

Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav Webinar Report

On 16th July 2021, Hindu College in association with the Ministry of Culture, Government of India organised a webinar on the topic “Gandhi: Independence and Beyond”, as a part of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav, featuring eminent speakers namely Professor Ramesh Chandra Bhardwaj, Head of the department of Sanskrit, University of Delhi and the Director of the Gandhi Bhavan, University of Delhi, Dr. Chandrachur Singh, an Associate professor at the Department of Political Science, Hindu college, University of Delhi and Dr Archana Verma, an Associate professor at the Department of History, Hindu college, University of Delhi.

Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav is a series of events organized by the government of India spanning over 75 weeks to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Independence. It's a part of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of building a new, Atma Nirbhar Bharat by the year 2022.

Hindu College with a glorious history is proud of its own contribution to the nationalist movement. As the centre for political debate and discourse during the freedom struggle, Hindu College has a longstanding and cherished linkage with the movement for independence. The webinar was an attempt towards interpreting and reliving the nationalistic values emanating from the life and teachings of the Mahatma.

The event started off with a performance of the Gandhi Bhajan by students of Hindu College, which was followed by an address delivered by Dr. Maneesha Pandey, the speaker of the Hindu College Parliament.

The session also featured cultural performances by members of Alankaar, The Indian Music Society of Hindu College. They performed Gandhi Bhajan, “Aabhar” a self composed tribute to Gandhi, and “Dhyanor Bharot Pranor Bharot” a patriotic song from the North East.

Professor Ramesh Chandra Bhardwaj delivered his talk in Hindi on *Swatantrata andolan ke prerak tatva/स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन के प्रेरक तत्व* or the motivating factors behind the independence movement. Professor Bhardwaj wonderfully articulated the contributing factors in the freedom struggle along with comparing the past with the present. How our freedom fighters spent their lives in shackles only to free us from them and even after that we have become slaves to cultural and social colonisation again in the contemporary world. He elaborated on our abandonment of our indigenious learning systems to adopt western ones. We need to concentrate not just on building smart cities, but on villages too; true progress can only be made together. The need of the hour is to make an effort towards moulding India to the visions that our freedom fighters had had.

Dr. Chandrachur Singh spoke on “Future as Present- Why the Mahatma matters more than ever...”. What we garnered from his address is that how to make sense of the past being shaped by our present. Future awakening the present is very important to interpret what Gandhi had in store for us. Gandhi was indeed ahead of his time and we surely need to learn from him. Gandhi

was very passionate about the idea of Hind swaraj. Initiating an alternative discourse to modernity, Gandhi's inner voice, anticipations and expectations about the future of India and the ability of Indians to live in harmony, the developmental strategies they would adopt for survival and their repercussions is something that is extremely relevant in the present scenario. We need to understand what Gandhi was anticipating as the future of India and civilization; his anxieties, speculations and questions about the future of the Indian society. How his thoughts about the future might have activated his present and how these anticipations unravelled in the future. Gandhi's future and our present are in sync with each other.

Dr. Archana Verma spoke on the topic "Gandhi's Vision for India- it matters". What we gathered from her speech is that one feature we need to remember about Gandhi is that he evolved over time with respect to his opinions and ideas. He advocated for self role in bringing about social, Political and economic change. Gandhi's rejection of capitalism, socialism and communism, which were perceived as hallmarks of western civilization and mystified many leaders, including Nehru. Gandhi envisioned a state for India grounded in economies that advocated self-reliance, resonating with our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's' call for an Aatma Nirbhar Bharat. Gandhi's vision for India involved fighting the curse of poverty, particularly agricultural poverty. He visualised a constitutionally limited state for India.

The program culminated with Dr. Achla Tandon thanking the speakers for their presence in the webinar and for their contribution to the celebration of Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav by reminding the attendees of the importance of centre-staging Gandhi, the Mahatma along with his role in our past and relevance in our present.

After the vote of thanks, the speakers and the attendees stood for the National Anthem as a token of their pride and respect towards the nation and the struggle for freedom.