

## **National Seminar on CHAMPARAN CENTENARY 'Gandhi and the Champaran Satyagraha: An Endeavour, A Legacy and Contemporary India' (29 -31 May 2017)**

### **Concept Note:**

Satyagraha is both an individual and collective pursuit of truth through non-violence. Since its first application by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa in the first decade of the twentieth century, it has been practiced in a variety of situations around the world to seek justice and dignity by victims of casteism, racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, ecological degradation and state repression.

People and polity of India made their first engagement with Satyagraha in modern times when Gandhi employed it at Champaran in Bihar in the context of the grievances of rural masses between April and November, 1917. Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography, "That day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life and a red-letter day for the peasants and me." Here, on a common platform, as an integrated initiative, he brought together the local elite, lawyers, national leaders, social workers and the suffering peasants to fight against unjust laws. He also initiated a variety of constructive programs to alleviate the abysmal living conditions of the suffering men and women.

In the ensuing decades, as part of the Indian national movement for freedom from the British Raj, Gandhi elaborated and expanded the application of Satyagraha in conjunction with constructive programmes, to the national resistance movement. In the process he led and guided more than forty initiatives including the Mill-workers Satyagraha (Ahmedabad, 1918), Non-cooperation Movement (1921), Vaikom Satyagraha (1924), Bardoli Satyagraha (1928), Salt Satyagraha (1930), and Quit India Movement (1942). Among various factors that helped India emerge as a democratic republic, Satyagraha is certainly crucial and seminal.

Since independence, there has been a continuation of the practice of Satyagraha by a variety of organizations and groups, within the political community and civil society to resolve various issues and problems. However in the plethora of efforts somewhere, it seems, that the core sensitivity of Satyagraha has either got diffused, watered down or even side tracked. Thus, it is time to revisit what Gandhi and his way of Satyagraha stood for; more so because the continuity of seeking to draw inspiration from both Gandhi and Satyagraha remains unabated.

The occasion of the Champaran Centenary provides us an opportunity to have an overview of the wide and complex canvass and narrative of Satyagraha. We propose to bring together 27 knowledgeable persons from diverse disciplines and fields to look together at the following aspects of the past, present and future of Satyagraha in a holistic manner:

- a) Understanding the context, content and impact of Champaran Satyagraha of 1917;
- b) The century of Satyagraha as a way of collective activities in post-Champaran India ( 1917-2017);
- c) Satyagraha and Sarvodaya – Key Concepts, practices and practitioners in India after Gandhi ;
- d) Satyagraha and the discourses of democratic nation-building since Gandhi in Champaran;
- e) Ethics, philosophy and politics of Satyagraha : yesterday, today and tomorrow;

f) The Trajectories of Satyagraha today – from economy to ecology;

g) Satyagraha and politics of violence in the era of globalization.

A National seminar on CHAMPARAN CENTENARY 'Gandhi and the Champaran Satyagraha: An Endeavour, A Legacy and Contemporary India' was organised at IAS during 29-31 May 2017. Professor Anand Kumar and Shri Samir Banerjee, Fellows, IAS were the Conveners of the seminar. Professor Anand Kumar, Convener of the seminar gave introductory remarks. The welcome address was given by Professor Chandrakala Padia, Chairperson, IAS. The keynote address was given by Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, 18 Aswini Dutt Road, Kolkata. Presidential address was delivered by Professor Chandrakala Padia, Chairperson, IAS.

#### PARTICIPANTS:

- Professor Sudhir Kumar, Panjab University, Chandigarh
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- Shri Surendra Kumar, National Secretary, Association of Voluntary Organizations for Rural Development ( AVARD), New Delhi
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- Dr. Chaitra Redkar, Department of Political Science, S.N.D.T. Women's, University, Mumbai
- Professor Sudarshan Iyenga, Fomer Vice-Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad
- Dr. V. Krishna Ananth, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, Sikkim University, Gangtok • Ms. Deepali Yadav, Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
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