CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

The impact of Italian nationalism on India’s freedom struggle constitutes an important part of India’s struggle for national emancipation from British imperialism. It is important to explore the influence and relation between the two countries of this period in proper historical and political perspective.

The renaissance period of both countries, Italy and India, was characterized by rapid growth of nationalism. Renaissance was an intellectual movement that began in Italy in the fourteenth century. It’s impact was manifested in a series of cultural, economic, social and political changes. It signified the awakening of human power and his great capabilities. The word humanism emerged as a part of Italian renaissance. It denoted the revival of knowledge or classical learning. The most important consequence of renaissance was the awakening of the past greatness. This period witnessed a remarkable growth of patriotic sentiment which at times verged on nationalism.

Italian renaissance took place from the fourteenth to sixteenth century whereas the Indian renaissance movement started in the nineteenth century. Leaders of Indian religious and social reform movements, such as Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda etc. created in the Indian mind an urge for political freedom. The cultural renaissance in India manifested in novels, poetry and essays of some outstanding literary figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhay etc., strengthened the idea of Indian nationalism. Like Machiavelli, Prof. Binoy Sarkar met the initial support for new emerging bourgeoisie with the aid of his secular approach. So it can be said that Indian renaissance was influenced by Italian ideas and models together with Indians search for own identity, and this movement paved the way for emergence of national
feelings and awareness. During the period of renaissance, the concept of nationalism gained momentum in India.

Introduction of English education, and consequently, the contact with western culture brought about the growth of patriotic and national sentiment. The first two decades of Indian National Congress are described in history as the moderate era. Moderate leaders Anandamohan Bose and Surendra Nath Banerjee thoroughly studied the writings of Mazzini’s life and career, and were profoundly impressed by Mazzini’s work and ideas. Surendranath was vocal about the great need of leaders such as Mazzini and Garibaldi in Indian national struggle. Though Surendranath was inspired by Mazzini, yet he warned the Indian youth to reject his revolutionary activities and follow a purely constitutional path.

Bipin Chandra Pal’s and Lala Lajpat Rai’s youthful imagination was captured by Surendranath’s lecture on the freedom movement of Young Italy led by Mazzini. They studied the writing of Mazzini and were intensely moved by it. In Roy’s ‘The Great Men of the World’, the first great man was his Italian Guru Joseph Mazzini and then Garibaldi. The life and work of Mazzini and Garibaldi were also translated into Bengali by Jogendra nath Vidyabhusan so as to place them within the reach of those who did not understand English.

Aurobindo Ghosh was also greatly inspired by the vision, patriotism and action of the three Italian leaders Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, in an article written on the occasion of Garibaldi’s centenary on 9th June, 1907, called Garibaldi, a Vibhuti, a man endowed with Godly creative power, while Mazzini was considered a Deshbhakta. Revolutionaries were greatly influenced by secret societies in Italy. The most important organ of revolutionary propaganda, The Jugantar tried to instill courage into the minds of the Indians by referring to Mazzini,
Garibaldi and to Italian salvation movement. Mazzini’s autobiography (vol.1) which sister Nivedita had lent to them, become the Bible of these youths.

Mazzini’s Young Europe of 1834 and his Young Italy inspired Gandhi to start his young India movement. Their various writings were derived from one common factor that is their faith on God. Gandhi was impressed by Mazzini’s Duties of Man.

Italian nationalists Mazzini and Garibaldi impressed Subhsh Chandra Bose very much. Another nationalist Jawaharlal Nehru mentioned in his selected works that Mazzini and Garibaldi showed the way for liberation in India. Garibaldi was his boyhood hero. So, inspired leadership, writing and work of Mazzini and Garibaldi attracted the attention of the Indian nationalist leader and they inspired three categories of Indian nationalist, namely the moderate the extremists, revolutionaries and other nationalists also.

Rabindranath Tagore was not a politician in the strictest sense of the term, yet he was devoted to the Indian freedom movement. Tagore was India’s culture ambassador to the west. His understanding of western culture was based not merely on the study of western thought and philosophy, but also on his extensive travel in the west. Tagore visited Italy early in 1925 and next on an invited from Mussolini in 1926. He was received twice by Mussolini. Reports about Tagore’s visit to Italy in 1926 and his comments were published in the Italian papers in such a way as if, the appreciation of Mussolini was synonyms to appreciation of fascist regime. Romain Rolland devoted all his energy to convince him of the fascist dictatorship. After meeting some eminent anti fascist Italians like Madame Salvadori, Tagore in his letter to C.F. Andrews made his position clear. So, we must say that, Tagore appreciated Mussolini’s personality more as a person and artist, than fascist leader.
Aurobindo Ghosh was one of the major figures in the history of the Indian national movement. He admitted that art and music are the passion of Italians even under Mussolini’s regimes. Unlike other dictators, Mussolini had a religious orientation. But Aurobindo did not hesitate to criticize fascism under Mussolini because its policy of aggressive nationalism was anathema to him.

M. N. Roy was the first virulent critic of fascism in India and wrote books on fascism namely, ‘Freedom or Fascism’ (1942) and ‘Fascism: Its philosophy, Professions and Practice’ (1976). Even Roy equated the ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and the INC with Fascism.

On his way to home from Round Table Conference, Gandhi arrived Rome on 12 December 1931. It had been arranged for Gandhi and Mussolini to meet in the evening. Though Gandhi was attracted by development works of Mussolini, but he was also aware of the aggressive nature of fascism which he could never support.

Subhas Chandra Bose was a convinced socialist. But, enemies and critics of Bose accused him as fascist, because they suspected his revolutionary activities, anti-communist views, proposed synthesis of communism and fascism, advocacy of militarism, plea for a strong party, his ardent patriotism and above all his alliance with axis powers. During his stay in Europe from 1933 to 1936, Bose met several European leaders including Benito Mussolini. Bose was inspired with the discipline and organizational strength of fascism.

Jawaharlal Nehru never adopted a charitable view of fascism. In an interview to the press, Simla, he continued to oppose fascism. Nehru, a passionate and genuine defender of freedom, could not support fascism anymore.
Here, we must say that the eminent personalities in India had the intention to study the justification of the anti-fascist propaganda and real state of affairs prevailing there in Italy under Mussolini’s dictatorship.

In conclusion, it can be said that Italian renaissance inspired the makers of modern India who were the forefronters of the Indian renaissance. There was a close interlink between the Italian renaissance and that of India, and subsequently the rise of Indian nationalism. And the leaders of the nationalist movement in Italy, Mazzini and Garibaldi, exerted a tremendous influence on the pioneers, and all categories of Indian nationalism. Even there was a close link between Indian nationalist leaders and fascist Italy under Mussolini. Though there were many personalities who scornfully rejected fascism and Mussolini, but there were some nationalists who were enamored of Mussolini’s personality and Italy’s economic prosperity and discipline under the leadership of Mussolini.

It may be noted that Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi influenced the nationalist movement in India long before fascism came into existence. Fascism did not have too many takers because its underlying spirit was contradictory to India’s civilization ethos where aggressive nationalism had no place. Fascism appealed to militant nationalists like Rashbihari Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose who wanted freedom for India at any cost, and refused to take up a totally hostile posture vis a vis Fascism. However, even they did not subscribe to Fascism as a matter of faith or principle and vocally denounced its bellicosity. Their support for Fascism was more a matter of pragmatic expediency as they felt that the second world was provided a golden opportunity to crush British imperialism through armed struggle from outside taking advantage of the international situation. Here the sympathy and support of the fascist powers needed to be cultivated. It was a pragmatic rather than idealistic approach.
Leaders like Nehru who supported British imperialism during the Second World War, considered Fascism a demonic force, an evil with which, compromise of convenience was impermissible. It was a dichotomy of idealism and pragmatism from the point of view of the militant nationalists who adhered to the dictum ‘My enemy’s enemy is my friend.’ From the point of view of the supporters of British imperialism, it would be the height of indiscretion to have any truck with Fascist forces as it would be like giving them a standing invitation to include India within their expansionist ambit. However, whatever admiration leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose had for Fascism, was for the disciplined national life it ensured, rather than any support for Fascist policy of self aggrandizement. In the ultimate analysis, the influence of Mazzini and Garibaldi was much more pervasive and enduring on the Indian nationalist movement. The influence of Fascism was transitory and was manifested only at a particular juncture of history when the chips were down for British imperialism.