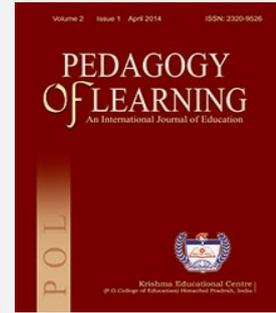


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## Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts in the 21st Century: An Evaluative Framework

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### ABSTRACT

The aims of this paper were to evaluate and find out the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multidisciplinary perspectives. The sample of present study consisted of two different sources such as 1) lectures of 27 resource persons of national repute in inaugural, plenary, technical and valedictory sessions and 2) papers presented by 87 researchers in 15 sub themes in an interdisciplinary national seminar on relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organised by School of Education, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2020. The authors used souvenir of the national seminar, direct observation from paper presentations in three technical sessions, report prepared by rapporteurs in technical sessions, lectures of resource persons, newspaper publication for data collection. There were five consecutive steps followed during data collection. The critical analysis of the data revealed that 1) the context of crafts during 1930s were limited in numbers but the context of crafts in 21<sup>st</sup> century are enlarged in the form of basic computer skills, mobile repairing, fashion designing, beauty parlour etc.; 2) Gandhi was pre-modernist, modernist and postmodernist ; 3) Gandhi's life philosophy were related to critical thinking development, inclusive social development, sustainable development in terms of politics, economics, environment, commerce and business, use of technology to assist human beings not to replace human beings; 4) the women were treated equally with men in terms of dignity and respect.

**Keywords:** Gandhian thoughts, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Relevance and Evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

United Nation General Assembly adopted the agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 aimed at providing a blue print for peace, harmony and prosperity for people and planet. The SDGs are a collection of 17 goals and 169 targets ranged from eradication of poverty, zero hunger to sustainable development and peace, justice of people and environment. In order to establish peace, harmony and prosperity among people in the planet, the achievement of these SDGs and targets by 2030 has become crucial and shared responsibility of all countries across the globe. The debate, discussion, argument and counter arguments on attaining all SDGs has raised the relevance of ideas, ideals, ideology and thoughts of many eminent philosopher/thinkers of international repute such as Peter Singer, John Dewey, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and so on. Among all those philosophers/thinkers, the ideas, ideals, ideology and thoughts of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (M.K Gandhi or in short Gandhi) has been popularised worldwide in 2019-20, because, this year is his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. Thus, the ideas, ideals, ideology and thoughts M.K Gandhi on the occasion of 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary has received remarkable bearings all over the world.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In recent past, the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of M.K. Gandhi, the father of nation had been celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 not only in India but also in the world. Ideas, ideology and personality of Gandhi for construction and reconstruction of present social order across the globe had remarkable bearings. Gandhi was not only a statesman and a freedom fighter, he was a multifaceted personality having in-depth and thorough ideas on different aspects of both human life and social life right from philosophy, economy, polity, education, science and technology, psychology, values and morality, trade and commerce to international peace and harmony.

The 74<sup>th</sup> United Nation General Assembly (UNGA 74) concluded on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 in New York City, USA discussed widely on top five issues such as terrorism, climate change, cyber threats, fiscal crises, and religious fundamentalism. It seems, the entire world is suffering from all these challenges. While searching for the solution to address all these issues the Gandhian thoughts came into mind. Therefore, School of Education, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India had organised an interdisciplinary national seminar on the eve of 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of M.K Gandhi and created a platform for intellectuals across different disciplines nationwide to discuss and debate on thoughts of M.K. Gandhi and their relevance to present society on the topic “Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. On that seminar, both the authors were active members of organizing committee and became inspired to write an article on the relevance of the Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by critical evaluation of the proceedings of the seminar. The proceedings of the national seminar included two main sources of data collection such as 1) the lectures delivered by 27 resource persons of national repute in inaugural, plenary, technical and valedictory sessions and 2) the papers presented by 87 researchers in different technical sessions of the seminar.

## STATEMENTS OF THE PROBLEM

- 1) Do Gandhian thoughts have relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- 2) What is the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multidisciplinary perspectives?

In order to find out the answers of above-mentioned questions, the present study was conducted with title “Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Evaluating Framework”.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To evaluate the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 2) To find out the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multidisciplinary perspectives.

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## DELIMITATIONS

- 1) The present study was conducted in the proceedings of an interdisciplinary national seminar on the topic Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century organised by School of Education, Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur, Odisha, India on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2020 only.
- 2) The findings of the study were confined to two sources only. Firstly, the critical evaluation of lectures given by 27 resource persons of national, state and local levels in the seminar were taken into the considerations for the analysis of the results. Secondly, the papers presented by 87 researchers in 15 subthemes in the seminar were critically evaluated and reflected in the results.

## METHODOLOGY

- **Design:** Since the objectives of the present study were to evaluate and find out the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multidisciplinary perspectives, the authors used proceedings of the seminar. The proceedings of the national seminar included two main sources; they were 1) lectures of 27 resource persons of national repute in inaugural, plenary, technical and valedictory sessions and 2) papers presented by 87 researchers in technical sessions of the seminar.
- **Sample:** The sample of the present study includes two different sources such as 1) lectures of 27 resource persons of national repute in inaugural, plenary, technical and valedictory sessions and 2) papers presented by 87 researchers in 15 sub themes in the seminar. Further, the resource persons of national repute were belongs to national, state and local levels in 9, 10 and 8 in numbers respectively. The paper presenters belong to three categories such as Faculty, M.Phil-Ph.D. Scholars and UG-PG students in 41, 32 and 14 numbers respectively.
- **Tools and Technique:** The authors used souvenir of the national seminar, direct observation from paper presentations in three technical sessions, report prepared by rapporteurs in technical sessions, lectures of resource persons, newspaper publication on relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for data collection.
- **Procedure of data collection:** In order to collect data, the authors had followed five consecutive steps. First, both the authors were part of the organising committee of the seminar. As a part of organising committee, the authors were selected as members of editorial board for scrutinizing the abstracts received from different paper presenters. During the process of scrutiny of abstracts, the authors studied all the abstracts and critically evaluated the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in multidisciplinary perspectives. All these abstracts were printed in the form of souvenir finally. Second, the authors observed the lectures of all resource persons delivered during the seminar. Third, the authors personally observed the full papers of all paper presenters delivered during the technical sessions of the seminar. Fourth, the authors took the help of all rapporteurs who were supposed to report the outcomes of different technical sessions. Fifth, the news and articles published in different newspapers were collected and analysed for evaluation on relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## RESULTS AND MAIN FINDINGS

The results and main findings of the study were represented in two broader objectives in the following ways.

### (A) To evaluate the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

An intensive analysis of lectures of different resource persons and paper presentation of researchers on relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century revealed that ‘the relevance of

Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is questionable, because, although the ideas, ideals and thoughts of M.K Gandhi is accepted worldwide, some politically motivated people in India have misinterpreted him and called he is father of nation of Pakistan not India and stated Nathuram Godse (the person who assassinated Gandhi) as hero of India (Panda, 2020 February, 08, Keynote speaker in inaugural session); if Gandhi and Hitler are compared in terms of support from the young generation people, Hitler was supported by 55% and Gandhi was supported by only 15% young people (Panigrahi, 2020 February, 09, Resource person); there exists relevance of Gandhian thoughts but the acceptance of his ideas has been declined (Jaisingh, 2020 February, 09, Chief speaker); Gandhian thoughts are not only limited to India but also extended worldwide and remain relevant to generations to come (Chopra, 2020 February, 09, Guest of honour); apart from independence of India from Britishers, the motto of Gandhi was to establish republic, equality, unity and integrity, remove superstitions, abolition of caste system, cleaning environment, establish sustainable economic growth and so forth in India (Nanda; Mohapatra; Padhi, 2020 February, 09 Resource persons); Gandhi was an instrument of transforming India through social development, intellectual development, truth and nonviolence among the peoples (Dash; Panda; Sahu and Mohammad 2020, February 09, Resource persons); the ideas and thoughts of Gandhi such as liberal education, skill of the teachers are being reflected in all national, state level educational policies like Draft New Education Policy-2019, NISHTHA schemes and many others (Senapati; Pati; Singh, 2020, February, 09, Chief guest, Guest of honour and Chairman respectively). Thus, from the above evaluation it is clear that, even though there are many people criticise Gandhian thoughts in many grounds still there exists significance of relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Gandhian thoughts can be helpful in solving many social, economic, educational, scientific etc problems in contemporary era.

**(B) To find out the relevance of Gandhian thoughts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multidisciplinary perspectives.**

1. The vision of Gandhi on education i.e basic education scheme came into existence in the year 1938 highlighted craft centered education, free and compulsory education, all round development of physical, cognitive and spiritual, importance of mother tongue, learning by doing, vocationalization of education and so forth are still relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The context of craft during 1930s such as knitting, gardening, farming, fishing, tailoring etc. has been extended to various skills like basic computer skills, mobile repairing, fashion designing, beauty parlour and other activities being followed in 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Gandhi's thoughts cannot be categorized as whether it is pre-modern, modern or post-modern. In the reflection of postmodernism, his thinking on relativity of truth and tolerance, respect for multiple voices, diversity and enriching pluralism enhance the great influence in present philosophical, sociological and political orientation.
3. Gandhi's aim was to awakening of women that rise their dignity and self-esteem, and bring them to mainstream of society, which is reflecting in the present era. Now women are leading in social, economic, political, technology, industries sectors and so on. The history of women in India now has been eventful.
4. In the present era women are not the deprived section of society. They are enjoying the equal status with men in every sectors of society. Gandhi's dreams on women upliftment, diminished of child marriage, dowry system; social and religious barriers to widow remarriage have successful reflection of present needs of society.
5. Now women are not dolls and objects of indulgence but also treated as honoured comrades in common service

6. Gandhi was a man of multidisciplinary personality. The present world is following his ideas and deeds. His principle of non-violence teaches the world for international peace, goodwill, harmony, justice and holy living.
7. Gandhi stated that realization of truth is equivalent to realization of God. Truth is the knowledge, power and joy of humanity. Truth of inner responsibility make the man pure and honest and honesty brings justice in mankind.
8. Joy and happiness are key attribute of peace. A life of truth is a life of peace. The real peace is only experience and recognized through the attributes such as happiness, comforts, understanding, tolerance, compassions etc.
9. Economic justice, decentralization power, equity and equality are pre-conditions for peace. As such, Gandhian thought on peace education is reflecting for today's motto of happy and joyful life.
10. Today's world is full of complexity. There is co-existence of affluence and hunger, equity and yelling for social justice, modernity etc. in the present world when the enthusiasm over ethos of welfarism has receded and advance impact of globalization has been looming large, and Gandhi's sounds relevant against it.
11. When myriad issues of global commons such as hunger, intolerance, pollution, terrorism etc. have posed challenge to humanity, Gandhian perspective of simple art of management of life kindles new hope for the world at present.
12. Gandhian contribution to democratic theory offers a specific institutional alternatives to representative democracy and pluralism on one hand and alternative ways of thinking about politics in general and democracy in particular on the other in 21<sup>st</sup> century, the political theorist accepted the Gandhian ideas of democracy in day to day affaires of the human relation. His concept of legitimacy of responsive government, active citizenship, political equality plays an important role in the future of democratic prospects.
13. This is the era of globalization and post-modern mindset of people are playing important role in everywhere. Such that Gandhi's contribution of secularism, abolition of untouchability, freedom of speech, rights, duties, truth, Sarvodaya, Satyagraha etc. are the great major influence at present time.
14. Gandhi's social development aimed to well-being of every individual and improving their full potential. It is nothing but socio-economic-political-cultural as well as human development. The twenty first century giving importance on sustainable development which is indication of social order, norms and values, and it is based on truth, purity, honesty, harmony, zero-exploitation, liberty, equality, dignity on the basis of caste, color, creeds and religion were the main goal of Sarvodaya of Gandhi for universal progress of all.
15. Gandhi's ideas on Aparigraha and Trusteeship cannot be lost sight in a globalized world where the pendulum has turned towards "Human development".
16. Gandhi's concept of decentralization of resources and his model of economic development speak about the progress of village and as independent unit and become prominent to save us from various economic, social, ecological and ethical dangers that are the results of this large scale industrialization.
17. A country needs to produce, purchase and consume as per the requirement. The requirement must be matched to actual demand of the country and demand must be matched to supply. Any difference between demand and supply will cause serious economic imbalance which is seen in the automobile sector in the recent time and Gandhi's manifold impact on

employment, balance between demand and supply can protect the economy of a country from many distortions.

18. In the globalization era there is much needed of critical thinking of being for socio-cultural-economic-political development of nation. Such that Gandhi's leadership and social relation reflects his critical thinking as application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, problem solving and decision making applied in freedom struggle for independence of India which needs of hours to challenge the issues of 21<sup>st</sup> century.
19. Gandhi believes on moral values and truth that have a significant impact on mental health of an individual, particularly its need for teachers. Mental health of a teacher is very crucial as it has a significant relationship with the learning outcomes of the students in a classroom. Positive mental health enhances the level of performance of a teacher and helps him /her in the improvement of professional growth.
20. Gandhian approaches on Students' discipline are an unforgettable chapter in education system of India as well as for world. His idea on students' discipline teaches great value of mankind. His discipline means not to be silent, it means to be self-control or discipline from within which can cultivate the critical thoughts, self-analysis, patience, honesty and simplicity which needed for development of mankind society and nation.

## DISCUSSIONS

On the basis of findings revealing Gandhian thoughts have significance of relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in multiple perspectives. The importance of Gandhian thoughts has to be inculcated among the youths of the country through various platforms such as including Gandhi's ideas in different curriculum starting from school to higher education level, general education to technical and professional education. The propagation of his ideas through bollywood movies, epic films, historical movies and other modes are significant in mobilizing and establishing peace, harmony and prosperity among the people of whole world. In the era of Post-Modernism, the ideas, ideals and thoughts of Gandhi must be deconstructed and re-evaluated. The motto of all students and parents in 21<sup>st</sup> century should not to achieve higher percentage marks rather to develop critical thinking like application, analysis, synthesis, evaluative, problem solving and decision-making abilities to shut out real life problems what Gandhi did in his life. The dignity of Women, tolerance on religion ground, rationalization of caste system, sustainable environment, inclusive economic development, inculcating moral and ethical values, maintaining international harmony, judicious use of natural resources, proper use of technology, rationalization of media are some fundamental needs of the hour. The deconstruction of Gandhian thoughts in relation to neo-socialism and neo-liberalism perspectives should be taken into consideration by future researchers.

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