guarantee Council (CEGC) and of the State Employment Guarantee Council of Rajasthan. He is a Co-convenor of the NCPRI, and was a member of the Steering Committee of the Multilateral Open Government Partnership (OGP) which has over 70 member nations. He is currently an OGP Envoy. He is also a member of the Audit Advisory Board of Rajasthan.

Apoorvanand is professor of Hindi at the University of Delhi. He earned his Ph.D. on the development of Marxist Aesthetics in Hindi literature. In 1999, he was invited to join Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, a Central University set up by the Government of India, and was instrumental in developing the University's vision plan and first academic programs.

He was part of the core group that designed the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in 2005 and was a member of the national Focus Group on Teaching of Indian Languages formed by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT). He has worked with the Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education in India under the Chairmanship of Professor Yash Pal. Created by the Government of India in 2008, the committee worked to craft a new vision plan for the sector of higher education in India.

He writes on literary and cultural issues. He is experimenting with different ways to facilitate democratic communication. He is the author of *Sundar Ka Swapna and Sabhya Ka Ekant*. His critical essays have appeared in all major Hindi journals. Apart from his academic and literary writings, he also contributes columns to newspapers and magazines on the issues of education, culture, communalism, violence and human rights.

Svati Bhatkal has been a communications professional for over 25 years. Her work, which includes print, audio, audio-visual and interactive media, has engaged with issues related to social justice and progressive thought.

She has directed a feature length documentary *Rubaru Roshni* (Where the Light Comes In) produced by Aamir Khan Productions. Released on January 26, 2019, the film was narrated by Aamir Khan and has been dubbed in six Indian languages. It has received widespread critical acclaim along with a viewership of over 30 million.

She has also co-authored the script for *Zokkomon* (2011) a children's film, produced by The Walt Disney Company.

She was the Former Vice-Chairperson, Children's Film Society of India. She was also the Co-Director and Head, Field Research, for *Satyamev Jayate*, one of India's most credible and widely watched television shows, produced and hosted by Aamir Khan.

She has co-authored scripts for television serial *Bombay Lawyers*, aired on NDTV, 2008.

Apart from her work in film and television, she is currently heading social media for non-profit, Paani Foundation, since March 2018.

She is the copy and acquisitions editor for *Popular Prakashan*, an established publishing house with a wide-reading list in English and Marathi. She is also the Instructional designer with Tata Interactive Systems. She has designed online training packages for corporate clients, portals and corporate websites for clients in India, the US and the UK.

Concept note for the design of the poster

The background shows two outlines of the world map. One is presented straight up and the other is in reverse. This depicts the truth and the post-truth aspects of the colloquium's brief. Gandhi's' image is placed in the middle to denote the emphasis of the theme. The lower part of the poster shows the ahimsa symbols both in straight and reversed formats to form the truth and post-truth connotations.

Concept note for the notebook and bag illustrations

The line art illustration is simplified and kept in a white background that denotes peace, harmony, and simplicity. The illustration depicts Gandhi's sandals along with the charkha: both are symbols for self-dependence, social cohesion and non-violent protest. The colour blue has been selected for the bag in order to denote solidarity with working castes/Dalit assertion. The whole illustration is meant to give an appeal of simplicity, organic economic and social life, and clarity of purpose.

The notebook illustration is done in a single color so that it can be easily screen printed across various surfaces and will be cost-effective.

Dr. Subir Dey
Assistant Professor
Department of Design
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

