



Re-Engaging with Gandhi: A Self-Reflective Enquiry



151 years after his birth and more than 7 decades after his assassination, Gandhi still remains a central figure not just for the future of India, but perhaps the world as well. His trenchant critique of modern civilization and its underlying ethos, has turned out to be remarkably prescient, even as we hurtle towards an existential precipice. His emphasis on *Ahimsa* and steadfast endeavour to apply it in all spheres of life, also offers us valuable lessons in a world riven apart by hatred and polarization.

In India however, most of us are socialised into either blindly admiring or hating Gandhi, with very little actual engagement with his life and praxis. On top of this, he is viewed as a monolithic entity to be agreed or disagreed with, to be venerated (however tokenistic) or villainised. In all this, we forget that he was a multifaceted, complex being with his own share of limitations, contradictions and blind spots, going hand in hand with the humility, honesty, courage and brilliance. Try as we may, Gandhi cannot be straight-jacketed into simplistic narratives, and how we see him often says more about us than the man himself. This deeply subjective nature of our engagement with him is rarely acknowledged or owned up to. But it is precisely this engagement with what he means to us in our daily living process, that signifies our respect for him and what he stood for.

We at *Pūrṇam*, *Ritambhara* and *The Ecoversities Alliance* warmly invite you to a journey of self-reflective **Re-Engagement with Gandhi**. In this exploration, we will approach Gandhi as a mirror unto ourselves, recognize the evocations and provocations he leaves one with, and enquire further into what we can discover about ourselves through this.

This is our 4th cohort in the last 12 months and nearly 150 participants from around the world have engaged with this process so far.

The Process

This is a **3-month long journey** of self-study, punctuated by an **online dialogue circle** once every two weeks for about 90-minutes each. So six such circles in total over three months. Each call will have a preparatory reading and watch list curated by us, that the participants can choose from:

- A few thought provoking **essays** on Gandhi by insightful commentators. There are so many good ones written on him, from a diversity of backgrounds.
- A **film** (usually in Hindi or English), that deals with Gandhi or his philosophy
- Participants can also read about 25 chapters of ‘**The Story Of My Experiments With Truth**’ for each of the calls. Thereby finishing the whole book in three months. The chapters are usually short, and can be easily covered.

A participant is welcome to choose any one of the above options or even all of them, if one has the time and inclination for it. More importantly, they are required to engage with the readings and the films **self-reflectively**. Make note of questions, insights, confusions and other evocations or provocations triggered in them, and share some of these in the dialogue circle. The focus lies squarely on our inner world and not in analysing or interpreting Gandhi.

It’s hoped that this container of sharing and listening would be transformative in itself and seed new enquiries and experiments in the members of the circle.

This IS NOT

- A debating or a discussion forum to analyse Gandhi’s teachings, actions or choices.
- An introductory course on his thought or philosophy by ‘experts’ of any kind.
- An ideological attempt to propagate his greatness or challenge it.

This IS

- A study and dialogue circle with fellow seekers to enquire into oneself further, using Gandhi as a mirror.
- An opportunity to develop a more conscious relationship with Gandhi and his search, beyond unexamined admiration or rejection.
- An experiment in seeding contemplative conversations around issues of importance, that often end up polarising us.

Requirements

- Anybody with an open mind and keen interest in the enquiry along with a willingness to dialogue with others is welcome to be a part of this. No other preparation is required.
- Most of the course communication will be in English, but we are more than happy to provide translation support in Tamizh and Hindi during the dialogue circles if needed.

Contribution

To make this accessible for a wide diversity of participants, the course is offered in the spirit of **Gift Economy**. There is no fixed price for participation. You are welcome to offer from your heart, a contribution that you are happy to make. This will be at the time of enrolment and more details would be sent along with the registration mail.

Dates

The course starts with an Orientation Call on **18th October, 6:00 - 7:30 PM IST**. After this, we'll meet on **alternate Sundays** for the Dialogue Circles (same timings as above). The course will end on Jan 3rd 2021.

(If there is sufficient interest, we are happy to offer another batch on **alternate Monday evenings 8:00 - 9:30 PM IST** as well. Please indicate your preference in the Registration Form below.)

Registration & Contact

Interested participants please fill up this **Registration Form**: <http://bit.ly/Gandhireg>

We will get back to you soon after, with the next steps.

For further queries please contact: purnamcafe@gmail.com

About the hosting organisations

Ritambhara is a space for contemplative conversations fostered by a community of seekers, who are attempting to engage with the question '*What does it mean to live meaningfully in today's times along the path of Yoga?*' The members share a common concern for the current ecological, socio-cultural and political state of the world, and find deep wisdom and hope in the teachings and praxis of Yoga as a way forward from these crises. The activities of Ritambhara include, active co-learning through inner work, group study and practice of the various aspects of the *āstāṅga yogā*, exploratory dialogues on the different facets of the Indian tradition, and facilitating learning spaces and opportunities for others on a similar quest.

Pūrṇam is a family of friends inspired by the praxis of *pūrṇa yogā* and Collective Evolution - *Swaraj & Sarvodaya*. We endeavour to create spaces of sincere inquiry into the human condition and hope to be of service to fellow travellers on the path in whatever small ways possible. We are still in our nascent stages. More will emerge with time.

The Ecoversities Alliance is a community of learning practitioners from around the world committed to re-imagining higher education to cultivate human and ecological flourishing in response to the critical challenges of our times.

Facilitators

Priya Nagesh is a Yoga Therapist and Energy-based healing (including Reiki) practitioner based out of Tiruvannamalai. She is inspired by the lives of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. She has many years of experience working with grassroots Gandhian organizations & traditional institutions and is passionate about the revival of Indic knowledge systems. Priya is committed to building organisations that have the praxis of Yoga at their hearts, and is a part of a few of them like *Ritambhara* and *YogaVabini*. She loves spending time with her daughter, writing and all things to do with Nature.



Naveen is a student of Yoga. Over the last 15 years he has been engaged with the questions: "*What does it mean to live meaningfully in today's times?*" and "*How may I offer the best of myself to the Whole?*". The journey, while still ongoing, has been richly rewarding and fulfilling. He is a co-founder of *Ritambhara* and the founder of *Pūrnam*. His interests include Evolutionary Leadership, Integral Psychology and Process Work. He is particularly keen on working with young changemakers and those interested in bridging spirituality and social change. He loves reading, good cinema and spending time in 'nature'. While he has spent many years studying Gandhi and has been influenced by *Hind Swaraj* quite significantly when younger, he feels his real engagement with Gandhi is just beginning.



Testimonials

“This course introduced me to my own dilemmas through a man born 150 years ago, but shared the same concerns and asked similar questions. It introduced me to more questions than answers. It invites you to remove your own spectacles and wear new ones to see not the world, but your own self and actions.”

- **Kalpita Wadher, Community Facilitator, Tilonia, Rajasthan**

“If you would like to 're-engage' in a true sense - internalize, reflect, think, contemplate and ponder about your own belief systems, triggers, thoughts and biases while engaging with richness of Gandhi, this course is for you. Please don't join this course to become an expert on Gandhi, or are looking for some simplistic preaching. Please join if you are wanting to explore yourself more, while engaging with Gandhi.”

- **Aditya Minocha, Farmer and Educator, Bir, Himachal Pradesh**

“What I really liked was the selection of the readings. I thought I had a wide reading on Gandhi, but the selections were new (most of them) and took me on a new path. Exploring the readings placing the "I" at the center was fascinating. I have gone through a similar exercise individually but doing it in the group opened up new dimensions. I was part of an amazing group and the co-ordinator, of course, was great. How each one unravels a layer of their own self through the readings sometimes becomes a part of your own journey and you cannot separate yours from the other. It enriches you and supports you. All this process happened with a minimum one-to-one interaction; we do not know anything about our co-travellers, do not even talk directly but we did walk together and that is wonderful.”

- **Syama Sundari, Trustee, Dastkar Andhra, Hyderabad**

“I loved the concept of the Course. Thank you Naveen for this beautiful experience. It took me on a whole new journey with myself by using the Mahatma as a mirror. The major discovery was that I could resonate with people beyond ideological differences and realize that we are all a mixture of Gandhi, Godse, Savarkar, Kasturba, Harilal etc. I am absolutely in awe of this Course. I would recommend it to all those who want to be on a journey with themselves. Happy Learning!”

- ***Charu Garg***, Student, Patiala, Punjab

“This course was the highlight of my fortnight. I used to look forward to the call, and the sharing by all the participants was deeply touching. The readings that we were given were extremely thought-provoking. Some of them were perspectives I would never have chosen to read on my own. The course made me realize that there was a lot more 'opening of mind' that I need to explore!”

- ***K Uma***, Water Management Consultant, Bengaluru

“I have a strong interest in leadership and governance, and through this course I have started understanding what these concepts mean to me. It has also strengthened my reflective practice, especially during reading. The course was also educational in terms of history, there were many characters whose views I encountered for the first time. It would be the best few hours you will spend learning about yourself, so don't hesitate to take out the time.”

- ***Rupinder Kaur***, Development Professional, Gurgaon

“I started the course hating Gandhi and thinking he was a hypocrite. However, by the end of it, I had developed a deep reverence for him and his journey. I realized a lot of things about myself and, in hindsight, feel this is the course I needed to continue walking the path I am on.”

- ***Anshima Gupta***, Therapist and Social Worker, Bengaluru

“Gandhi is dead but his message is more relevant than ever. As we realize the modern dangers to society like fake news, radicalism and global warming, for anyone trying to find what role an individual can play in being part of the solution, this course can provide a framework for finding answers. The reference material was a joy and the course is worth it just for that. The group interactions and discovering of like-minded people is a big bonus too. As I took this course with my wife, it was a great way of knowing each other at deeper levels and we both enjoyed the course a lot.”

- ***Mridumesh Rai***, Retail Professional, Bengaluru

“My biggest learning was to see Gandhi as a human, a person in the making. To understand that he stood for principles which he failed at times, but did not mean he would give up on them. It helped me to see myself in the same light and be a little less harsh on myself. It humanized me. I learned that non-violence is not about passivity and non-engagement but basing proactive actions with the power of love that nurtures both the oppressed and oppressor.

This is a journey to engage with Gandhi within us all in a safe space held by co-travellers. We read, we watched, we reflected, we shared and we grew a little more compassionate with every call. Naveen has been Gandalf to our little band of *Gandhi-like* travellers.”

- ***Manvendra Singh Inaniya*, Eco-Worker, Uttarakhand**

“I feel deeply touched by the experience that I had with the readings, the films, the articles, the sharing, the connections in the conversations. This was a journey with my ancestors, with my heart, my spirit, my soul, body, and my mind that put more beauty and responsibility into my path. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity :)”

- ***Andrea González Andino*, Co-creator, Ecoversities Quito, Ecuador**

“Overall, I found the course valuable and it came at the right time for me in my journey. The question that we started each call with - *“What did you learn about yourself?”*, was deceptively simple and surprisingly powerful. Furthermore, the emphasis that this course placed on Gandhi being a mirror to the self and yet a window into new perspectives on the system is something I loved. The intimate nature of the call space is something I enjoyed - the fact that we were able to reach a deep level of conversation in spite of knowing little about one another and having access to nothing but one another's voice. I learned that it is possible to discover kindred spirits through such a format as well.

If you are intrigued by Gandhi and would like to discover what it means to walk the *‘razor’s edge’* in the 21st century, then this is the course for you!”

- ***Arhan Bezbora*, Co-founder Co.lab^x, Bengaluru**