

Year 2019

23rd December, 2019

A One- Day State level Seminar on The Socio-Political and Ethical Thought of Mahatma Gandhi: A Critical Evaluation Sponsored by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research was held on 23rd December, 2019 in commemoration of the World Philosophy Day. The seminar aimed at paying homage to the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of the Mahatma. The resource persons for the seminar were Prof. Jhuma Chakraborty, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University and Prof. Pralayankar Bhattacharya, Department of Philosophy, University of Calcutta.

Report of the Seminar Commemorating World Philosophy Day

A One Day State Level Seminar Commemorating World Philosophy Day was organized on 23rd December, 2019 by the Department of Philosophy, Diamond Harbour Women's University, Sarisha, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal with the help of a generous grant provided by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. The pivotal theme chosen for the seminar was The Socio-Political and Ethical Thought of Mahatma Gandhi: A Critical Evaluation with a view to pay tribute to the sesquicentennial birth anniversary of the Mahatma.

The inaugural session was graced by the presence of the Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof. Anuradha Mukhopadhyay and Dr. Tania Chakraborty, Dean of Students' Welfare both of whom spoke at length about the standing relevance of the theme. After the welcome address by the Coordinator of the Department of Philosophy, Dr. Sushmita Bhowmik, the keynote lecture was delivered by Prof. Aparna Banerjee, Former Professor of Philosophy, University of Calcutta. In her keynote address, Prof. Banerjee held forth on the religious and ethical ideals of Gandhi with special focus on *ahimsā* and *aparigraha* elicited by Gandhi from the ancient Indian scriptures and their extension and application in his views on the economic and educational welfare of the nation.

The seminar was divided into two academic sessions. Prof. Jhuma Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University, with her invited lecture entitled “**Non-Violence: The Pillar of Gandhian Thought**”, and Prof. Pralayankar Bhattacharya, Associate Professor, University

of Calcutta, with his discourse on “**Gandhi on Man and Society**” were the two eminent speakers of the first academic session chaired by Prof. Aparna Banerjee. Prof. Jhuma Chakraborty had interwoven in her talk the concepts of Truth, God and Non-violence that were three pillars of Gandhian philosophy. The speaker observed quite poignantly that “...for Gandhiji violence was context-sensitive” since he would denounce any non-action against any social prejudices and atrocities against women. He would outright regard any absence of physical protest against such misdemeanour as cowardice. The ideal of a welfare state resting on Trusteeship, the revolt against the rich-poor divide and the caste-system as a culmination of the Non-violence principle of Gandhiji were few of the many strands of Gandhian philosophy elaborated upon in her discourse. Prof. Bhattacharya began his paper with a very thought-provoking question: “How is it possible to practice non-violence as a virtue?” He subsequently attempted to address this question through the lens of Gandhian concept of non-violence, love and egalitarianism. In this context, he pointed out a unique feature of Gandhian *ahimsā*— it is a method, not of coercion, but of conversion, which involves mutating the tyrant’s soul through self-suffering.

The second academic session which was the Young Research Scholar’s segment was chaired by Prof. Jhuma Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University. Gouri Mondal, PhD Research Scholar of the Department of Philosophy and Afsana Parvin, M.Phil student of the same department (2019-2021 Academic Session) presented their respective papers in this session. Both composed and presented their papers in the vernacular medium. In her paper entitled “**Varna Vyavastha Samparke Gandhi O Ambedkarer Dharanar Gathangata Dik (A Comparative Analysis of Gandhi’s and Ambedkar’s Views of Caste-System)**”, Gouri Mondal brought forward the issue of social malaise of untouchability and contempt of the so-called plebeian class. She discussed the two different remedies offered by Gandhiji and Ambedkar in an attempt to uproot the evil consequences of the class division rampant in Hindu society. Highlighting the inadequacies of both the Gandhian method of egalitarianism and Ambedkar’s method of Iron Fist of Law on the solo stand, she proposed a reconciliation of both methods as an effective panacea against the malady of casteism. In her paper “**Santrasvada O Gandhijir Ahimsā Niti (Terrorism and the Ahimsā Principle of Mahatma Gandhi)**”, Afsana Parvin argued for the contemporary relevance of the non-violence ideal in effectively addressing the elements of dissension, separatism and terror-politics. An absolutely time-tested remark made by Gandhiji was underlined in her paper: “When violence appears to do good, the good is only temporary— the evil it does is permanent.”

The curtain was drawn on the One Day State Level Seminar Commemorating World Philosophy Day by a generous vote of thanks by the Coordinator of the Department of Philosophy, Prof. Sushmita Bhowmik.

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