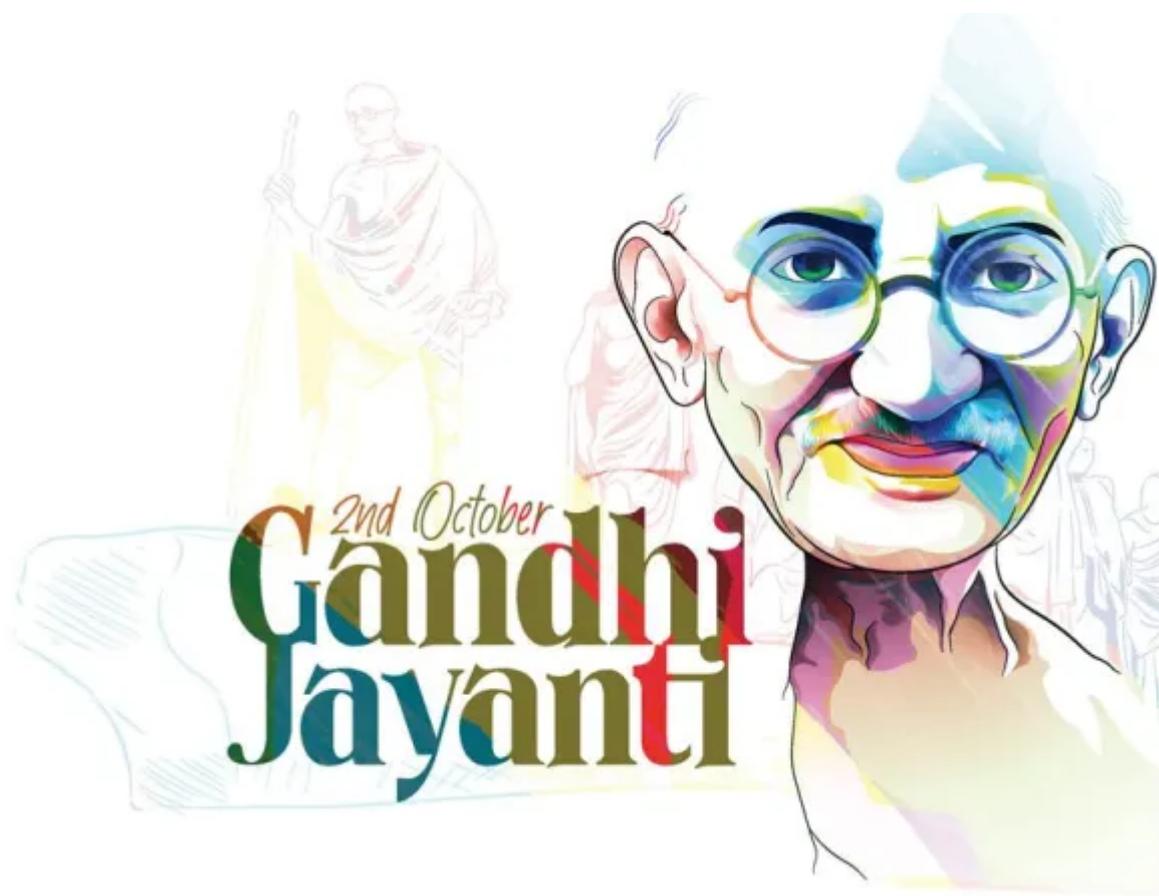


Celebrating the relevance of the 'Sant of Sabarmati' in today's times

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Dr Christian Bartolf

"In a gentle way, you can shake the world" - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

October 2 this year marks the 152nd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. Since 2007, Gandhi's birth anniversary has been adopted by the United Nations as the International day of non-violence, as a tribute to a life dedicated towards peace. To learn from the life of the national icon, students of Rotaract club (NSS), Apeejay Stya University in association with Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan, organised a webinar on the theme: 'Mahatma Gandhi and fascism in 21st century' on October 2.

Dr Christian Bartolf, President , Gandhi Information Centre, Germany presided as the guest speaker of the webinar. He began his lecture by emphasising that non-violence alone has the potential to pave the way for long-term peace. He told the students that only a glimpse back in history could help mankind understand recurring patterns of violence in the present day. He further stated that the contemporary world has witnessed great temptations to follow extremist 'misleaders'. Therefore there are many compromises to democracy and human rights. Dr Bartolf added that it is especially in such a time that Gandhian ideals and philosophies offer one, an alternative for a peaceful self and world.

To substantiate his argument, he quoted from Gandhi's lectures in Switzerland in 1931. Gandhi emphasising the need for global non-violence had said "(West) You have hardly arisen from the deadly effects of the war and on the contrary you are slowly realising the evil effect of war in a more concentrated form. The first war, called falsely great, has taught the west many a lesson in humanity. No cruelty was considered too great. No honour was safe."



Dr Bartolf told the students about Gandhi being disappointed by the League of Nations which was unsuccessful in arbitrating between nations involved in conflict. Underlining the endless services of Gandhi vis-à-vis other leaders of his

time, Dr Bartolf gave the students Gandhi's excerpt from an interview conducted by *Bombay Chronicle* in 1935: "My first aim is to change the mentality of the people. Not to coerce them as Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt are doing in their countries."

Gandhi's views, Dr Bartolf added, even went on to influence Martin Luther King Jr., celebrated American civil rights leader. Dr Bartolf informed the students that Gandhi had famously said that a violent man's activity lasts only for a while whereas Buddha's non-violent thoughts continue to guide us even after ages. Non-violence, thus, Gandhi firmly believed, was the most invisible but if practiced well, the most inexhaustible force that ever existed. The use of non-violence as opposed to violence, could only be done by the brave. Man's destiny was to replace the law of the jungle with a law of conscious love.

To conclude his lecture, Dr Bartolf said: "We all must strengthen the democracy of our nations. We must practice social reforms that bring equality in the society and we must uphold ours and others basic rights as a human being. If this is not done, democracy will slowly give way to dictatorship."

The lecture was followed by a question and answer session. Dr Bartolf was asked by the students to name a Gandhian slogan which influenced him the most. To this, he replied "The seed is never seen, it works underneath the ground. The seed itself is destroyed but the tree which rises above the ground is a long seed. The means is like the seed and the end is a tree. We reap exactly what we sow."



"Understanding Gandhi is very crucial for the 21st-century citizen in order to have peaceful people on this beautiful planet. Today his ideology is bigger than his name ever was."

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