Gandhi's role in the Indian freedom movement was a unique phenomenon. Because, for the first time, each section of Indian society responded to the call of Gandhi to contribute to the national struggle for political and economic emancipation. Not only the masses, but the rich capitalists, industrialists and landlords rallied round him. Some of them developed personal relationship with him. This relationship was not limited to giving donations for the running of his Ashrams or for the implementation of constructive activities. He was also consulted even on the smallest details of their personal and family life. To a number of them, he was a spiritual guide.

Gandhi was mostly looked after by Ghanshyam Das Birla and Jamnalal Bajaj. Even when Gandhi stayed in slum areas of Harijan quarters, Birla saw to it that he was properly housed and cared for. Gandhi openly admitted that he had enjoyed Birla's hospitality for years. Whether he stayed at Birla house or in the Harijan quarters, he was always Birla's guest. He was assassinated in the house which was given by Birla for his use.

Jamnalal Bajaj another capitalist who was also very close to Gandhi and his programmes. In the latter's estimation the former was getting close to his ideal of trusteeship. Perhaps it was Jamnalal Bajaj who strongly influenced Gandhi's attitude towards capitalists.
Gandhi's friendship with the capitalist and their active participation in the national freedom movement was viewed very seriously by the leftists from the very beginning. It was natural for the category of critics to assume that this kind of relationship was bound to be exploited by the capitalists in their class interest.

But it is noteworthy that while maintaining good relations with the capitalists and heavily depending upon their financial support, Gandhi continued his attack on capitalism. Thus, his relationship with the capitalists raises a few important questions which need serious enquiry.

I. What kind of relationship Gandhi had with the capitalists in general and Jamnalal Bajaj and Ghanshyam Das Birla in particular?

II. Could Gandhi be regarded as a protector of the capitalists because of his financial dependence upon them?

III. Is Gandhi's friendship with the capitalists and his condemnation of capitalism, a sign of hypocritical conduct?

IV. Does Gandhi's Trusteeship provide a cover for the capitalists and hence capitalism?

A modest attempt has been made to examine these and similar other questions in the present study.

It has been my privilege to carry out this study under the supervision of Dr. S.L. Malhotra, formerly Professor and Chairman, Department of Gandhian Studies, Chandigarh, who has been a source of inspiration and guidance for my study. I am indebted to him and acknowledge this with deep gratitude.
I am equally grateful to Dr. Jai Narain of the Department of Gandhian Studies, Co-supervisor, for this study, for his guidance, encouragement with constructive criticism.

I am also thankful to the members of the staff of the Department of Gandhian Studies, Chandigarh for their cooperation.

I acknowledge with gratitude the help and cooperation rendered to me by the librarian and staff of the Panjab University Library, Department of Gandhian Studies Library, Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalya, New Delhi, Sapru House Library, New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi and H.P. University Library, Shimla.

Jitender Raghuvanshi

Jitender Raghuvanshi
alias Jeet Ram