CHAPTER V

REVOLUTIONARIES' INTERACTION WITH GANDHI

Gandhi’s endeavours between 1915-35 were concentrated in making the Indian freedom movement as broad based as possible. He, not only wanted to bring the masses in his fold, but also tried to develop contacts with leaders of various political parties and groups to secure their cooperation in the difficult task of obtaining freedom for the country. Naturally, this process of establishing contacts resulted in the interaction between him and the revolutionaries whose bravery and self sacrificing tendency were undisputed. It was inevitable that some of the revolutionaries should listen to his words, since they were in contact with him. While, Gandhi had individually influenced certain revolutionaries belonging to the old school of revolutionary thought, through his patient and persistent efforts, there were still others, who, in spite of their contact with him could not be converted to his creed.

REVOLUTIONARY CONVERTS

KAKA SAHEB KALELKER

Immediately after coming to India, Gandhi was successful in influencing some revolutionaries of
Maharashtra, the place wherefrom the wind of revolution had started blowing towards the end of the 19th Century. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, well deserves to be placed first amongst the list of such people who were influenced by the Gandhian philosophy, even though he began his political career as a true revolutionary.

While studying in Fergusson College, Poona, Kalelkar had come under the influence of the revolutionary ideology. His refusal to divulge much about his activities even after becoming a total Gandhian, on the ground, that he had taken a pledge to maintain secrecy, reveals his commitment to the idea of revolution during the early stages of his career. He said "I mainly belonged to the group of workers in two or three secret societies in Maharashtra, but I was, in a way, fairly well connected with some movements in Bengal too, and one movement in the Punjab and one in the South near Madras." Though, he believed in the violent revolutionary movement he was one who did not approve of committing solitary murders. According to him such acts provided the government with a reason to follow repressive measures.¹

Even before meeting Gandhi at Shantiniketan in 1915, he had already read about Gandhi, and had gone through his book "Hind Swaraj". What attracted him to Gandhi, at this juncture was his realisation that Gandhi was ready to strike

¹. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, Oral History Transcript, op.cit., p. 11.
hard when the other methods like petitions and deputations proved to be futile. Though, he had developed great respect for Gandhi, Kaka Saheb at that stage still believed that only an organised revolution would bring about freedom and that nonviolence could be used only as a strategy. He took up teaching having realised as a revolutionary that education alone could cause awakening amongst the people.

Prior to his coming into contact with Gandhi, Kaka Saheb had been influenced by religion, but the country's independence, was his first concern. As he himself admitted, he realised after his interaction with Gandhi, that the liberation of the country and the liberation of the soul were identical and not anagonistic. He said that he was aware of "resistance" being a part of his own philosophy but it was Gandhi who taught him to resist and at the same time be non-violent.

The personal contact with Gandhi, for him, therefore was not only an eye opener but also a soul opener. He had realised the potentiality of the combination of 'resistance' and 'non-violence'. But, he still did not

3. Ibid., p. 130-1.
5. Ibid., p. 17.
believe in non-violence alone being the panacea for all ills and so during one of his discussions with Gandhi, he acquainted the latter with his political beliefs and made it clear that he was ready to take up arms rather than depending on non-violence alone, for the cause of freedom.

Gandhi, then, had replied that he was out to convert people to his view because majority of the people had faith in Kaka Saheb’s method of functioning. Thus, in the years between 1915-18, Kaka Saheb had continued to be a believer in revolutionary methods, though he stayed in Gandhi’s Ashram and watched the latter’s techniques from close quarters. His conversion to non-violence, therefore, seems to have materialised gradually after his recognition of the merits of Gandhian thinking. It also appears that Kalelkar was disillusioned with the political philosophy of terrorism after the failure of the revolutionary forces in 1915. Coupled with his aversion to assassinations being an inevitable part of a revolution, it had a great impact on Kalelkar who was prepared to accept non-violence as an expedient method for the time being.

His final conversion of faith to Gandhi’s ahimsa, however, occurred during the days of Ahmedabad riots immediately after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. He admitted that a shot missed him narrowly when he was trying to pacify the rioteers. He neither hated the rioteers nor the British army and had the first vision of the spirit of ahimsa. His
acceptance of ahimsa, however, was also strengthened by his conviction that a violent revolution was not going to succeed in India. He knew the weaknesses of the revolutionary organisations, since he had been an insider and was actively involved in the working of the secret societies. He also admitted that Gandhi was aware of the military strength of the Britishers, but never used it as an argument to convince the revolutionaries of their mistakes.  

He was highly appreciative of Gandhi's attitude towards the revolutionaries and had expressed the view, that the latter never disclosed his respect for them. According to him Gandhi knew that the revolutionaries were desperate men who had concentrated on the use of the moral strength for the liberation of the country alone, but not for the liberation of the soul. 

His conversion to the philosophy of non-violence led him to persuade many other revolutionaries of Maharashtra to accept the Gandhian way of life. Govindrao Yalgi, Gangadhar Rao Deshpande and Kriplani were such prominent figures who accepted Gandhian ideals after having been with Kalelkar in the Revolutionary movement.

7. Ibid.
Kalelkar whose association with Gandhi continued, till the day the latter was shot dead in 1948, later got deeply involved with Gandhi's Constructive Programmes viz. education, languages, religion culture etc. The transformation of the revolutionary Kalelkar who was once in Savarkar's group, was so absolute that he came to be regarded later as one of the "Four Gandhian Philosophers" and he continued to be involved in spreading the message of Gandhi throughout his life.

MAMA SAHEB PHADKE

Another revolutionary who came into contact with Gandhi in 1915 was Mama Saheb Phadke. After his conversion, he never actually participated in the Gandhian movements because Gandhi insisted that a sepoy need not patrol all the time with a rifle. He therefore was involved with the work of the upliftment of the Harijans, while staying in the Ashram at Godhra.8

PANDIT SUNDERLAL

Sunderlal, an active revolutionary of the early twentieth century was responsible for stirring up the people of the United Provinces. He became a member of the

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Revolutionary Party in Bengal in 1907. According to J.C. Ker, Sunderlal was in close contact with many leaders like Aurobindo, Tilak, Amir Chand of the Delhi Conspiracy case and also with Rash Behari Bose. Atleast till 1913, he was in touch with the Revolutionary movement.

He later became a follower of Gandhi. From an article that he had written, it appears that he was greatly perturbed by Aurobindo’s disappearance from Calcutta in 1910. He admitted that many workers of the Revolutionary party had begun to have a feeling of frustration and despair as far as the question of India’s Independence was concerned. It was because of this reason that he along with other revolutionaries had met Mahatma Gandhi and discussed the country’s situation in 1915-16 and in the subsequent years.

It can therefore be inferred that his conversion to Gandhian philosophy might have been the result of his discussions with Gandhi himself. He also seems to have had a clear understanding of Gandhi’s ideals. He mentioned that "Mahatma Gandhi did not preach non-resistance to evil ... cowardly surrender to evil, according to him was worse than

10. J.C. Ker, Political Trouble in India 1907-17, op.cit., pp 373-5.
12. Ibid., File No. 19, An article on "Terrorist Movement in India", p. 19.
violence ... But for people who, for any reason cannot resist violence with non-violence, Gandhi clearly taught that they may resist violence with violence and if need be die in the effort rather than surrender to violence.\textsuperscript{13} While recognising the merits of the Revolutionary movement, he had agreed that it was becoming more and more evident that it could not have led the country to independence under the prevailing circumstances.\textsuperscript{14} He also had mentioned that the masses by and large remained untouched by the Revolutionary movement. Probably, it was this realisation on his part that resulted in his conversion to the Gandhian faith.

**CHHOTE LAL**

Chhote Lal, an accused in the Delhi Conspiracy Case of 1915 was acquitted though he did not desire the same. He, later accepted Gandhian non-violence because he had read Gandhi's writings and also knew about the latter's activities in South Africa. He was a founder member of the Sabarmati Ashram and became one of the outstanding workers. Alongwith some of his associates he became a model for the ashram students who came there, to get training in various constructive activities. He, later moved to Wardha and was in

\textsuperscript{13} Pandit Sunderlal's Private Papers, File No. 12, An article on "Gandhism and Disarmament", pp. 3-4, NMML, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., File No. 19, An Article on "Terrorist Movement in India." p. 18.
charge of the development of the village industries. According to Balwant Sinha, Gandhi had mentioned that he needed volunteers like Chhote Lal for the upliftment of the village industry since it was practically extinct in India at that time and that the latter devoted himself entirely to such a work with all his energy and knowledge.\footnote{15}{Balwant Sinha, \textit{Under The Shelter of Bapu}, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), pp. 148-9.}

Gandhi mentioned that Chhote Lal was never tired of any work and was involved in many ventures like spinning, weaving, kitchen work, accounts etc. Beekeeping was also his passion in the later stage.\footnote{16}{\textit{Harljan}, September 11, 1937, vol. V, p. 249.} However, Chhote Lal committed suicide in the \textit{ashram} itself in September, 1937 because he had contacted typhoid during one of his wanderings in search of bee-hives and could not bear to be served by others.

The strong bond between Chhote Lal and Gandhi during their long term of stay together in the \textit{ashram} and also later, shows the extent to which the former was influenced by Gandhi's way of life. Gandhi himself had written that he had entertained high hopes of Chhote Lal and so could not tolerate any imperfection in him. While Gandhi recognised his 'indefatigable energy' and 'insatiable capacity' for silent work he also knew that Chhote Lal could never completely control his proneness to anger and pride. Still he did not
consider the latter's suicide as an act of cowardice. His pride in this revolutionary convert's activities can be ascertained from the fact that he considered him to be one of the silent warriors in the army of the country and expected that his life should act as an inspiration for others.  

While living with Gandhi, Chhote Lal had literally acquired the former's pattern of working. Balwant Sinha expressed the opinion that Chhote Lal was a strict disciplinarian and insisted on carrying out his programmes exactly according to plan. The least negligence was enough to upset him and then he came down heavily on the defaulter.  

Gandhi, who always wished to bring together the non-violence of a satyagrahi and the power of self-sacrifice in a revolutionary had identified such a trait in Chhote Lal. He therefore, profusely expressed his admiration for the ease with which Chhote Lal could shed his cult of violence, under the former's care and guidance.

GANSHYAM DAS BIRLA

Birla (G.D.), a well known disciple of Gandhi too, had contacts with the revolutionaries in the early 20th century. But he himself agreed that terrorism did not have much appeal for him. From 1916 onwards, when he developed a


relationship with Gandhi, whatever traces of violence that remained in him were eradicated.19

MOULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD

Moulana, who was greatly influenced by the political endeavours of Gandhi, too had revolutionary inclinations in the initial stages. The partition of Bengal, his contact with Shyam Sunder Chakravarty, an important revolutionary worker of those days and the influence of Aurobindo Ghose had a cumulative impact on Azad who joined the revolutionary ranks. He had pointed out to his revolutionary associates that their indifference to the Muslims would make the struggle for independence, much more difficult for them. As a result of his contacts with the Arab and Turkish revolutionaries, he also realised that the Indian Muslims should not be indifferent to the nationalist demands. His efforts to kindle the spirit of nationalism amongst the Muslims through the journal, ‘Al Hilal’ landed him in jail and he too was released under the Royal Amnesty in 1920.20

His first contact with Gandhi occurred in Delhi where the latter had participated in discussions with the Muslim leaders regarding the Khilafat question. Azad, thus was


attracted towards Gandhian thinking mainly because he was aware of the latter’s earnest attempts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity during the non-cooperation days. Gandhi’s recognition of the Muslims being an integral part of the Indian political aspirations, as against the revolutionaries’ negligence of this aspect, might therefore have influenced Azad to come into Gandhi’s fold.

MOHAN LAL PANDYA

Mohanlal Pandya, another erstwhile revolutionary also was a total convert to the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. He participated in the Kheda Satyagraha of 1918 and had played an important role in it. Gandhi wrote in his autobiography that Mohanlal Pandya alongwith Shankarlal Parikh had thrown himself into the fight, supporting the Patidars of Kheda. He, further mentioned that Mohanlal Pandya didnot want the campaign to end without someone undergoing suffering in the shape of imprisonment, for something done consistently with the principle of satyagraha and so volunteered to remove the onion crop that was attached by the government. Pandya and his companions were therefore convicted and imprisoned.21

It appears that Gandhi had clearly developed great faith in Mohanlal. When it was pointed out to Gandhi by the

Commissioner of Bombay that Mohanlal was one of his worthless colleagues, Gandhi stated that he was yet to see a man who understood, the essence of Satyagraha better than him. Gandhi also said that he (Gandhi) was a reformer who gathered even terrorists around him and that he would bring them round to healthy ways of life as he had already done with many. Gandhi’s defence of a revolutionary convert, as in the case of Mohanlal shows that Gandhi did not hesitate to have complete faith in them, irrespective of their early connections with the violent Revolutionary movement.

KRISHNASWAMI SARMA

Krishnaswami was another revolutionary from Tamil Nadu who had been converted to Gandhi’s views on non-violence. He took pride in the fact that he had always been taking special care to insist on non-violence in thought, word and deed. His statement before the Chief Presidency Magistrate, when he was arrested for making speeches in furtherance of the Non-cooperation movement, reveals that he eschewed violence in favour of non-violence. He said, "When in the year 1907, I began my political work, I believed in violence as the only means to attain political freedom for India. Ever since Mahatmaji’s influence my mind began to

change and in the year 1920, I definitely lost faith in violence and I am convinced that non-violence and non-cooperation can alone obtain for us, the abiding freedom that we desire. I have worked faithfully and genuinely on the lines laid down by Mahatma Gandhi. 

Jitendra Kushari, another revolutionary who had became a staunch follower of Gandhi during the days of his Non-cooperation movement, adopted his Constructive Programmes. He started a National school where spinning was taken up. Gandhi had visited the school, but the spinning activities taken up by the school, from Gandhi’s view point, was not enough to meet his high expectations.

In fact, many of the revolutionaries who got converted to Gandhian thinking had accepted the former’s stress on Social Reconstruction, being an inevitable part of India’s fight for freedom. Especially in the twenties, when individual assassinations ceased to be the pivotal point of the revolutionary ideology, they came to recognise the necessity of bringing about fundamental changes in the social and economic sphere of the Indian society. The idea of Social Reconstruction therefore, was in the purview of the violent activists as well as Gandhi.

23. Young India, April 20, 1922.
24. Mahadev Desai, Day to Day with Gandhi (Secretary’s Diary), op.cit., vol. VI, p.269.
There are scattered references to the activities taken up by the early secret societies, for social revolution as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. According to Guha, Swadesh Bandav Samiti of Barisal had the following items on its programme.

"1. Reduction of litigation by introducing arbitration.
2. Swadeshi and boycott to help indigenous industry.
3. Temperance.
4. Female education, abolition of dowry, widow remarriage.
5. Health.
6. Provision of drinking water in rural areas.
7. Abolition of the rigours of caste distinction and the removal of the disabilities of the lower caste Hindus."\(^{25}\)

Satish Mukherjee, Satish Chatterjee and Aswini Kumar Dutt played an important role in carrying out such activities. The same Samiti also made attempts for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity; it gave shape to the idea of self-sufficient village units and the building of people’s organisations to satisfy their local needs and setting their small conflicts – including settlement of litigation through Panchayats.\(^{26}\) The activities of the samiti clearly manifests


that its members must have considered political freedom meaningless without Social Reconstruction.

It appears that the revolutionary workers in Madras too, tried to break the caste barriers, "Among the different items administered in the oath to the members, one was to discard caste barriers and untouchability." The Ghadr members of the Punjab too never believed in the differences between the caste and considered everyone to be an Indian. Thus, when the Jugantar party joined the Non-cooperation movement "they made an open declaration that they would have no other party affiliation apart from the Congress which they joined as the machinery for organising the masses of India not only for political independence but also for a socio-economic revolution." 28

One can therefore safely presume that Gandhi's ideology of a new social order through Constructive Programmes was not completely unknown to the revolutionaries of the twenties. Gandhi always insisted "that India lives in her 700 thousand villages and so the revolutionaries must spread out into those and try to bring sunshine into the dark dungeons of their countrymen." 29 He fervently believed in

27. A.C. Guha, First Spark of Revolution, op.cit., p. 325.
28. Ibid., p. 497.
29. Collected Works, op.cit., vol. XXVI, p. 286 ; Young India, March 12, 1925.
creating a new social order through voluntary constructive activities and advocated a basic non-violent social change.

Gandhi’s plans for taking up Constructive Programmes included eighteen items, viz. communal unity, removal of untouchability, temperance, Khadi, village industries, village sanitation, basic education, adult education, women, education in health and hygiene, preservation and development of provincial languages, adoption of Hindustani as the national language, economic equality, peasantry, labour, hill tribes, lepers and students.\(^{30}\)

These programmes were meant to bring about the moral as well as the material progress of the individual in the Indian society. They continued to be an inevitable part of Gandhi’s political strategies too. He said, “We find that we can employ satyagraha even for social reform. We can rid ourselves of the many defects of our caste system. We can resolve Hindu-Muslim differences and can solve political problems … But it should never be forgotten that they are inter-related. It is not true to say that neither religion nor social reform has anything to do with politics.”\(^{31}\)

He was therefore, convinced that the revolutionaries must be involved in his Constructive Programmes, once they were

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dissuaded from their violent acts. He asked them to take their due share in works of patient construction. He was confident that the revolutionaries were capable of a silent and sustained effort for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{32} It was probably due to this reason that many of the revolutionaries like Kaka Saheb, Mama Saheb, Jiten Kushari and Motilal Roy were encouraged by Gandhi to take up the Constructive Programmes seriously.

Motilal Roy, who had links with both the \textit{Jugantar} and \textit{Anushilan} groups gave a distinctive character to his \textit{Prabartak} mission after the Non-cooperation movement started. The \textit{Prabartak Vidyapith} was founded in February 1921. Papia Chakravarty said that the \textit{Prabartak Sangh} was "firmly adhered to its chosen constructive method of silent preparation for \textit{purna swaraj} ..." He further quoted that Motilal never ceased to believe either in the need for a fundamental change in the individual behaviour and in the society or in the basic contradiction of the colonial situation.\textsuperscript{33} The \textit{Sangha} aimed at the creation of an ideal society free from exploitation and also desired equality. It also appears that Gandhi had great faith in Motilal's

\textsuperscript{32} Collected Works, op.cit., vol. XXVI, p. 141.

integrity and business like attitude and so had asked the AISA to lend money to the Prabartak Sangha.  

It, therefore, becomes apparent that Social Reconstruction was one factor which appealed to the revolutionary converts and so they were ready to accept Gandhi's help as well as guidance in matters regarding constructive activities.

**REVOLUTIONARIES, PARTIALLY INFLUENCED**

Gandhi also appears to have had some kind of an emotional and charismatic influence on some of the revolutionaries he had come across. But such activists had great reservations about Gandhian philosophy and therefore could not be converted to his way of thinking, despite their close contact and interaction.

BHUPATI MAJUMDAR

He said that Gandhi's name was nauseating to those revolutionaries who had gone to the Congress Session at Nagpur. But, he miraculously changed his mind, immediately after he had a look at Gandhi and heard him speak. He wrote that he had discussions with Gandhi regarding the question of


Hindu-Muslim unity because according to the former the Khilafat issue taken up by Gandhi was unnecessary and almost suicidal. He had pointed out to Gandhi, that by insisting upon Hindu-Muslim unity the latter had implied the division, between the two communities. According to him, Gandhi should have rather insisted on the Indians to remain united. Irrespective of the arguments, Gandhi had stuck to his own view regarding Hindu-Muslim unity.

He, finally met Gandhi in 1939, as one of the revolutionary prisoners alongwith Shanti and Suniti once in Midnapore and subsequently at Howrah. Gandhi had wanted them to take charge of the Chittagong people but, the revolutionaries refused to pay heed to Gandhi’s suggestion. Majumdar remained totally unconvinced by Gandhian philosophy even as late as 1947. He made it plain to Gandhi that the latter’s non-violence, non-aggression and non-cooperation, all had a negative approach and so did not appeal to him. Inspite of his disagreement with Gandhi, Bhupati Majumdar did visit the latter because according to him it had a purifying effect. He admitted that Gandhi, the man was wonderful.\footnote{Bhupati Majumdar, Oral History Transcript, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 11-4.} The relationship between Gandhi and Bhupati Majumdar shows that Majumdar was taken in more by Gandhi’s personality rather than his ideology. Neither was convinced of each other’s policies.
SURENDRA MOHAN GHOSE

S.M. Ghose, was another revolutionary leader who had come into close contact with Gandhi as early as 1920 and had assessed that the latter was shrewd in political matters. Later, in a meeting with Gandhi, at Sevagram, he had an argument with Gandhi regarding the efficacy of "Charkha" and "non-violence" in the freedom struggle. He had admitted frankly before Gandhi that he signed the Satyagrahi’s pledge without believing in it. But, he had also agreed at the same time, that it was Gandhi who had turned nonviolence into an effective weapon and made charkha indispensable. Gandhi suspected that Surendra Mohan wanted Bengal to be exempted from the spinning condition, but the latter denied having any such expectation. On Gandhi’s request, Surendra Mohan stayed in the ashram for two or three more days and confessed that it was a pleasant experience for him.37

He had somehow, through all his discussions gained the impression that Gandhi inspite of his modern education in England, had completely identified himself intellectually, psychologically and emotionally with those who were living in villages and were far behind the twentieth century.38

38. Ibid., p. 268.
The mutual relation between the two, reveals that both had revered each others’ principles, though it was difficult for them to get converted. While, it is clear that Surendra Mohan expressed his opinions fearlessly before Gandhi, the latter too was magnanimous enough to accept him as he was, since Gandhi believed in gentle conversion and not in forcing his own ideology on others.

REVOLUTIONARIES, UNAFFECTED

SHYAMAJI KRISHNA VERMA

When Gandhi had gone to England in 1906, he had the opportunity to make his first contact with the foreign based Indian revolutionaries. He met Shyamaji Krishna Verma. According to James Hunt, "perhaps the most interesting of Gandhi’s Indian contact was the group associated with India House, Particularly the founder, Shyamji Krishna Verma ... Gandhi had carried news of Krishna Verma’s activities in Indian Opinion since April, 1905 and Krishna Verma’s Indian Sociologist had taken note of Gandhi. But although Gandhi had praised Krishna Verma’s works, the latter had bitterly criticised Gandhi’s volunteer work in suppressing the Zulu revolt ... Perhaps this is why Gandhi wanted to go to India House. Always ready to confront his opponents, directly attempting to win them over through his candor and reasoned convictions, he wanted to ... wean him from his increasingly
militant convictions." It appears that Gandhi had three long conversations with Shyamaji but the details of the discussions had not been mentioned anywhere by him. Since Shyamaji continued to guide the Revolutionary movement, it might be inferred that he was not overly affected by his contact with Gandhi.

**Bhai Parmanand**

Bhai Parmanand was another notable revolutionary who accepted violent methods as an inevitability in the Indian situation. He came into contact with Gandhi in 1905, when he visited South Africa. The latter was highly impressed by his truth and nobility. Parmanand had many discussions with Gandhi on various matters and the latter therefore believed that Bhai Parmanand's lofty patriotism would disdain to use violence to serve national ends.

Bhai Parmanand had gone to London and also met Shyamaji through Gandhi. He also stayed in India House, along with Savarkar and was aware of the friction between Gandhi and Shyamaji. He, had toured widely, and also came into contact with Lala Hardayal. He was in fact, present in the United States of America during the days of the Ghadr Party's activities.

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formation. It was probably there in San Francisco that he had inspired Kartar Singh Sarabha.\(^{41}\) It appears that he also had some revolutionary connections because Lala Hardayal had told the Indians in Estonia that Bhaiji had been sent to India so that he could do revolutionary work.\(^{42}\) On his return, he was tried with the other Ghadr revolutionaries on various grounds and was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he was then sent to the Andamans.

Towards the end of 1919, Gandhi appealed to the government for his old friend’s release. He pointed out to the government that they had erred in treating an honourable man as a common felon and demanded his release. After being released, when he came to Lahore, Bhaiji had felt that Gandhi had gained importance in the eyes of the Indians due to the Non-cooperation movement. He further realised that the country’s hope centred round Gandhi at that stage because, he promised Swaraj to them within one year.

Chhabil Das, principal of the National College at Lahore, however, opined that Bhai Parmanand never believed in the utopian ideals of attaining Swaraj or independence within twelve months and according to him Bhaiji had boldly stated that Gandhi was abusing the credulity of his ignorant

42. Ibid, p. 139.
countrymen. He further mentioned that Bhai Parmanand never believed in any nation ever achieving independence without the help of arms or an armed revolution.\(^43\)

Bhaiji himself admitted, when in 1921, as a result of the Non-cooperation movement many students gave up their studies he took with him a batch of youngmen to Narnaund, a village in the district of Hisar and that they carried on the work of propaganda from door to door in that village and in many others in the neighbourhood. He had also taken up the work of National Education.\(^44\)

His acceptance of national education was in conformity with the Gandhian faith in the necessity of its being an inseparable part of Social Reconstruction. Bhai Parmanand’s success in this direction is undeniable, as he made efforts to inculcate a spirit of nationalism in the younger generation. One of his students reminiscised thus, "he left an impact on all who came into contact with him. He would narrate stories about Lala Lajpat Rai’s and Lala Hans Raj’s patriotism and inspire us. He told us about the life of great men and martyrs and taught us to live and die for duty and faith.\(^45\)

\(^{43}\) Chhabil Das, Oral History Transcript, Acc. No. 163, pp. 7-8, NMML, New Delhi.

\(^{44}\) Bhai Parmanand, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 161-4.

\(^{45}\) Dharamvir, \textit{Bhai Parmanand Aur Unka Yug}, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 49.
Thus, one finds that, irrespective of his disbelief in Swaraj being attained in one year through non-violent methods, Bhai Parmanand had participated in Gandhi’s first major movement. The sheer realisation on the part of the former that Gandhi had the approval of the masses, influenced him to participate in the Non-cooperation movement. The parting of ways between Gandhi and Bhai Parmanand was more on the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity, being a necessity for bringing about the deliverance of the motherland. Upholding the same view Chhabil Das stated that Bhai Parmanand did not agree with Gandhi on the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity resulting in Swaraj. The latter did blame Gandhi for not waking up during the days of the Moplah Revolt. It was probably from here that he moved away from Gandhian thinking since he did not approve of Gandhi’s programmes regarding the Hindu-Muslim affairs. Later, he got more intensely involved in the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha and so got diverted from the main stream of the National Movement. Thus, in the case of the inter relationship between Bhai Parmanand and Gandhi, there were many ups and downs. They were both influenced by each other and they respected each other in the initial stage; while Gandhi pursued his non-violent path, Bhai Parmanand continued to be in touch with the

47. Dharam Vir, op.cit., p. 316.
revolutionary elements like, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Rash Behari Bose and later even Bhagat Singh.\textsuperscript{48} He also continued to insist that force alone would liberate the motherland. He had a talk with Gandhi in 1940, wherein the latter tried to convince Bhaiji that universal violence, as a means of getting independence, was certainly not easier than his method of non-violence.\textsuperscript{49} But Bhai Parmanand still was not convinced and so he pursued a path that seemed to be right in his own eyes.

VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR

Gandhi's interaction with Savarkar, a well known revolutionary started as early as 1906. He held discussions with Savarkar on political problems from all angles during his visits to London whenever he stayed in India House till 1909. These discussions however revealed great differences in their ideologies. Inspite of the differences, when, V.D. Savarkar and his brother Ganesh Damodar Savarkar were not released under Royal Amnesty, their brother Dr. N.D. Savarkar had approached Gandhi for advice and guidance for securing their release. Gandhi assured him that he was taking up the issue in his own way. Gandhi continued to pursue the matter with the government and pointed out that the Savarkar

\textsuperscript{48} Dharam Vir, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 8, 151 and 284.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Collected Works, op.cit.}, vol. LXXI, p. 98; \textit{Harijan}, January 20, 1940.
brothers were notable "political offenders" who had not been discharged. But, he pleaded for their release on the ground that they did not entertain any revolutionary ideas at that time. He agreed that they were "political offenders" but denied that they were a danger to public safety.50

He continued to stress on the release of the brothers even in 1921, when he stated that the Savarkar brothers' talents must be utilized for public welfare. He reiterated that the latter had seen the evil in the present system of government much earlier than he himself had. He felt that it was his non-cooperation programme that delayed their discharge.51

Again he defended the Savarkar brothers when it was reported in the "Capital" that they had plotted with the enemy. He stressed that the government's action was wilful and wicked because one of the brothers, Ganesh, had already undergone imprisonment for a period of fourteen years.52

Though, the brothers were ultimately released only in 1937, they were brought out of the Andamans, and V.D. Savarkar owing to ill health was interned at Ratnagiri, his home town. It was here that Gandhi met him, once again in 1927. Mahadev Desai recorded in his diary that Gandhi

51. Ibid., vol. XX, pp. 104-5 ; Young India, May 18, 1921.
52. Ibid., p. 283 ; Young India, June 29, 1921.
recalled the sacrifice and patriotism of his old friend Savarkar. According to him Gandhi had said, "We had our differences then, we have them now, but they have not affected our friendship in the least. Differences of opinion should never mean hostility ..."  

Mahadev Desai, further recorded that the meeting with Savarkar was a pleasant one. The discussion between them was not political but the latter had asked Gandhi about untouchability and Shuddhi, Gandhi had expressed his regard for Savarkar as a man who loved truth and so would lay down his life for the sake of truth. He agreed that their goal was the same and that Savarkar should correspond with him regarding all the points of differences between them. This was the last meeting between Gandhi and Savarkar. 

Later, however Savarkar played a crucial role in the Hindu Mahasabha, and his pro-Hindu policies were in direct contrast to Gandhi's insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity. According to Savarkar, Gandhi's policy was pro-Muslim and so he severely criticised the latter in the weekly "Shraddanand"; When it was brought to Gandhi's notice, he denied any knowledge regarding what was written about him.

55. Ibid., vol. XXXVI, p. 64, Letter written to Ramnarayan Chaudhri, February 27, 1928.
In 1937, when Gandhi was criticised for not having signed the memorial for Savarkar's release, Gandhi clarified that the Savarkar brothers were bound to be released because of the government that would be formed under the new Act irrespective of the memorial. He also mentioned that the Savarkar brothers themselves were aware that he would never contemplate their incarceration with equanimity and reiterated that he did whatever was in his power to secure their release.\(^{56}\)

In the later years, however, Savarkar continued to be highly critical of Gandhi's insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity and his role in the partition of India and even regarding the Kasturba Memorial Fund, whereas Gandhi continued to believe that the line of activities pursued by the revolutionaries was not conducive to the nation's growth. Thus, the personal ties that existed between Gandhi and Savarkar, however weak they were, reflect the distinctive character of each individual. Though, they came together, and discussed important issues they hardly had any common ground. It is surprising to note that Gandhi, who had criticised the first bonfire of clothes held at Poona on October 7, 1905 at the insistence of Savarkar, as an act that represented hatred and violence, had made a public bonfire of foreign clothes in Bombay on November 17, 1921 as an organiser and leader of

the Civil Disobedience movement.\textsuperscript{57} Inspite of their differences there were moments when both had appreciated each other's individual mettle as a leader, as is suggested by the inter relationship between them. But, the fact remains that both could not convince each other of their faiths and beliefs.

\textbf{BHAGAT SINGH AND BHAGWATI CHARAN}

In the late twenties, Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan of HSRA probably came into direct contact with Gandhi. Chiranjilal Paliwal who was a casual visitor to the Sabarmati Ashram and was a Gandhian, but connected with many revolutionaries, claimed that Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan were dumb founded before Gandhi when they met him. He said that they had met Gandhi in Sabarmati Ashram as well as in Delhi. He admitted that he came to know about the meeting through one Raghunandan Saran.\textsuperscript{58} According to him, the two revolutionaries had argued that obtaining freedom through charkha and non-violence would be a slow and tedious method and since many nations had won freedom through the path of revolution, they should also be allowed to follow the same.


\textsuperscript{58} Chiranjilal Paliwal, Oral History Transcript, Acc. No. 357, p. 32, NMML, New Delhi.
Gandhi tried to convince them that they must try the path of non-violence because it was still unexplored fully.  

While questioned about Gandhi’s justification for dissuading the revolutionaries from their path. Chiranjilal said that Gandhi’s major aim was to educate the world about his path of non-violence and not to gain political freedom alone. Gandhi, according to him reiterated that the creed of non-violence, if accepted by the revolutionaries would make wars, a thing of the past.

Neither Bhagat Singh, nor Bhagwati Charan had admitted anywhere that they had met Gandhi or had been influenced by him. In fact, Bhagwati Charan was not even impressed by the Gandhian philosophy. Bhagat Singh alongwith Sukhdev, according to one of their close accomplice, Durga Das Khanna considered it inadvisable to insist on non-violence of Gandhi’s conception at all times and in all circumstances. He further stated that the two revolutionaries were not happy with the way the Non-cooperation movement was withdrawn and that Bhagat Singh never accepted non-violence as the sole weapon in the country’s armoury. Chhabil Das stated that Bhagat Singh had no great admiration for Gandhi.

60. Ibid., p. 48.
and his methods. Such a person, therefore, could not have been greatly influenced by Gandhi even if he met him and had a discussion with him as claimed by Chiranjilal, especially when the latter admitted that he met Bhagat Singh only a day before the bombs were thrown in the Assembly implying that the meeting between Gandhi and Bhagat Singh must have occurred before the incident. If the meeting between the two could not dissuade Bhagat Singh from throwing the bomb, it is clear that Gandhi’s arguments, if at all they had met, did not have any impact on him.

It is therefore undeniable that there were differences in the ideological perspectives of Gandhi and the revolutionaries of Bhagat Singh’s group. But it is also true that there were some spheres of thought, where Gandhi and the HSRA men could have come closer together. Their views on communal and caste issues, their interest in ameliorating the condition of the labourers and peasants are two such major issues which clearly bring out their concern for the Indian masses.

In the Punjab, Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha had paid attention to the communal question. According to Shiv Verma, "They used to organise community dinners in which Hindus and Muslims would sit together and eat. They even went to the extent of mixing Jhatka and Halal in the same pot and eat.

They were strongly against communalism.\textsuperscript{63} He, also admitted that they were against communal riots that took place but had not given a serious thought to the question of actively combating the communal problem.\textsuperscript{64} Manmathnath wrote that, "Principal Chhabil Das cooperated with this type of work. Among Muslim candidates were to be found Fazl, Mansur, Ahsan Ilahi and others."\textsuperscript{65} As such, one finds that the revolutionaries of the twenties had reached a stage where they did not give undue importance to caste, religion or untouchability.

While Gandhi insisted on organising the peasants and industrial labourers and protecting their rights, the revolutionaries' ideology too included the uplift and improvement of the workers and peasants, as is manifested by their socialist stance. The Manifesto of the HRA recognised the necessity of organising the labour and the peasantry; the HSRA had accepted the role of the peasantry and labour in a society in the context of a mass revolution. It advocated the emancipation of the hitherto exploited classes of the society, and the domination of their interests in the economy, society and polity. Much of these programmes of the

\textsuperscript{63} Shiv Verma, Oral History Transcript, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.

HSRA, however remained only on papers. The Kirti Kisan Party of the Panjab tried to translate this concept into action to some extent by looking after the needs and problems of the peasants and the workers. Gandhi, on the other hand, had concrete ideas for improving the conditions of the peasants and labourers whose rights he wanted to protect. He knew the importance of labour in a modern society and favoured the formation of labour unions. He even supported their strikes, provided they were totally based on truth and non-violence.

It is therefore clear that the HSRA men as well as Gandhi aimed at the liberation of the suppressed and the oppressed and both desired a society free from exploitation based on justice and equality. This in turn manifests that both were in favour of socialism. While Gandian socialism was, in essence a plan for social as well as economic reconstruction of the society and also an ideology of political liberation from British imperialism, the revolutionary concept of socialism as conceived by the HSRA mainly slanted towards Marxian thinking. While Gandhi’s ideas could be translated into action, the latter were not however, very successful in spreading their socialist ideas among the masses.

DURGA DEVI

Durga Devi wife of Bhagwati Charan and a revolutionary in her own right, who had met Gandhi before the
Gandhi-Irwin pact was concluded in 1931, was also not influenced by him. According to her, she was taken by Raghunandan Saran to Dr. Ansari’s house in Delhi where Gandhi was staying at that time, because she wanted to tell Gandhi that the question of political prisoners should be made a part of the peace talks between Gandhi and Irwin.

Nothing much came out of the interview as Durga Devi herself admitted. She was disillusioned with Gandhi who first misunderstood their purpose of the visit and later insisted that the death sentence given to Rajguru, Sukhdev and Bhagat Singh was entirely due to their faith in violent activities.66 This personal contact between Gandhi and a revolutionary, however, reveals that Gandhi could not convince the latter of the futility of their methods.

PRITHVI SINGH AZAD

Another famous revolutionary whose interaction with Gandhi resulted in the former’s staying in the Ashram, was Baba Prithvi Singh Azad of the Ghadr fame. He decided, to surrender after absconding from the police for almost sixteen years, through Gandhi, in the year 1938. He admitted that he was influenced greatly by the fact that the country was moving forward in its ... struggle for freedom under Gandhi’s

leadership and so wanted to show the Britishers that he too was ready to follow the path of peace as suggested by Gandhi. But, he clarified further that his philosophy remained unchanged and so it would be baseless to presume that he was inspired by Gandhi to surrender voluntarily.67

On the other hand, in a statement issued to the press, at the time of Babaji’s surrender Gandhi said that the former had been revising his views on armed revolution of late and so he had decided to take charge of him. He also further said that Baba Prithvi Singh was endeavouring to examine the method of non-violence for the deliverance of the country.68 According to Mahadev Desai, while Prithvi Singh was being taken away Gandhi remarked that it was people like those who could be true Satyagrahis.69 In fact, Gandhi entertained the faith that such people should be given an opportunity of leading a useful life, as was explained by him in an appeal to Lord Linlithgow, wherein he had expressed hopes of converting revolutionaries, if he received co-operation from the authorities.70

69. Ibid., (fn).
70. Ibid., p. 442.
The inter-relation between Gandhi and Babaji continued to flourish and in the later years they corresponded regularly with each other. While Gandhi appreciated the fact that a revolutionary had accepted voluntary imprisonment as good service of the country, Babaji learnt to spin. Gandhi expressed the opinion that if a person who was himsa personified could assimilate ahimsa, his non-violence would be infinitely richer in romance than his past violence. But, the same revolutionary Prithvi Singh, however, parted company with Gandhi by 1942 after having lost faith in the latter, all of a sudden. Gandhi expressed the hope that even if, he had lost faith in Gandhi, he should not lose faith in ahimsa. This was a particular case, where a staunch follower of the early school of revolutionary thought had come into close contact with Gandhi but could not be convinced of the efficacy of Gandhian thinking.

Thus one finds that the non-violence of Gandhi had varied effects on different groups of revolutionaries. Undoubtedly, he had a deeper influence on some of them especially those who were already, disillusioned with the revolutionary methods, while some others reverted to revolutionary creed because of their lack of faith in non-violence. However, a majority of the revolutionaries

belonging to the period of Gandhi’s Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movement do not appear to have accepted his creed of non-violence. In fact, they clearly resented Gandhi’s refusal to deal with them directly, instead of taking a personal interest in them. This is also corroborated by the living revolutionaries who were interviewed. Though they had become members of the Congress, they had not lost faith in revolutionary methods. It was Gandhi’s unshakable faith in Hindu-Muslim unity and charkha that had alienated a couple of them. He himself, however, continued to be averse, to the revolutionary philosophy throughout the period of his interaction with them.