



GANDHIAN STUDIES CENTRE

VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY

P.O. : Vidyasagar University, Midnapore - 721 102, Dist.: Paschim Medinipur,
West Bengal, INDIA

Concept Note

Title of the Seminar: *Minority Politics in India: Gandhian Perspective*

The politics of minorities in India has long been a crucial aspect of democratic governance, social justice, and nation-building. As a diverse and pluralistic society, India continues to negotiate questions of cultural identity, political participation, and equitable representation for its minority communities. In this context, the Gandhian perspective offers a distinctive moral and political framework that emphasises harmony, non-violence, ethical citizenship, and human dignity. This seminar aims to revisit and critically evaluate the relevance of Gandhian thought in understanding contemporary minority politics in India.

Mahatma Gandhi's approach to minority issues was grounded in the principles of *sarva-dharma-samabhava* (equal respect for all religions), decentralisation of power, and non-coercive politics. He envisaged a society where the safety of minority communities depended not only on constitutional guarantees but also on a broader moral climate shaped by trust, empathy, and collective responsibility. Gandhi consistently argued that the strength of a civilisation is measured by how it treats its weakest and most vulnerable sections. His engagement with various minority groups—including religious minorities, Dalits (whom he termed Harijans), and marginalised rural populations—was shaped by his conviction that true freedom must be both political and moral.

In the contemporary political landscape, debates surrounding minority identity, political representation, communal polarisation, and constitutional rights have become increasingly complex. While legal frameworks provide structural protection to minorities, societal attitudes and political narratives often influence the lived experiences of these communities. It is here that the Gandhian lens becomes especially valuable. His insistence on non-violence, constructive dialogue, and empathy offers pathways to transform conflicts and rebuild trust. Moreover, Gandhi's critique of majoritarianism and his emphasis on ethical leadership align closely with the current need to foster inclusive and participatory politics.

This seminar seeks to bring teachers, scholars, students, policy analysts, and civil society actors to explore the applicability of Gandhian ideas to present-day minority politics in India. Discussions will examine Gandhian principles in relation to constitutional provisions, communal harmony, educational upliftment, economic decentralisation, and grassroots activism.

By revisiting Gandhian thought, the seminar aims to inspire fresh reflections on building a more inclusive and compassionate democratic society. It hopes to generate meaningful dialogue on how India can uphold its pluralistic ethos while addressing the evolving aspirations of its minority communities.



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Proposed Themes of the Seminar

1. **Gandhi's Engagement with Religious Minorities:**

Exploring Gandhi's approach to Hindu-Muslim unity, his advocacy for interfaith respect, and his efforts to establish an ethical foundation for communal harmony in India.

2. **Dalits and Gandhi's Social Reform Agenda:**

Analysing Gandhi's interventions concerning untouchability, temple entry, and social integration; examining debates between Gandhi and Dr B. R. Ambedkar; and assessing their implications for contemporary Dalit politics.

3. **Lower Castes and Constructive Programme:**

Studying Gandhi's ideas on caste reform, social equality, and upliftment through education, vocational skills, and decentralised economic empowerment.

4. **Adivasis and Tribal Welfare in Gandhian Thought:**

Understanding Gandhi's perspective on tribal self-sufficiency, protection of indigenous rights, and sustainable livelihoods, along with the work of Gandhian organisations in tribal regions.

5. **Gandhian Ethics and Minority Rights in Contemporary India:**

Examining how non-violence, decentralisation, and moral politics can inform present-day policies, community relations, and democratic participation for all marginalised groups.