



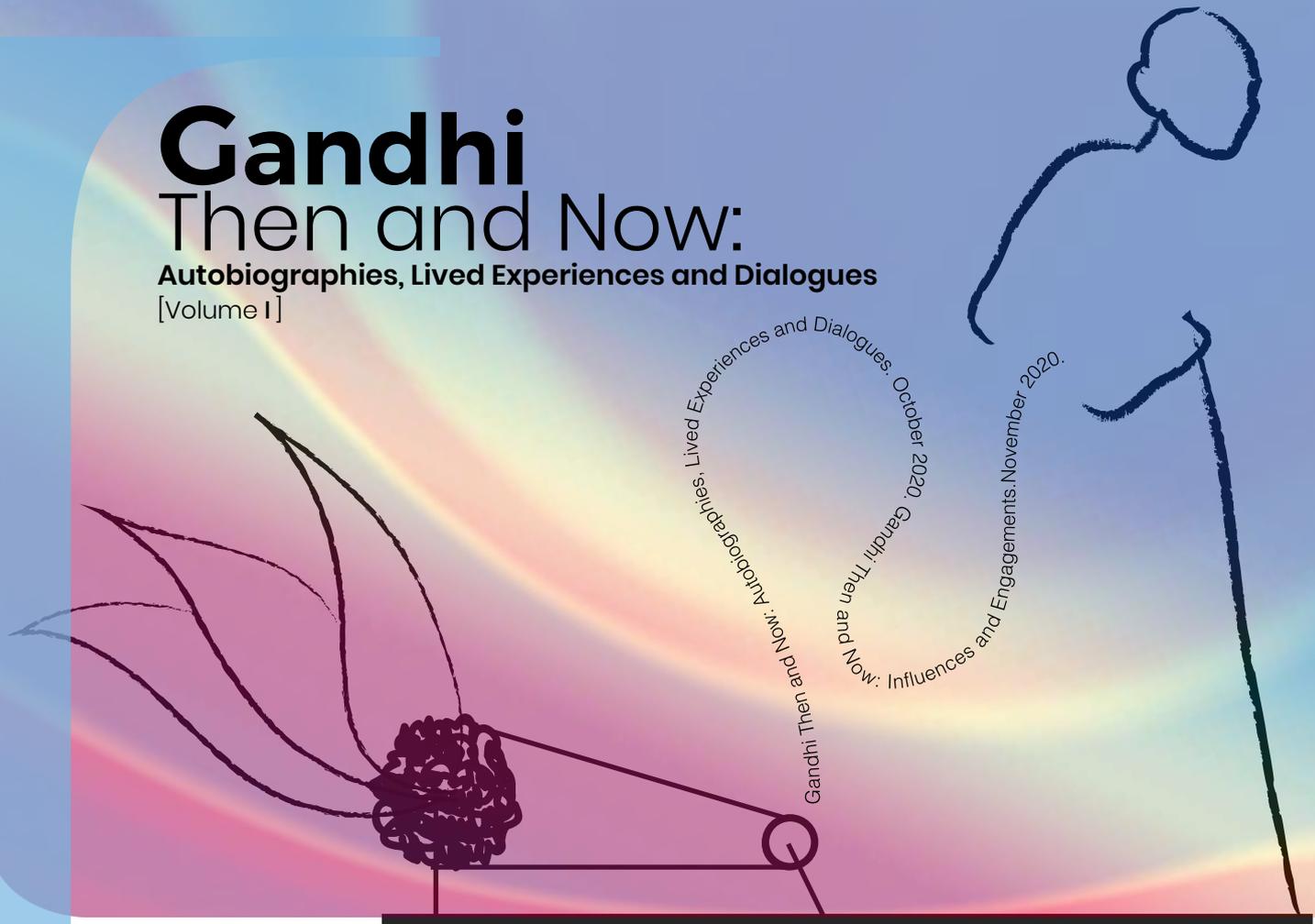
University of Mumbai



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A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Journal of the University of Mumbai

Gandhi Then and Now: Autobiographies, Lived Experiences and Dialogues [Volume I]



This special issue is in collaboration with the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Center, Department of Applied Psychology and Counselling Center, University of Mumbai

Special Issue Editor: Satishchandra Kumar

Volume 01 | Issue 06
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A Free Open Access Peer-Reviewed Interdisciplinary Journal

On the occasion of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's 129th birth anniversary on 14th April 2020, the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities, University of Mumbai has launched a free open access online journal, Sambhāṣaṇ. This interdisciplinary journal hopes to bring diverse disciplines in dialogue with each other through critical reflections on contemporary themes.

Sambhāṣaṇ or conversation as an art of dialogue has been crucial to the development of both Indian and Western thought. Dialogos in Greek literally means “through word”, where one establishes relationships on the basis of conversations to initiate processes of thinking, listening and speaking with others. Thinkers such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, David Bohm, Hans Georg Gadamer, Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum have projected shared dialogue as a way of understanding the relationship between the individual and society. While Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, Pandita Ramabai, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, Patricia Hill Collins and Judith Butler, to name a few, have started out anew through ruptures in conversations. The inevitability of conversation in academic life emerges from its centrality to human development and ecology. Conversations are not restricted to any single territory, but are enacted between global and the local topographies. This online bi-lingual journal aims at continuing and renewing plural conversations across cultures that have sustained and invigorated academic activities.

In this spirit, Sambhāṣaṇ an interdisciplinary monthly online journal endeavours to:

- be an open platform, where scholars can freely enter into a discussion to speak, be heard and listen. In this spirit, this journal aims at generating open conversations between diverse disciplines in social sciences, humanities and law.
- preserve and cultivate pluralism as a normative ideal. Hence, it attempts to articulate a plurality of points of view for any theme, wherein there is both a need to listen and to speak, while engaging with another’s perspective.
- act as a springboard for briefly expressing points of view on a relevant subject with originality, evidence, argument, experience, imagination and the power of texts. It hopes that these points of view can be shaped towards full-fledged research papers and projects in the future.

Framework

- This journal is open to contributions from established academics, young teachers, research students and writers from diverse institutional and geographical locations.
- Papers can be empirical, analytical or hermeneutic following the scholarly culture of critique and creativity, while adhering to academic norms.
- Commentaries and reviews can also be submitted.
- Submissions will be peer-reviewed anonymously.
- Some of the issues will publish invited papers and reviews, though there will be a call for papers for most issues.
- There would be an occasional thematic focus.

Guidelines for Submission

- Original, scholarly, creative and critical papers with adequate references.
- All references to the author should be removed from the submission to enable the anonymous review process.
- There can be a limit of approximately 3500–4000 words (for papers) and 1500–2000 words (for commentaries) and 1000–1200 words (for reviews).
- Essays should follow the Times New Roman font in size 12 with double space.
- All contributions should follow the author–date referencing system detailed in chapter 15 of The Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). The style guidelines in this journal can be consulted for quick reference.
- Authors should submit a statement that their contribution is original without any plagiarism. They can also, in addition, submit a plagiarism check certificate.
- The publication of research papers, commentaries and book reviews is subject to timely positive feedback from anonymous referees.

Publisher

***Office of the Dean of Humanities, University of Mumbai,
Ambedkar Bhavan, Kalina Campus, Vidyanagari,
Mumbai-400098***

This journal accepts original essays that critically address contemporary issues related to social sciences, humanities and law from an interdisciplinary perspective.

“In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared... In other words there must be social endosmosis.”

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Editorial Note

On the occasion of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's 151st birth anniversary *Sambhāṣaṇ* has collaborated with the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Center, University Department of Applied Psychology & Counselling Centre, University of Mumbai on two volumes of special issues, October 2020 and November 2020. These volumes are based on the theme "Gandhi: Then & Now" reflecting Gandhi's relevance in the 21st century.

As is well known, Gandhi's autobiography is a story of his "experiments with truth" (2018). However, in an age of absolutism and credulousness – often spawned by corporatized social media – what is not so obvious is that it portrays his search for knowledge grounded in the labor of inquiry, experimentation and exploration. Instead of lazily asserting a claim, one experiments with it to get past gullibility, and the whims and fancies emanating

from subjective caprice. According to Gandhi, "...a votary of truth must exercise the greatest caution..." (2018, 469). He upheld an ideal of living in which the fallibility of the self was accepted, along with that of doctrinal truth. In questioning the latter, one questions the tyranny and violence of doctrinal truth, both in the individual and social spheres. Thus, overcoming violence requires a process of deep introspection and self-criticism in a space that is between the public and private. Experimentation for Gandhi is an alternative to social engineering of identities, propagation of fake news and the manufacture of thought. Experimentation requires freedom, imagination and creativity. It does not adhere to set ideas or inflict them on others. It enables transformation. Thus, for Gandhi it is possible to resist the "brute force" (2010, 75) of violence through the "soul force" (2010, 74) of love. But the latter is not given and has to be cultivated through arduous processes of penance, prayer, reflection and self-discipline. Gandhi began his self-disciplining practices of austerity and introspection in his ashram blurring the space between the personal and the public. This expanded to the whole of India with his swaraj based resistance to British imperialism. It spread globally after his assassination in 1948. On this note, the essays in this volume focus on "Autobiographies, Dialogues and Pedagogies". They engage with how Gandhi's search for the self was never isolated, but was always linked to others, so that the search for one's self is also a form of self-transcendence. Kirti Nakhare, Aarushi Sharma and Bhagyashree Varma explore Gandhi's "experiments" as still having the potential to infuse life and energy. Uday Narayan Singh (Sahitya Akademi award winner), Nikhil Katara and Madhavi Nikam engage with the dialogues that framed Gandhi's relationships with Tagore, Bose and Rolland. They tellingly reveal that differences are not closures, but provocations to converse and critique. The essays by Indu Prakash Pandey and Sibyl Thomas spell out the pedagogical force of Gandhi's introspective approach. The book review by Amita Valmiki explores the contemporary character of Gandhian thought.

These essays reveal that despite being routinely invoked and referenced, Gandhi's relevance in the contemporary context, continues to be strong and spirited. His journey poses several questions that are germane to the contemporary world, some of which include: How can non-violence speak to recent upheavals of race, caste and gender across the globe? How do the vicissitudes of Gandhi's autobiography address the certitudes of speculative thought and absolutism? How does autobiography serve as a critical space? How does one blur the line between the public and the private worlds in developing one's "soul force"? How does one respond to conflicting "soul forces"? The essays in this issue invoke Gandhi's notion of experimentation, in their attempts to discuss these questions.

Gandhi presents an enormous hermeneutic challenge in the 21st century. Much ink has been spent on discussing his relevance and his significance, in the course of reading his texts and engaging with the applications of his thoughts in diverse domains. Gandhi has his zealous admirers. To mention just a few whom he influenced, Ela Bhatt, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela. King professed to be inspired by Gandhian ideals of non-violence after spending a night in Mani Bhavan in erstwhile Bombay in the year 1959 (Frayser 2019). Yet, years later Obádélé Kambon has critiqued Gandhi's problematic relationship to race (Kambon, 2018). Gandhi's critics have posed questions regarding his relation to caste following B.R. Ambedkar or nationalism following Rabindranath Tagore. These criticisms open up the need for autobiographies being self-critical so as to participate in dialogues and pedagogies. These complex and conflictual perspectives show that one cannot adopt a reductionist and uncritical attitude in the continuous attempts to rethink Gandhi. The "hermeneutics of suspicion"¹ towards Gandhi, demonstrate that his thought is always in the plural and shaped by the readers who interpret him. Perhaps this is the meaning of contemporaneity. They also show how the hermeneutics of the self (reflected in autobiographies) are also hermeneutics of others,

given the inextricable relationship between the self and the other. The “contradictory resolve” (1977, 38) of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, entailing both a willingness to listen, as well as, suspect is at work in reinterpreting Gandhi, both then, and now.

The Sambhāṣaṇ team thanks Prof. Suhas Pednekar, Vice Chancellor and Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for their constant support. We thank our invited authors for contributing to this volume with their enriching essays. We thank our peer reviewers for timely and expert feedback on the essays, often at a short notice. Our gratitude to Prof. Bhagyashree Varma for her time and effort with translation. We are grateful to our Advisory Committee Members and Board of Consulting Editors, who often go beyond the call of duty to give us good counsel. Our *Dank* to our Review Editor for helping us out. Our task will be incomplete without the support of our Assistant Editors. We welcome on board our new Assistant Editors, Ms. Aishe Debnath and Ms. Anjali Majumdar with gratitude. Our *shukriyaan* to Ms. Prajakti Pai for her patience and artistic gifts. We remain grateful to Dr. Srivaramangai and Mr. Sanket Sawant for their oceanic help.

NOTES

¹ This expression is derived from Ricoeur (1977)

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We gratefully acknowledge the constant support from Prof. Suhas Pednekar, the Vice Chancellor and Prof. Ravindra Kulkarni, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Mumbai in publishing this journal.

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*“...my experiments have
not been conducted
in the closet, but in the
open;”*

–M. K. Gandhi

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