

Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh: A Comparative Study of Ideology



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Abstract

Great person of all ages have been concerned about betterment of the lot of human beings, but how to understand it remains an arduous task for every age. Even though the aim is related, the means to achieve the goal can differ. And this difference in approach can create a lot of controversy. This is exactly what happened between Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh, the two great statesmen of contemporary India. As an outcome, Bhagat Singh has been graded as an antagonist of Mahatma Gandhi. It has been held in some quarters that while Gandhi was the sun of nationalism around which all the planets of the Indian National Congress revolved, Bhagat Singh was a star that followed a path of its own. This paper is attempts to the comparative study of the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh and also highlights the similarities and dissimilarities between the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Nationalism, Contemporary India.

Introduction

"Bhagat Singh was not a devotee of non-violence, but he did not subscribe to the religion of violence. He took to violence due to helplessness and to defend his homeland. These heroes had conquered the fear of death. Let us bow to them a thousand times for their heroism." M.K. Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi ideology was a selfless assignment with innovativeness and its drawbacks. Alongside the dilemmas of industrialization, materialism and selfish pursuits, Gandhiji advocated home-rule, self-reliant, trusteeship and a least state conferred only with co-ordinative powers. He was an honestly a spiritual man. This perspective formed his politics, his economic ideas and his view of society. However, the religious approach that he engrossed was knowingly different from other religious man. He accepts the inner cohesion of all existence in the cosmic spirit, and saw all living beings as representatives of the everlasting divine reality.

Review of Literature

At the outset researcher would like to recall the standard work of Gopi Nath Dhawan (1946)¹ clearly designates that he has taken entire political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for his study, his main thrust is on the philosophy and technique of Satyagraha. From the substantive point of view the work is important in so far as it examines Satyagraha both in its substantive and methodological dimensions together with the dilemmas of a Satyagrahi leader in the context of the decision-making process through which he has to pass while launching Satyagraha which he ably distinguishes from passive resistance. He discusses the use of Satyagraha both in the context of political and non-political conflicts. Finally, he also deals with the structure of the non-violent state. The real merit of the book, however, lies in Dhawan's critical examination of the various criticisms of Gandhian philosophy and technique of Satyagraha where he is quite balanced in his appraisal. From the methodological point of view one could point out that Dhawan's book has largely drawn on primary sources and is built around analytical-evaluative approach. Its weakness is that in terms of its contents he has not always succeeded in making a distinction between the political and philosophical in Gandhi. Similarly in methodology sometimes description gets better of the analytical approach. Dhawan was too near to the use of the Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. Still by and large it remains as objective study. In fact, Dhawan was a path-finder for studies on Gandhi in the field of Political Science and later scholars have largely drawn on his work.

Bishan S. Sharma (1956)² learned work lies in its comparative focus. The author has compared Gandhi as a political thinker with English liberal philosophers like – Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Green. He has offered interesting comparative foci like comparison of Sarvodaya with the utilitarian ideal of greatest good of greatest number and comparison of the views of Gandhi and Green on the political obligation. While the comparisons are stimulating, the contextual difference between Gandhi and English liberal philosophers should not be forgotten. The two, as its common knowledge grew in an entirely different socio-economic and political milieu and if this contextual difference is forgotten comparisons may lead to misleading conclusions. Further perhaps none of the English Liberal has so much of a saintly element in them as Gandhi had. These are some of the weaknesses of comparative studies like one which Bishan S. Sharma has attempted.

John Bondurant's (1959)³ learned research work which perhaps can be treated as one of the epoch-making studies on Gandhi. She has placed Gandhian technique of non-violence against a total perspective of western political philosophy in her effort to point out where western philosophers had failed or left a gap and how Gandhi made it up. What makes her study different from other studies in the field is her methodology which largely adopts the case study method. She has attempted a scientific analysis of five Satyagraha campaigns which Gandhi launched in India with the help of comparative-analytical categories like (a) dates, duration and locale; (b) objectives; (c) Satyagraha participants and leadership; (d) participants and leadership of opponents; (e) organization and constructive programmes; (f) preparation of action; (g) preliminary actions; (h) reactions of opponents; and (i) results. She has also used the traditional-modernity foci in her study. One of her striking conclusions is "Gandhi used the traditional to promote the noble. He reinterpreted tradition in such a way that revolutionary ideas, closed in familiar expression, were readily available and employed to revolutionary ends." She also comes to the conclusion that the emergence of Satyagraha cannot be explained only as an Indian traditional ideal as quite a few western ideas had also gone into the enunciation of its elements both in terms of substance and techniques at the hands of Gandhi. Her formulation about Gandhian dialectic is really original. She points out in this connection: What results from dialectical process of conflict of opposite positions as acted upon by Satyagraha, is a synthesis, not a compromise.

Buddhdeva Bhattacharyya's (1969)⁴ work is different from other studies of Gandhian political ideas. The author with the help of historical-cum-analytical method has tried to show Gandhian mind in evolution His effort is to identify the pattern of continuity and change in the various facets of Gandhi's political philosophy. Incidentally he has also discussed such issues as whether Gandhi was a traditionalist, whether he was a mystic, whether he was a pacifist, whether he was an atheist, and so on. He has taken a balanced position in regard to these controversial issues which he has discussed with the

help of primary sources. He highlights Gandhi's theory of democracy in three sections: (I) Critique of Western Parliamentary Democracy, (II) Views on Institutional Basis of Democracy, and (III) Foundations of Democracy. The scholar has put the views of Gandhi in his own writing that Gandhi called parliamentary democracy as sterile woman and prostitute. He has pointed out that democracy and violence could not go together. In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi has criticized the mechanism of elections. He was apprehensive of the majority principle of western democracy as majority could crush the will of minority. He wanted to evolve political system suited to genius of Indian People. That is why he emphasized for village Swaraj. In Harijan, Gandhi has evolved principles of democracy like freedom of thought, tolerance, truth, secularism and sovereignty of people. For it he laid down various conditions like Satyagraha, growth of village industries, primary education, removal of untouchability. He pleaded for decentralization in his political and economic philosophy.

Adi H. Doctor (1964)⁵ has raised the question whether there was any anarchist tradition in India before Gandhi. His analysis records a negative findings on this score. The merit of the book lies in the author's conclusion that the anarchist tradition in India originates with Gandhi in a wholistic manner though perhaps there were piecemeal traces of the tradition in India originates with Gandhi in a wholistic manner though perhaps there were piecemeal traces of the tradition in pre Gandhian thought also. He also tries to show how Vinoba Bhave continues and carries forward the tradition of anarchism in Gandhian thought. The approach of the author is comparative-cum-analytical. One, however, feels after reading Adi H. Doctor's book that he has left the basic question unanswered whether certain philosophical tradition either of the west or of the east can be transplanted from one soil to another in a wholistic fashion. If the answer to this basic question is in the negative, then perhaps these efforts at transplantation would hardly provide a suitable evaluative perspective on Gandhi.

S. Irfan Habib (2007)⁶ the publication of this book in the year of the one hundredth birth anniversary of Bhagat Singh is aimed to highlight the ideological dimensions of the work of Bhagat Singh and his associates. S. Irfan Habib is a historian of science and works with the National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies in India. For completing this book, he has accessed the resources of the most important archives and libraries in Delhi, Chandigarh and Meerut that are relevant to this work. He also interviewed Kulkar Singh, one of the brothers of Bhagat Singh, and many surviving comrades of Bhagat Singh. This book can be usefully read in the context of competing ideologies in the current political landscape of India. The year 2007 has been a year of many anniversaries relating to South Asia. These include the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the 1757 Battle of Plassey, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the 1857 uprising and the sixtieth anniversary of India's independence from British colonial rule and its partition into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority, though formally

secular, India in 1947. As an icon, Bhagat Singh can be called the Che Guevara of India. Yet, the centenary of his birth was the least celebrated of all the anniversaries except the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Plassey. In Punjab, there were some significant official and non-official celebrations of his birth centenary but, outside Punjab, it was largely a marginal affair.

The book covers outstanding historic material which, if further treated and analysed, could be the basis for suggesting that in the late 1920s and early 1930s, there were two serious ideological nominees for leadership of India's national movement. One was Gandhism and the other was what may fairly be called Bhagat Singhism. Gandhism and Bhagat Singhism should not be abridged to the divergence of non-violence vs violence. Gandhism was a viewpoint of minimal socio-economic transformation as a replacement of British imperial rule. It was focussed on transfer of political power. There is sufficient historic indication to show that Gandhi was even willing to accept a subordinate dominion status for India under the broad structure of imperial rule. His compromising role vis-à-vis British imperialism faced sharp criticism from Subhas Chandra Bose within the Congress and in subdued voices even from Nehru. A part of the reason for his compromising stance towards British imperialism was the serious involvement of the top layers of India's capitalist class in the swaying of, if not the making of, the Gandhian and Congress perspective. Gandhi's strength was his unwavering, even arrogant, promise to non-violence and what he measured to be truth. Gandhi's weakness was his absolute lack of understanding of the process of global capital build-up and imperialism and the supplement of India into the global capitalist framework.

Shashi Joshi (2006)⁷ dramatize the tenancy of the last British Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and his stretch as the first Governor-General of independent India delivers sufficient scope for imaginative clarification of historic facts related undoubtedly to one of the greatest eventful, though contentious eras in the Indian subcontinent's history. The author mixtures recorded actions of actual meetings, official declarations and documents, with literary interspersions and fictional acts and discourses to portray the concerns, purposes and mindsets of the main characters complicated in that drama.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the similarities between the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh.
2. To find out the dissimilarities between the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Bhagat Singh.

Our goals can be related but our means to achieve them can be different. Though it is widely claimed that Gandhiji's principles of non-violence brought India her Independence there are several revolutionaries who played a protuberant role in India's struggle for Independence. Shahid Bhagat Singh who was martyred at the age of twenty three is one amongst them. It is our obligatory onus to recall

and hail his unsurpassed sacrifices and contributions to the cause of our national independence. His struggle and martyrdom was a landmark in the history of the equipped struggle which a section of our youth launched to free India from the British clutches. His life and thought have left an inefaceable impact on the hearts and minds of millions of our countrymen, particularly the youth. He will always be recalled as 'Prince of Martyrs' for his bravery to take the stony path with pliability.

Comparison

Revolutionaries paid an extraordinary agreement in their own method to the independence of the country. Although they could not stab intensely into the cores of the masses they surely infused in them an intelligence of patriotism and a purpose to drive out aliens from their soil. This spirit worried the British bureaucrats. Even those who were opposed to their ideology and methods admired them for their love of motherland and the daring way in which they faced the gallows and a tremendously hard life in the jails. While critical their cult of violence, even Mahatma Gandhi, an exponent of non-violence, promptly appreciated their feelings of intense patriotism and their willingness to sacrifice their all for the liberation of their country from foreign yoke.⁸

The main objective of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades was to imprisonment and hand over all means of manufacture in the hands of the common people of India after ending all leftovers of capitalism and imperialism in the country. They supposed that it was the sacred duty of every Indian to work for contravention the chains of slavery of our people. They also wanted India not only to be free but also a sovereign, socialist republic of laborers and peasants. In a pamphlet thrown in the Central Assembly, he declared, "We dream of a glorious future, when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty. But, the expense of few individuals at the opinion of the great revolution that will bring freedom to all, rendering the exploitation of man by man impossible, is inevitable."⁹

Afterward the courageous act of throwing bombs in the Central Assembly, instead of escaping from the spot, which was not a problematic work for them, they stood there like a rock, upraised revolutionary slogans, threw brochures around and willingly courted arrests. 'Inquilab Zindabad', the echo of the slogan raised by Bhagat Singh throughout the minutes of the Delhi Assembly Bomb Case by him and Batukeshwar Dutt, was heard in each and every part of the country. This commended them to the nation and Bhagat Singh became a symbol of nation, to be honoured and rivalled by the adolescences of India.¹⁰

The Ruler of the British was alert of the point that its twin was discoloured by the one-sided trial in the Assembly case. Sardar Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt, in instruction to recover the dilemma of political prisoners in the Indian jails, commenced the hunger-strike in Lahore jails. Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades were able to win the support of the people for this moral cause. In the legislative assembly, Pt. Motilal Nehru assessed the government's strategy towards the underneath trials

in the Lahore conspiracy case. Jawaharlal Nehru also uttered his anxiety and go to the two jails of Lahore.

Throughout the trial of Lahore conspiracy case, Saradar Bhagat Singh discrete his opinions openly and fearlessly. Also explanation the point view of the revolutionaries, he outlined courtesy of the community to the unfair activities of the government. He was positive to a countless extent in achieving both. Crowds gathered to watch the proceedings in the court. At the main gate, a large number of students of schools and colleges always gathered to observe the proceedings. The huge youth crowd would sing patriotic songs like, 'Kabhi wo din bhi ayega ki jab azad hum honge', 'Watan par marne walon ka yehi baki nishan hoga' and 'Sarfarooshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai'.¹¹

Approved the decision of death of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru effectively shook the nation. In a talking at Allahabad, five days after the verdict was passed, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Whether he agreed with Bhagat Singh or not, his heart was full of esteem for the bravery and self-sacrifice of Bhagat Singh. A man of his type is exceptionally rare. If the viceroy supposes us to catchphrase from appreciative this delightful bravery and high drive behind it, he is mistaken.

Sardar Bhagat Singh did not subordinate himself with a plea of mercy, made on behalf of most of the accused, to the Privy Council. In fact during the entire period between the order of the death sentence and his execution, he always opposed this idea of submission of an appeal of mercy.

The administration of the government felt that proposal of the plea of mercy would defer the execution and detained popular demonstration during this period. The government of Punjab was reluctant to prohibit such meetings, since it would be required to impose it only with a series of clashes with police. In this viewpoint, while allowing local governments to follow a uniform policy, keeping in view local conditions, the latter were also lawful to prohibit meetings in sympathy with the convicts in case they felt it to be appropriate.

Mahatma Gandhi was free from the jail on January 26, 1931. In the beginning, he was unwilling to talk with the viceroy but on February 14, 1931, he obvious to talk with Lord Irwin for a compromise, which commenced on February 17, 1931. Five days before these talks, the Secretary of State for India telegraphically informed the viceroy that Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had heard the appeal of mercy and had decided to recommend its dismissal, to the King. In opinion of the prospects of a compromise with Gandhi, acting on behalf of Congress, the British government decided to submit the execution of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his two associates.¹²

Ample in contradiction of his wishes, Bhagat Singh's mother Vidyavati entreated the viceroy to exercise his privilege of mercy and put a stay on the execution and travel it to an imprisonment term, putting forward the following pleas: (a) in case appropriate check of her son had been conducted, his blamelessness would have been recognized (b) under

the form of the experimental set by the Ordinance, her son was disadvantaged of the right of appeal to High Court, which he would have had under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Mahatma Gandhi deliberated this substance with the viceroy on February 17, 1931. According to Gandhi, he told the viceroy, "This has no linking with our discussion and it may even be inappropriate on my part to indication it. But if you want to make the present atmosphere more favourable, you should suspend Bhagat Singh's execution." The viceroy articulated his gratitude to Gandhi for placing the matter in such a manner, saying, "Commutation of sentence was a difficult thing but suspension could be considered." While praising Bhagat Singh's bravery, Gandhi said that in his view he was not in the right edge of mind. He then mentioned to the wicked of capital punishment which did not give any chance to such a man to improvement himself. He was, therefore, putting the matter on humanitarian grounds and wanted suspension of sentence in order to evade needless chaos in the country.¹³

The dissatisfaction of the community was mutual by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and few other Congress leaders. A few young fans of the Congress dispersed leaflets asking Gandhi, as to how can there be peacetime when a sentence of death is hanging over the heads of patriots. On March 7, addressing a mass public assembly of over approximately fifty thousands, Gandhi pointed out that two days before he had signed a provisional impermanent settlement with viceroy, which in no way can be called a peace treaty. He implored the young men to have courage, endurance and reason. In case the old men had substandard and were remorseful of weakness, the youth should force them to renounce and assume the wheels themselves. He then clarified that throughout his negotiations, he was not acting on his own but was supported by the whole Working Committee of Congress. As a negotiator of interim truce, the initiate of truth, non-violence and boundaries of justice were not forgotten by him. He demanded the youth to stand by the settlement and protected the release of the prisoners. He also warned the youths that Sardar Bhagat Singh cannot be released by violent means. In his place thousands of Bhagat Singh would have to be sacrificed. As he was not ready to do so, he favoured the approach of peace and non-violence. In the end, he implored the youths to modification their methods and accept the settlement.¹⁴

On March 10, in a speech Pt. Nehru throwing light on the efforts made by Congress to release Bhagat Singh, said that if in asking for the release of Bhagat Singh, Congress had demonstrated obstinacy, he would perhaps have been hanged by this time. If Bhagat Singh is alive will then, it was because of Mahatma Gandhi's pains and if he and other prisoners guilty of violence were released, it would be due to Mahatma Gandhi's efforts.¹⁵

This update about suspension on hearing, Bhagat Singh felt somewhat worried. He was not inclined to pass his days any more in the dingy cell. The sooner he embraced death, it was better for him.

Moreover he had no faith in Gandhi, and his cult of non-violence and the Congress¹¹. In his discussions with Chuhar Singh, a 'Ghadrite' prisoner, Bhagat Singh told him, "Babaji, the imperialist British do not care for the popular urge. Viceroy-Gandhi meetings... would be no worthy to us. The policy of the Congress is weak, institution and constitutional. The constitutionalists are always useless for the revolutionary interests. The opportunist enemy has made an agreement to save his skin after some give and take. When the question of implementation arises, it throws the paper into the waste paper basket. So many pacts were made previously but nothing had materialised."¹⁶

Viceroy informed to Gandhi in the next meeting about his considering the case of Bhagat Singh with most anxious care but he was not able to find any grounds on which he could justify to his conscience the commutation. He had rejected the idea of delay on following grounds: (a) delay on political grounds, when instructions have been passed, appeared to him indecorous (b) delay was inhuman in that it would propose to Sardar Bhagat Singh's supports and relatives that he was seeing commutation (c) Congress would reflect it genuine in complaining that they were deceived by the government.¹⁷

"Did Mahatma Gandhi unsuccessful to save the life of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his buddies from the gallows?" is a question which is constantly asked by historians and scholars of freedom movement. It is also held at certain quarters that Gandhi did not sincerely try to save them. The purpose of the present piece is to put the truths straight and let the erudite readers make their own assessment.¹⁸

Mahatma Gandhi-Irwin Pact elevated Gandhi's stature as for the first time the agents of the government of British patronized to negotiate with the Congress on an equal footing for the settlement of terms of peace. But execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru damaged Gandhi's prestige since it was believed that he had so much influence over the viceroy, that he could persuade the latter to spare the lives of the young revolutionaries.¹⁹

The implementation gave a rude shock to all, especially the youths. The supreme self-sacrifice and courage and patriotism thrilled the hearts of young and old alike, across the country. The official historian of Congress, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya observed that Bhagat Singh's name was as widely known all over India as Gandhi's. Nehru declared at the Karachi session of the Congress that in Bhagat Singh, self-sacrifice and bravery had reached their zenith. The Mahatma himself had a special regard for the brave patriots. He gave the following assurances to congressmen in Bombay:

(a) He would ask the Karachi Congress for a mandate to bind the hands of the Congress deputationists to the Round Table Conference. (b) The mandate would contain nothing that was not consistent with the status of independence for which the Lahore congress had declared. (c) He would use all his influence and strain every nerve to secure amnesty for those who had been left out in the pact.

Once Mahatma Gandhi was travelling from Bombay to Delhi, he got the information that the government had decided to execute Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Pressure was brought to bear upon Gandhi to intercede with the viceroy for the commutation of the death sentence. "On this occasion", writes Subhash Chandra Bose, "I ventured the suggestion that he should, if necessary, break with viceroy on this question, because the execution was against the spirit, if not the letter of the Delhi pact." But the Mahatma who did not want to identify himself with the revolutionaries would not go far and it naturally made a difference when the viceroy realised that the Mahatma would not break on that question. However, at that time, Lord Irwin told Gandhi that he had received a large signed petition asking for commutation. He would postpone and consider, but not beyond that. The assumption which Gandhi and everyone else drew from the attitude of the viceroy was that the execution would be finally cancelled and there was jubilation all over the country. It was a painful surprise when on March 24, Gandhi received the news that Bhagat Singh and his comrades had been hanged the night before.²⁰

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and a crowd of other leaders assessed the Mahatma Gandhi for weakening to save their valuable lives. But there is no doubt that he made truthful efforts to save those valuable lives in spite of his disapproval of their dependence on violence for the liberation of motherland. He pleaded with the viceroy to the maximum of his ability to commute their death sentence on the ground that commutation was the general demand of the country and therefore any act to the country would endanger internal peace. Giving an idea of the efforts made in this connection he said, "I pleaded with the viceroy as best as I could. I brought all the persuasion at my command to bear on him.. I wrote a personal letter to the viceroy.. I poured out my soul in it but to no avail. I might have done one thing more, you say. I might have made the commutation a term of settlement. It could not be so made. And to threaten withdrawal would have been breach of faith. The Working Committee of the Congress had agreed with me in not making commutation a condition example to truce. I could only mention it apart from the settlement. I had hoped for magnanimity. My hope was not to materialize. But that can be no ground for contravention the settlement."

The viceroy himself admitted that Gandhi tried his best. But Lord Irwin remaining adamant, told Gandhi that there was a very minor difference between a revolutionary and a patriot for one section of the society and a terrorist and a criminal for the government. Also, in his own words, "As I listened to Mr. Gandhi putting the case for commutation forcibly before me, I reflected first on what significance it surely was that the apostle of non-violence should so earnestly be pleading the cause of the devotees of a creed so fundamentally opposite to his own, but I should regard it as wholly wrong to allow my judgement on these matters to be influenced and deflected by purely political considerations. I could

imagine no case in which under the law penalty had been more directly deserved."The Mahatma Gandhi told him that the question at present was no between violence and non-violence but of saving the precious lives. The viceroy gave only a verbal assurance.²¹

Lord Irwin mentions in his autobiography "Mahatma Gandhi said he greatly feared that unless I do something, the effect would destroy our pact. I said, I would remorse this no less than he. There were only three possible course. First was to do nothing and let the execution proceed. Second was to change the order and grant Sardar Bhagat Singh reprieve. Third was to hold up any decision till after the Congress meeting was over." Gandhi requested him to show mercy and spare the life of the young men. Gandhi appealed to the viceroy's conscience.²²

Gandhi was greeted with hostile slogans and black flags when he went to attend the Karachi session of the Congress. He was blamed for not making commutation of the sentence a condition for settlement in the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Members of Naujawan Sabha shouted: "Gandhi go back", "Down with Gandhism", "Gandhi's truce has sent Bhagat Singh to gallows", "Long live Bhagat Singh". Far from being angered, Gandhi had a good word for them to say in the press, "Though they were incensed against me, they gave vent to their wrath in what I would call a most dignified manner. It was open to them to do physical injury but they refrained from doing so. And it was open to them to insult me in many other ways, but they confined their resentment to handing me black-cloth flowers representing, I imagine, the ashes of three patriots. I am hoping they will exercise the same restraint. For they know I am trying to reach the same goal with them. Only I am following a method wholly different from theirs. In this country of self-suppression and timidity, almost bordering on cowardice, we cannot have too much self-sacrifice. One's head bends before Bhagat Singh's bravery and sacrifice. But I want the greater bravery, if I might say so without offending my young friends, of the meek, the gentle and the non-violent, the bravery that will mount the gallows without injuring or harbouring any thought of injury to a single soul."²³

Gandhi admitted that he could go no further since India's freedom was more important than the execution of a few young men who would cheerfully court death for their country. Nevertheless Gandhi paid tribute to their courage and self-sacrifice, while drafting a resolution on their sacrifices for the Karachi session. It ran thus: "This Congress, while disassociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any form, places on record its admiration for the bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades Sukhdev and Rajguru and mourns with the bereaved families the loss of their lives. The Congress is of the opinion that government have lost the golden opportunity of promoting the goodwill between the two nations, admittedly held to be essential at this juncture and of winning over to the method of peace, the party which, being driven to despair resorts to political violence."²⁴

Sardar Kishan Singh, the father of late Sardar Bhagat Singh came to the rostrum of the

Karachi Congress and spoke in favour of the resolution. He said he never wanted anyone to emulate the act of violence. He only admired the spirit behind their action. But such subtle distinctions could hardly be for the masses. Gandhi had to issue a statement in Young India, repudiating the cult of violence that came to be associated with the name of Bhagat Singh: "... I regret to observe that caution has been thrown to the winds, the deed itself being worshipped as being worthy of emulation."²⁵

Conclusion

Gandhi's role in this affair has to be judged in view of the fact that the ultimate goal for which he worked was for country's independence where not one but many Bhagat Singhs were required to be sacrificed for the sake of freedom. His earnest desires was to make absolutely final, what was provisional. "It has", said Gandhi, "increased our power for winning freedom for which Bhagat Singh and his comrades have died." In conclusion we can say that Gandhiji was an avid follower of non-violence. And in his quest for non-violence or in his quest for freedom, he brooked no short-cuts. He took the longer sustainable way. In a way, he was naive too, to experiment at such a large scale with a non-violent struggle against oppression. Mahatma Gandhiji had equal respect for all religions but was unapologetic about his Hinduism, he derived strength from his belief.

Sardar Bhagat Singh was deeply influenced by Marxist ideology of an equipped revolution against the ruling class. His aim was 'total independence', and he was willing to shed his own blood for it. However, he was humane enough to avoid unnecessary bloodshed when he threw a low-intensity bomb in an empty spot of the Central Assembly. Also, Bhagat Singh shunned all religious ideologies.

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