



VASUDHA – THE ECO CLUB

in collaboration with

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

&

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

RAM LAL ANAND COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

on the occasion of

AMRUT MAHOTSAV

(75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE)

on

23rd JULY 2021

had organized a

Webinar on

GANDHI AND ENVIRONMENT

SUMMARY OF THE WEBINAR

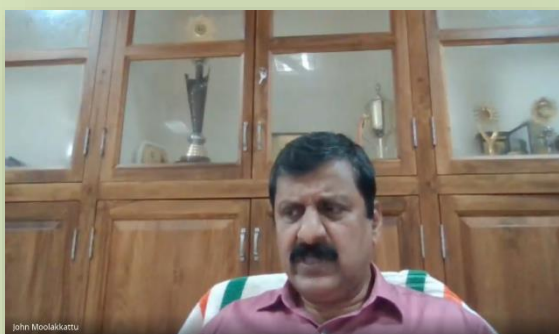
“What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

Vasudha, the Eco Club, in collaboration with the Department of Political Science and Department of History, Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi, organized a webinar on 23rd July, 2021 on ‘*Gandhi and Environment.*’ The speaker for the event was Prof. John S Moolakkattu from the Department of International Relations and Politics, Central University of Kerala. He was earlier professor at Mahatma Gandhi University, IIT Madras and held the inaugural Gandhi – Luthuli Professional Chair in Peace Studies, University of KwaZulu – Natal, Durban, South Africa.

The webinar started with the introduction of Prof. Rakesh Kumar Gupta, Principal of Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi, followed by the introduction of the key-note speaker, Prof. John S Moolakkattu.

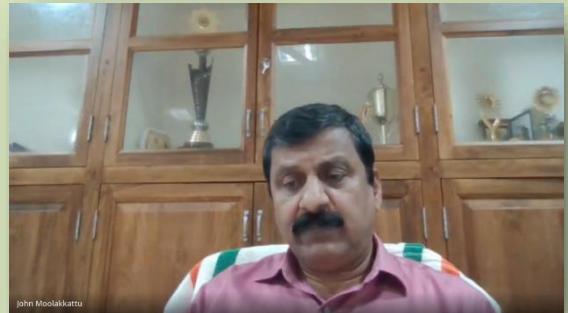
Professor Moolakkattu, as an introduction, first laid out that the implications of Gandhi’s political and socio-economic ideas are, perhaps a much more relevant way to understand his connection with the environment, rather than his speeches and writings. Many international scholars would argue that ecological consciousness as a movement only began in the 1980s, and that is perhaps why there is only a fleeting mention of the Mahatma in modern-day publications in that field. Ecology as a study does not focus on the spheres of politics or society or economy, it rather attempts to establish an interconnectedness between all living organisms, taking care to stress on how the relationship between humans and their environment has evolved as a result of culture and traditions, and in some cases even religion and folklore. In the words of Gandhi, “I believe in *Advaita* (known duality). I believe in the essential unity of man, and for that matter, all that lives.”



As the event progressed, Prof. Moolakkattu proceeded to explain that Gandhi cannot be termed as an extreme environmentalist, who would not bother with questions of sustainable living. He was of the opinion that human interests should be tempered with the need to preserve our harmony with nature. Gandhi

looked at the human tendency to acquire more and more goods and services as not only wasteful but downright immoral to an extent. A well-known proponent of indigenous medicine, Gandhi is said to have been appealed to many medical practitioners at the time to undertake research on the beneficial value of these indigenous plants. In fact, the charkha or the spinning wheel was a symbol of his artisanal accord with Nature.

According to Professor, Gandhi had also expressed his concern at the patterns of development that were undertaken by various systems across the world, be it the capitalist or the communist path, since both, according to Gandhi, are based on materialistic progress, looking to create a system of mass consumption, with a simple difference in their distributive models.



The event then meandered to an interesting question-answer session, where Prof. Moolakkattu proceeded to entertain questions from the students as well as faculty members of the college. The questions varied, beginning from the conflict between the modern generation's market-based techno-managerial skills and the adoption of Gandhian principles and policies, to the sharing of unequal responsibilities due to varied usages by different countries. Gandhi was critical of the modern railways, and this topic too was discussed in great detail. His relationship with and influence on Nehru, yet their differences of opinion of development models was discussed next.

The purpose of this webinar was to understand Gandhi's views on the environment in a holistic manner. It helped us realize how Gandhi is still an inspiration to modern day environmentalists like Vandana Shiva and Ram Guha, who have discoursed at length his dialytic opinion on various tenets of the environment.

The event was a resounding success, and was concluded upon the Vote of Thanks being presented by Dr. Narendra Pandey, Convenor, Tawaarikh-The society of the Department of History, Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi.

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