Chapter - II

INDIAN CAPITALIST CLASS AND GANDHI

Undoubtedly Gandhi had been in touch with the business class right from the beginning of his career. He came to South Africa as a legal representative of Dada Abdulla, a proprietor of Dada Abdulla and Company which was a leading Indian firm in Durban in South Africa. Indian merchants found in him the most suitable person to serve their interest. Indeed, that was the tradition of his family. By profession, the people of Porbandar were businessmen. The town was the ancestral home of the Gandhis and they were originally grocers.¹ Though his primary concern was with the legal affairs of Dada Abdulla and Company, he could not contain himself when he saw the wretched condition of indentured labourers in South Africa who had migrated from India on an agreement to serve for five years. They were living a life of slaves. The condition of Indian merchants was no better. For, all Indians were looked down upon as inferior and were subjected to discrimination. The Indian merchants howsoever affluent were known as 'Coolie merchants' and Gandhi, the barrister was called a 'Coolie barrister'.²


2. Ibid.; p. 124.
Touched by the deplorable condition of the fellow countrymen in South Africa, he decided to fight for their rights and justice. He was sorry to learn that Indian traders frankly confessed that they were in the country to make money and were prepared to ignore insults. But to Gandhi this kind of treatment was a very serious matter. He had to come back to India after one year. A farewell was being organised in his honour by Seth Abdulla. In the course of this party his eye fell on a newspaper article headed 'Indian Franchise', which was aimed at disfranchising all Indians in Natal. The farewell party was turned into a working committee. Funds were raised and volunteers enrolled. Ten-thousand signatures were obtained in a fortnight to oppose the bill.\(^3\)

Now Gandhi's attention was directed to keep watch over the Indian interests in South Africa. For that he was to live there for a longer period. To accept a regular salary for public service was not acceptable to him. So twenty leading Indian merchants retained him as a lawyer and paid him a year's fee in advance.\(^4\)

Hence, he decided to combine public service with his professional work at Natal. He applied to the Supreme Court for permission to start legal practice. His application was opposed by the Law Society of Natal, dominated by the European settlers.

\(^3\) Ibid.; p. 163.
\(^4\) Ibid.; p. 165.
But the Supreme Court rejected its plea and he received permission.

Seth Tyeb Haji Khan Muhammad was another most important person who held the same position in Pretoria as was enjoyed by Dada Abdulla in Natal. He agreed to help Gandhi in his desire to study the conditions of Indians there. Besides Dada Abdulla, several other affluent Indian merchants in South Africa such as Seth Tyeb Haji Khan Muhammad, Parsi Rustomji and Adamji Miya Khan joined hands with him in his fight against racial discrimination. Parsi Rustomji supplied him the necessary funds for the hospital that was set up by Gandhi for the service of suffering Indians. He also gave a helping hand to Gandhi for Phoenix settlement. He sent for the new settlement old corrugated iron sheets of a big godown and other building material.

For Satyagraha movement in South Africa Gandhi was able to receive the financial help from the rich people of India also. Among the donors were -

1. Ratanji Jamshedji Tata .... ₹25,000
2. Aga Khan collected at the All-India Muslim League Session .... ₹3,000
3. J.B. Petit .... £400
4. Nizam of Hyderabad .... ₹2,500

As is evident from his political strategy in South Africa as well as in India since 1916, Gandhi had been continuously in

good relations with the merchants and business class. The nature of capitalist development in India helped him in this endeavour.

Under the first phase of his political strategy Gandhi gave a dignified place to rich capitalists because he wanted their co-operation in his fight against British imperialists. Hence, he succeeded in Rallying a number of them around him in his fight for the freedom of the country. Addressing the business men of Ahmedabad on August 21, 1917, he said, "It is my view that until the business community takes charge of all public movements in India, no good can be done to the country. British merchants have earned a name by fighting for their freedom. Ahmedabad is the capital of Gujarat and wields much influence. If business men elsewhere start taking livelier interest in political agitations, as you of Ahmedabad are doing, India is sure to achieve her aim". Since his prime concern was to win national independence, he made efforts to arouse in them the feeling of patriotism. This approach stemmed from his faith in the goodness of human nature. As human beings, capitalists, too, are not beyond redemption. Hence, he appealed to them to rise above their self-interest and dedicate themselves to the good of the country. Without the active co-operation of business community, he felt the national struggle movement might not become so penetrating as he had witnessed in South Africa. "In South Africa", he commented, "Our merchants rendered valuable help in the struggle and because some of them weakened, the

struggle was prolonged somewhat. So, his effort was to get business community involved in the process of nation building. Along with the freedom movement, many other activities of rural uplift, social reforms, spread of basic education and propagation of national language were going on simultaneously. This was his all round effort for the mobilisation of people. Such an unlimited and vast programme naturally needed the finance which he could expectedly get from the rich capitalist class, though he appealed to all to overcome his financial difficulty. In his appeal to collect for the All-India Tilak Swaraj Fund he said,

"Welcome as the thousands of moneyed men must be to us, we must rely upon the pice of the masses. Every pice knowingly given will be a token of the determination of the giver to establish swaraj."

His aim was to make the business community realize the importance of political movement. So he argued, "It is my view that, until the business community takes charge of all public movement in India, no good can be done to the country. British merchants have earned a name by fighting for their freedom."

In his endeavour to awaken patriotism and national feelings in business class Gandhi said on October 19, 1917,

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8. Young India; January 12, 1921, p. 13.
"Merchants always have the spirit of adventure, intellect and wealth, as without these qualities their business cannot go on. But, now, they must have the fervour of patriotism in them. India's strength lies with her merchant class so much does not lie even with army. The power of England and Germany rests on their trading class. A country's prosperity depends upon its mercantile Community".10

His view of non-violence and human value gave priority to the task of converting the hearts of the business community. Advising them, he said,

"In order to enable lacs of men and women to take and observe the swadeshi vow, commercial honesty will be sin-qua-non. The mill-owners will have to fix their rates in a patriotic spirit. Merchants, great and small, will also likewise have to keep honest dealings. I have no doubt that swadeshi cannot advance unless thousands of petty shopkeepers from whom the poor millions buy introduce honesty into their dealings. The organisers of swadeshi have ventured to place before the nation the swadeshi pledge for its acceptance upon the belief that our merchants possess the patriotic spirit and that for the sake of the country they will be kind to the poor and truthful towards them".11

When Gandhi came to know that the wealthy Parsis of Ankleshwar were opposed to non-co-operation, he said,

10. Ibid.; 14, pp. 6-7.
"India is the land of the Parsis as much as it is of the Hindus and Muslims. We shall reason with the Parsis, fall at their feet and beg money from them. We shall in this way show them that they should also make their contribution in this great struggle that is going on in India".12

The Parsis, in fact, held predominant position in cotton industry in India as is evident from the chart given below:

**Ownership of Cotton Mills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Mills built</th>
<th>Parsis</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Total industries</th>
<th>British including Sassons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1854-70</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-90</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1900</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1915</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gandhi had to woo the Parsis for the boycott of foreign cloth and non-co-operation movement and financial help for his political struggle.

In his appeal to Parsis to take part in Swaraj movement he said,

Mr. Godrej had already handed him a sum of Rs. 3 lakhs and he had shown to the whole of India what the Parsis were capable of doing. The Parsi community had given him liberally in many ways, and it was not a fact that by coming to India they had not done any service to this country.... Naturally they were a commercial people... Commerce had taught them to be honest and collect money and do good to other communities in this country, and he asked them to take stock of the present conditions and their future. They had fully paid their debts to the country by producing such great men as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Jamshedji Tata.13

The Parsis presented Gandhi with a purse of Rs.30,001/- for the Tilak Swaraj Fund at the Excelsior Theatre, Bombay14 on June 30, 1921.

Mr. Shavaksha Bamanji, a Parsi philanthropist from Bombay promised monthly donation of Rs.10,000/- till the attainment of Swaraj.15

Another Parsi merchant, Rustomjee Ghorkhodoo donated for Swaraj movement Rs.40,000/- and had earlier at Durban given freely help and shelter to Gandhi alongwith fellow-prisoners.16

16. Young India; March, 23, 1921, p. 92, C.W.M.G.; Vol. 19, p.469.
Gandhi's programme of boycott of foreign goods adversely affected the interest of the trading community. So Kasturi Ranga Iyengar commented on the appeal for boycott of British goods in the following words,

"Boycott of British goods is thoroughly impracticable, for, it involves sacrifice of their millions by millionaires. It is in my opinion infinitely more difficult for a merchant to sacrifice his millions than for a lawyer to suspend his practice or for a title holder to give up his title, or for a parent to sacrifice, if need be, the literary instruction of his children. Add to this the important fact that merchants have only lately begun to interest themselves in politics. They are therefore yet timid and cautious. But the class, to which the first stage of non-co-operation is intended to appeal, is the political class which has devoted years to politics and is not mentally unprepared for commercial sacrifice".17

Speaking at Merchants meeting on January 26, 1921 at Calcutta, Gandhi stressed on the need of finance,

"If you wish to accomplish the work of 30 crores of men, then come out with your money. Try to have money and ask me to give an account for the same. Appoint some one treasurer. If you know that you yourself cannot attain swaraj, then help me with money.

If you do not help with money, Swaraj will be difficult but not impossible to attain. If the students of India do not help me, it does not matter, if the pleader do not help, it does not matter. If moneyed men do not help with money, that also does not matter. The attainment of Swaraj depends on the workers and the agriculturists. I belong to the same profession as yourselves by births and was a merchant myself by profession. I was a lawyer and earned money thereby.\(^\text{18}\)

He told the wealthy class during the non-co-operation movement that they were far behind in the struggle for Swaraj. He said, "In Gujarat, we have not reached even the figure of two lakhs for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Even in this, the contribution of the really wealthy class is very small indeed."\(^\text{19}\)

"If we help, the government will make things difficult for us. I wish that the wealthy classes would shed this fear from their hearts. The days for such fear are gone. And, again, if only one rich man had to give, he could be intimidated, when, however, all agree to give, how can any of them be intimidated? However, fear is such a thing that, despite one's desire to give, one cannot take courage to be the first to do and take their full share in the work of national regeneration.

\(^{18}\) C.W.M.G.; Vol. 19, pp. 280-281.

\(^{19}\) (At the outbreak of the First World War, the Gujarat industrialists of Bombay and Gujarat owned more than a hundred cotton mills - i.e. approximately 70% of the productive capacity of Indian cotton mills.) C.W.M.G.; Vol. 20, p. 147.
Even if, however, some among the wealthy classes find it difficult to follow the dharma of fearlessness, I hope they will not give up the dharma of compassion. They will certainly extend whatever help is possible to the famine-stricken. If they do or can do nothing else, I pray that they will, at any rate, take up the burden of famine relief.  

How he wanted to attract the wealthy classes towards the national freedom movement is manifested in the following speech,

"If all the rich men of India could realize that their safety lies, not in fearing the existing government, but in fearlessly helping the movement. Today, if they are making millions, they are sending billions out of the country, i.e. they are taking the millions and assisting to take their billions out of the mouths of their poor and, in many cases, starving countrymen. Today, they, more than the other classes, are supporting a top-heavy administration, which is keeping up a ruinous military expenditure in order to be able to hold India in the last resort by Dyerism and O'Dwyerism."

On Gandhi's appeal for the collection to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, it was at the Cotton Green where the biggest amount of Rs. 4 lakh was collected, the next larger sum having been contributed by the dwellers of Bombay.

20. Navjivan; May 29, 1921.
22. Bombay Corporation; July 1, 1921.
A purse of Rs. 2,50,000/- was presented by the Cotton Association to him for Tilak Swaraj Fund, on receiving he thanked them and said,

"Until the trading classes began taking more interest in the affairs of their country, they had no hope for the success in their cause. But there was a happy sign of awakening in these classes now. And if they went on this rate, Swaraj was sure during the current year."

On Gandhi’s appeal to the cloth merchants, it was another group of businessmen dealing in piece-goods, who gave to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, Gandhi told them that it was they who had made possible the Bezwada promise regarding the Fund.

The Jhaveris alone contributed 3 lakhs of rupees presumably under the prompting of the pearl merchant and Shroff, Seth Gulabchand Devchand who also gave his house, Shanti Bhawan, to the movement.

Other individuals who gave substantially in 1921 were the Marwari Cotton brokers, Surajmal Hurnandrai Ruia (Rs. 60,000/-) and Amsadilal Poddar (Rs. 2 lakhs). A list signed by 660 signatories from Bombay city composed of nearly 74% either of merchants or merchant firms, who took the Satyagraha Pledge, indicates the increasing involvement of businessmen in the national movement.

24. Bombay Corporation; July 1, 1921.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.; March 5, 1919.
When Gandhi found that only about 82 lakhs of rupees had been collected for Tilak Swaraj Fund, he asked some four or five rich men about the deficiency, who promised to make good the balance. Their names were not published on the understanding that by doing so people would not pay their contributions. He was, therefore, so glad to announce at a public meeting at Bandra on July 1, 1921 that the estimated crore would be made up. However, a large number of businessmen and capitalists remained untouched by the stormy winds of national movement. Some of them took advantage of it.

Leaving some exceptions, the industrialists as well as the millowners were no active participants in the agitation during the period between 1918-1922. They were notably found absent from the various fund contribution lists such as Tilak Swaraj Fund (1921) and Jinnah Memorial Hall Fund list (1918).

From Bengal, it came to Gandhi's notice that mill-owners had been misusing the situation by raising prices and were not following the call of non-co-operation. On July 6, 1921, he appealed to mill-owners,

"Perhaps you have no faith in the movement of non-co-operation. I know some of you consider that it cannot but end in violence. The Bengalees always tell me, when I go to Bengal, that the mill-owners not only did not help them when the anti-partition agitation was going on, but that they helped them false by forcing up prices, by over-sizing and, what is worst of all, by planning off on them foreign cloth under the name of swadeshi."
Advising them not to adopt selfish interest but introduce national spirit and philanthropic attitude he goes on,

"I do not say you should be philanthropic, though there would be nothing wrong if you combine philanthropy with business. But I do plead for the conduct of your business on national rather than purely selfish lines".

Expecting positive assurance from the mill-owners he said,

"I ask you, therefore, without prejudice to your views about non-co-operation, to issue your assurance that neither the merchants nor the consumers need fear any rise in the prices of your cloth merely because of larger demand by reason of the proposed boycott of foreign goods. This is the least that the country has the right to expect of you". 28

It was his letter of July 7, 1921 to the cloth merchants in which he held them more responsible than mill-owners for India's pathetic poverty and delaying the Swaraj. In Gandhi's words,

"If your trade is a matter of life and death to you, is the country's good less so? Swaraj means that you and I put our country's trade before ours. The appeal to you to refrain from importing foreign cloth is in other words an appeal to subordinate your individual gain to the country's".

"For every yard you import from England and Japan or America, you take away from the mouth of a fellow countryman at least three annas without giving him anything in return."

"But you are so responsible that, if you stop the importation of foreign cloth, you can revive the ancient and honourable dharma (duty) of hand spinning and give an impetus to the industry of hand-weaving". 29

Gandhi, thus advised the merchants to stop the drain of money Rs.60 crores per year from our country by stopping of imports. He also advised them to utilise their talents from unhealthy channels to healthy and progressive channels by organising hand-spinning and hand-weaving, an enterprise of patriotism. Obviously, he stood for permanent boycott of foreign cloth for winning the Swaraj. For him without swadeshi, there was no question of Swaraj. With that aim, he advised the merchant class to sacrifice their present interest for the sake of the nation. For him, trade of foreign goods was primarily responsible for the present position that ruined the country completely, forced the farmers to be idle for four months, and made Indians slave to the imported goods.

Offering them this business idea Gandhi asked,

"Is it impossible for merchants to give up trading in foreign cloth and take to selling Khadi? New cloth worth Sixty crores of rupees has to be produced. Will not this work provide a living for thousands of merchants". 30

Cloth merchants told Gandhi that they would enter into fresh contracts. They, however, stated that they had already agreed to act upon the resolution passed by the Marwari Chamber of Commerce which expressly stated that they were not going to purchase foreign cloth till December 31st, 1921.31

The approach of the capitalist class as a whole, to the Government as well as to the nationalists, was getting highly sophisticated awareness. Since businessmen (the industrialists and the merchants) were dependent upon the Government for the maintenance of such economic and political climate which was conducive for the flourishing of modern trade and industry. They were becoming more akin towards the politics and business. In the words of Purshotamdas Thakurdas,

"We (businessmen) can no more separate our politics from our economics than make the Sun and the Moon stand still".32

The period between 1918 to 1922 can be considered that of 'agitational politics' of nationalists against the Government and the industrialists and millowners were more sympathetic with British Government during this period.

Observing this, Gandhi told the millowners in 1921,

"That many friends tell me that the nation is not to expect anything from you. They point out the fact that you have not, with one or two exceptions, paid anything for the ( Tilak) Swaraj Fund".33

32. Government of India (Publication); F.10(15), Feb. 1929, NAI.
Even earlier the role of the industrialists had also been found by A.P. Kannangara as rallying towards the side of Government. In 1905 he wrote,

"the millowners neither initiated nor gave much support to Swadeshism; ... they gave none at all to the boycott... their interests as a class made them ... remain absolutely loyal to the British Raj".  

Certainly, the millowners avoided the participation in Non-Cooperation movement that took place between 1920 and 1922. Even few advocated direct opposition to it. Under the presidency of D.E. Wacha, a resolution was passed in October 1920 to oppose the non-cooperation movement as it was feared that it would lead to violence. The resolution further says that,

(I) Steps would be taken to inform public opinion of the dangers of the movement.

(II) Lecture Committee should be formed for the same purpose.

(III) A fair trial should be given to the new councils.

An 'Anti-Non-Co-operation Committee' was also formed by the members of industrialists and Servants of India.  

In contrast to the industrialists, the marketeers appeared to be more responsive as the anti-colonial struggle progressed. For, they had deep grievances against the British Government's policy of the 'income tax' and 'exchange', and both were regarded as unfair. The marketeers were more closely aligned with the nationalist movement, viewing it as a way to challenge British rule and secure economic freedom.

with hatred and fear by the business community. The involvement of marketeers went on increasing during the agitational period, particularly the Gujarati, Hindus and Marwaris were deeply involved. In March 1919, Gandhi suggested the marketeers of Mulji Jetha markets to sign the Satyagraha vow, which many simultaneously did at the house of S.G. Banker. Soon after, 50 merchants convened a meeting in which it was decided to close the market against the "Rowlett Bills". On the same day the Khdemji and Morarji Gukuldar Cloth Markets were also closed.36

On Gandhi's arrest in April 1919, a complete business hartal was observed during which the cotton, cloth and bullion markets were closed along with the Marwari Bazar and Mulji Jetha Market.37

After the agitation of 1919, a swadeshi movement was started. It was observed,

"That swadeshi movement is being shaped and handled by the businessmen and that many had taken the swadeshi vow.38 The businessmen involved in this were, however, all merchants rather than industrialists. Vithaldas Jerajani and Narandas Purshotam, both merchants, started a swadeshi concern in 1919.39 However, these were marketeers, predominantly the Gujarati petty traders and marketeers who formed the 'backbone of Congress' during civil disobedience campaigns of boycott and Hartal.

37. Ibid.; June 20, 1919.
38. Ibid.;
39. Ibid.;
But after 1920, there appeared a difference of opinion among the Bombay industrialists. In their attitude towards the forthcoming congress campaigns; Birla, Naranji, and Ahmedabad mill owner Ambalal Sarabhai, wanted a continuation of the 'happy state of affairs' with the congress. They also believed that if there was anyone, it was National Congress, which could obtain their ends (the economic demands of the industrialists). They further doubted that if the Government failed to check the present economic depression then 'Bolshevik propaganda would find fertile soil in India. Realising the need to support the political campaigns of Congress, Naranji said, "Political and economic matters are so much intermingled that you cannot get one (economic independence) without the other (political independence"). He further stated in his letter to Thakurdas that it was only 'Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent movement' which had diverted the people from adopting violent methods. Behram Karanjia, a conservative businessman too advocated the idea of supporting civil disobedience movement. Nevertheless, many industrialists being traditional allies of the Government backed Government horse in one way or other.

The mill owners refused to give substantial amount to the Swarajists in the election held in 1929. At the annual general

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40. Letter from Sarabhai to Thakurdas, Nov. 5, 1929, Thakurdas P., File, 91.
41. Ibid.; also see Naranji to Thakurdas, 28 March 1930 and Birla to Thakurdas, 3 November 1929.
42. Ibid.;
43. Ibid.;
44. IMC Annual Report, p. 45.
45. Thakurdas P., File 42(2), Birla's letter to Thakurdas on April 26, 1929 and reply.
meeting of the Chamber, Tairsee as retiring president in 1929 initiated the move to split it by denouncing Congress. In his speech, he rejected the council boycott on the grounds that the commercial community had made many economic gains through the council and had more still to gain.

In his letter to the Viceroy in April 1930, Thakurdas admitted that the Committee of the Chamber was being pressed to identify itself with the Congress movement by giving active support to the nationalist elements in the chamber, but it had so far resisted.

By 1930 many of the industrialists had started the support to the national campaigns of the Congress, though boycott movement proved problematic for the mills. Foreign cloth dealers also suffered considerably from the boycott. AICC had set up a boycott sub-committee in 1927 with the view to boycott British goods. However, during August 1930, the Congress working committee enumerated 56 Mills to be boycotted, out of them 24 situated in Bombay.

Many industrialists severely attacked the boycott campaigns. Sir Ness Wadia and F.E. Dinshaw opposed the boycott and hartals on economic grounds. Sir Phiroze Sethna argued against the boycott on economic as well as on ideological grounds. He observed that through the involvement of Gujarati businessmen in boycotting and in hartals, Bombay was loosing vital trade to other centres. Many other liberals such as Setalvad and Jehangir too

46. Sethna to Lewis, July 18, 1930; Sethna to Mrs. Barnes, March 16, 1932, Sethna Diaries.
adopted similar viewpoints. In the words of Thakurdas,

"Civil disobedience had brought Bombay to the brink of financial ruin". 47

The industrialists and mill owners were so affected by the civil disobedience and boycott that they formed an association in mid-1930 which was named as the Indian Industries Association. This Association spread circulations, pamphlets among the mill workers pointing out the damaging economic effects on the economy. It was also pointed out to them that unemployment was due to the boycott. 48 Perhaps, as a repercussion to these events another union, the 'Unemployed Workers' Association' emerged on the scene in January 1930. This union developed a thesis that the Congress' Mill boycott could well lead to the alienation of millhands from the nationalist cause. 49 The Government was also another agency working against Congress activities through propaganda linking the Great Depression with nationalist movement. In 1930, Bombay Chronicle published the forceful arguments as,

"The national movement has disorganised trade but it has also created a wonderful spirit of Swadeshism and boycott which will help trade ... There is a world depression of trade and continuous reduction of prices to meet a continuous decline of purchasing power consequent upon the deflation policy adopted by the Indian Government, the exchange ratio and the growing government expenditure and loans since the end of the war, have

47. Dingaw to Jayakar, August 11, 1930, Sapru P. (Micro) Reel 2190, J. 7.
48. Bombay Corporation; October 11, 1930.
49. Ibid., September 27, 1930.
they could not support any more. Even G.D. Birla who was known among the industrialists as nationalist, attempted negotiations with Government through the Second Round Table Conference rather resuming the Civil Disobedience Movement. He, along with Thakurdas and Jamal Mahomed Saheb remained in London and preferred negotiations for the FICCI with the hope to find out a moderate solution.

Anti colonial struggle under Gandhi's leadership went side by side with many other activities such as constructive programmes and social reforms. For the implementation of these programmes, finance was the utmost need, and thus he invited the Indian capitalists. Undoubtedly, he was a master mind in influencing them towards the national freedom movement. On his relations with the capitalists, he said,

"My own relations with the capitalist friends typify the attitude of the Congress towards the capitalist class. I freely accept the hospitality of capitalist class, like Birlas, and made use of their money to serve the cause of the poor, but the latter do not expect anything in return from me. On the contrary, they are glad to be exploited by me in the interest of the poor. My relationship with them is ethical. I can never give up my association with the capitalists because of fear of anybody. To do so would, in my opinion, amount to be betrayal of the cause of the poor.

Similarly, whilst the Congress accepts the financial help and co-operation of the capitalists in its fight for
independence, it never is and never can be a capitalist organisation".\textsuperscript{53}

On Gandhi's relationship with the capitalists and their predominating role in the national movement, Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Gandhi had accepted the present social order and surrounds himself with men who are pillars and the beneficiaries of this order; and who without doubt, profit and take advantage of both our movement and of any constitutional changes that may come". On this part Nehru was very clear, "I want to break from this lot completely".\textsuperscript{54}

In his Presidential Address of the Congress session at Lucknow, Nehru's ideological and political views intimidated the Indian capitalist class as a whole.

The Capitalists' reaction to Nehru's views on socialism and private property, came on May 18, 1934 as Bombay Manifesto.\textsuperscript{55} Twenty-one leading businessmen of Bombay including some prominent businessmen such as Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Naoroji Saklatwala, Homy Mody, Walchand Hirchand, V.N. Chandavarkar, Chimamal Setalwad, Pheroz Sethna, Cowarjee Jehangir, Shapurji Billimoria, K.R.P. Sharoff, Chunilal B. Mehta and Mathuradas Vissanji, reacted heavily against Nehru's views.

\textsuperscript{54} Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, pp. 478-79.
\textsuperscript{55} The Tribune; 20 May, 1936.
Emphasising the progressive role of the Indian Capitalists during anti-colonial movement, they warned,

"The Capitalists had hitherto played a considerable part in the development of the national movement but Nehru's activities were likely to divide the country and so to impede the achievement of self government".

The suspicion and anxiety of the 21 leading businessmen was as follows:

"Nehru was spreading the idea that private property was immoral, and it did not, therefore, deserve protection by the state. He was thus advocating the 'destructive and subversive programme' of doing away with the private property and thereby jeopardizing not only the institution of private property but peaceful observance of religion and even personal safety".

The capitalists took Nehru's view very seriously because these were not the views of an ordinary individual but of a President of the most powerful organisation. They also feared that he might 'push the Congress to the left'. Meanwhile, the socialists were also becoming active inside the Congress.

But it cannot be denied that Gandhi's personality and leadership had considerable impact on the business community. Time and again, he was able to receive their co-operation and financial help.
However, only a few capitalists could come around him. Recognising this, Hiren Mukerjee says, "There were exceptions, of course, Ambalal Sarabhai and Walchand Hirachand, for instance, and on some what lesser plane, men like Jeewanlal of Crown Aluminium, who could loosen their purse strings for whatever the Mahatma wanted". On Gandhi’s relationship with Ambalal Sarabhai, Erikson writes, "that he offered Gandhi money out of a sense of comradeship with a manly voluntarist of a high order and a maternally concerned man of universal dimensions". Ambalal on asking replied, "that the basis of his and Gandhi’s friendship was first of all a common passion for abolishing caste and other inequalities within Indian society, and a joint interest in ending British domination".

Other capitalists who came very close to Gandhi and became his intimate friends were Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and Ghanshyamdas Birla. They not only became his personal friends but also followed him and supported him wholeheartedly in the social and political awakening and reconstruction of the country as well as the struggle movement of the nation.

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, a capitalist, had read in the newspaper about the stormy carrier of Gandhi in South Africa and was eagerly waiting to meet him. Soon after Gandhi came from South Africa in 1915, it was Jamnalal, one of a few rich people who came in direct contact with Gandhi and gained his utmost confidence. He was a spiritual seeker who found in Gandhi a spiritual master and surrendered himself unconditionally before him. Not only this, he went further. During the Nagpur session of Congress in 1920, he was Chairman of the Reception Committee for the session. He went to Gandhi and said with some hesitation, "I want to ask some thing of you". Gandhi replied with some surprise, "Ask, and it shall be given, if it is at all within my power to give", Regard me as your son Devdas" Jamnalal asked. Gandhi had positive reply, "Agreed, only I am giving nothing, you are the giver".  

Jamnalal Bajaj identified himself with Gandhi and thus became from Rai Bahadur Jamnalal Bajaj to Jamnalal Gandhi, though he never used the suffix Gandhi with his name. This was innately with his spiritual quest that he put before the father to correct and guide him towards the right path. Gandhi was equally conscious of Jamnalal's devotion to him. Once he wrote to a friend,

58. Harijan; February 22, 1942, p. 53.
"You are aware how intimate was the relationship between Jarmalal and myself. There is no work of mine in which I did not receive his fullest co-operation in body, mind and wealth". Bajaj took active part in many of the political movements launched by Gandhi and went to jail like a true Satyagrahi.

Jamnalal Bajaj was born in a poor family at village Kasi-Ka-Bas of Jaipur state on November 4, 1889. Seth Bachhraj, a millionaire by his commercial ventures, adopted him from Kanhlram at the age of five. Bachhraj desired to pay some money to Kanhlram but the latter refused. A year later the boy was sent for schooling. But at the age of ten Bachhraj stopped his formal education and wanted that Jamnalal should look after his family business. Being sharp minded, Jamnalal had developed workable mastery over Hindi, English and Gujarati.

According to his biographer, Jamnalal was gifted with sharp intellect but being a born ascetic he always desired to understand the depth of life. He had a curiosity to gather knowledge from experience. Knowingly, that he was gifted to Bachhraj, he always felt himself as a prisoner in the golden cage of Seth Bachhraj's household even though he had been provided with all the facilities of life. He was a man of character and morality. At the age of seventeen, there appeared a dilemma in his life which shows the sense of self-respect and character in him. Seth Bachhraj asked him to wear a particular pearl necklace

59. C.W.M.O.; Vol. 75, p. 315.
while they were to attend the marriage of a relative. But Jamnalal had no charm in riches as he was rather prepared to renounce all. Seth Bachhraj, a man of short temper did not like Jamnalal's refusal to wear it. He shouted, "You have become very proud; you are elated because you have come in easy possession of easy wealth. You have the cheek to talk back to me. What is the good of such an heir? You only love my riches and not me". This incident inspired Jamnalal for introspection. He came to the conclusion that for the sake of wealth he should not sell his self-respect, it should be despised and renounced. At last, he left the house with firm decision and without any sign of bitterness on his face. Jamnalal wrote a letter to Bachhraj in Marwari which was translated by Mahadev Desai:

"You were so angry with me today. It was God's will and you had a right to be angry in that you have adopted me. It is not your fault, rather it is the fault of those who gave me in adoption. The money is yours and you may do whatever you like with it. I am sorry for the expenses you have incurred on me so far, but from this moment, I will not touch a pie out of your money. I have no right against you and I would implore you not to be anxious about me. May God keep you for many more years. Wherever I go, I shall pray for your welfare. Pray pardon me for having irritated you. I hope you never believed that I served you because of your money. Please dismiss that thought from your mind, if you ever have it. I care not for wealth". 61


Bachhraj turned remorseful by the heart-touching letter of Jamnalal and repented for his short-tempered behaviour with the adopted son. Bachhraj brought him back and asked him not to leave him alone. Six months later, Bachhraj passed away leaving behind all his wealth valued nearly five to six lakhs.

According to his biographer, Jamnalal's spiritual urge for a Guru (spiritual guide) became more intense after he got a sizable wealth in succession. Consequently, he met many saints of various religions in his spiritual quest but could not get any solace from them. The man of humility and learning, he met eminent leaders like Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya, Rabindranath Tagore and Lokmanya Tilak but his quest for a spiritual master did not end. He had read in the newspaper about Gandhi's campaign in South Africa. Even before knowing him personally he often said, "What a noble and godly soul is Gandhiji; when will he come back to India? Whenever he comes, I must get near him and make him my own". 62

At the Sabarmati Ashram Jamnalal watched Gandhi and was reminded of the lines of saint Ramdas, "Bow down to him whose steps are in consonance with his utterances". At last he found in Gandhi, the spiritual Guru, the urge for whom was incessantly increasing. Dedication and sincerity of this young man, too, attracted Gandhi. Jamnalal promised Gandhi to give him all monetary help if he would shift his ashram to Wardha.

One of his close associates, Vinoba Bhave was persuaded by Gandhi to take charge of Satyagraha Ashram at Wardha in 1921.

In his correspondence Gandhi used to address Jamnalal as 'Chi' (Chiranjiva) but in 1924, he addressed in a letter as "Bhai" which puzzled Jamnalal and made him restless over it. He wrote back to Gandhi to ask: "Am I no longer fit to be your son?". Replied Gandhi,

"How are we to arrive at a decision whether you deserve to be 'Chi' (i.e. my son) and whether I deserve to be adopted as father? Just as you have misgivings about yourself, I have similar misgivings about my own self. If you are imperfect, so am I. I ought to have given more thought to my own qualifications before allowing myself to be adopted as your father".

He said further,

"I am confident that both of us will achieve success in our effort to remove our shortcomings. If, however, we fail, God, who wants in us a spirit of dedication and can look into the inmost recesses of the heart, will deal with us according to our deserts. I will, therefore, consider you as 'Chi' so long as I do not deliberately harbour impurity within myself". 63

Now Jamnalal was adopted son of Gandhi and Gandhi his adopted father. But this adoption was unique in itself in comparison to the adoption that took place earlier with Seth

63. Gandhi's letter to Jamnalal in Kalekar Kaka Sahib; To A Gandhian Capitalist (Wardha: Jamnalal Seva Trust, 1951), pp. 55-56.
Bachhraj. This occurred not in legal terms but it was moral
and spiritual consciously accepted by both. Possibly Jamnalal
had a psychological problem. For Jamnalal did not have the
guidance of a father. Bachhraj virtually adopted him as a
grandson when his own son died prematurely. Thus, it was a
complete surrender of a son and total identification with the
adopted father that immensely had deep effects on both as well
as on the fortunes of the nation.

Gandhi's ever-increasing nearness proved more fruitful
to Jamnalal as his moral and spiritual practices influenced
Jamnalal more and more. Through introspection he became his own
critic and frankly placed entire functioning of mind before
Gandhi. Whenever, Jamnalal faced any problem, he began to put
before Gandhi for solution and Gandhi in turn, did his best to
solve any such, though of trifling nature. In a letter to
Jamnalal, Gandhi writes;

"Whenever an impure thought arises in mind, it should at
once be confronted with a pure one... You should also remind
yourself that you are proving disloyal to Janakibai, and that a
godly husband would never be disloyal to his wife. You are,
without doubt, godly. The ordinary recipes are, of course, known
to you. One should be sparing in diet. While walking, the
eyesight should be fixed to the ground in front of one. If the
eye is inclined to cast a lustful glance, one should be angry
with it almost to the extent of plucking it out. There should
be a constant reading of clean books". 64

64. This letter Gandhi writes from Yervada Central Prison on
October 5, 1922. Ibid.; pp. 51-52.
In his reply on October 25th, 1922, Jamnalal accepted his shortcomings from spiritual point of view as,

"But my present state of mind makes me ashamed of myself; and I ask myself what right I had to become your son. Though I did cast the burden on you, the responsibility in fact is mine... If the mind goes astray when I am away from home, it has to be curbed forcefully, if only out of a fear of disgrace. But I aspire to a state of mind wherein I may always be free from passion even when I am at home. At present, however, this seems a thing most difficult to achieve."

This mutually and willingly agreed relationship between the father and the son went on increasing. Step by step, Jamnalal went on achieving the spiritual satisfaction which was his quest. He found in Gandhiji a person who had enlarged himself with the whole of humanity. He also observed Gandhiji living in selfless plane where the question of high and low, rich and poor was completely absent. Gandhiji's spiritual way of life increased Jamnalal's faith day after day. In the words of Jamnalal, "No one, who has had the good fortune of being Gandhiji's associate and has made an effort to understand his approach to men and affairs and attitude towards life, will ever get tired of life. He will be filled with an enthusiasm to work and a zest for life. He will always be prepared to do his duty and be content with his lot. It may be that Gandhiji's way of attainment of Swaraj involves delay but it is a sure way;

65. Ibid.; pp. 53-54.
there are no risks in it and whoever follows that way is bound to attain Swaraj for himself if not for others. That is my firm faith.".66

When Jamnalal was awarded with the title 'Rai Bahadur' by the British Government, he went to Gandhi for his blessings. Delivering his spiritual discourse to Bajaj, Gandhi said, "Use the new honour well. It is easy to live down an insult, but difficult to live down an 'honour'. Honours, titles, etc., are dangerous things. They have been more abused than used. I would wish you to make a proper use of them. I hope it may never come in the way of your patriotism and your own spiritual advancement".67

Being spiritual-minded, Jamnalal grasped all the guidance he received from Gandhi. He liked Gandhi's philosophy of life and endeavoured to follow his teachings as far as possible. He gave up his titles of Rai Bahadur and Honorary Magistrate at Gandhi's call when the latter launched the non-co-operation movement. Even, when he was Rai Bahadur, as usual, he participated in all the Congress movements and the associated with Gandhi and other national leaders who often stayed at his house. His association with them annoyed the Britishers who expected from him loyalty towards British Government. In his reply Jamnalal said,

67. Young India; June 28, 1923, p. 217.
"But Government must know that I have nothing to do with the political opinions of those who stays with me as my guests... It is my duty to treat my friends with hospitality when they come to me as my guests. As for Gandhiji, I have the greatest respect for him and I can never sever my relations with him".  

To keep himself always associated with Gandhiji, Jamnalal purchased a car and kept it entirely at formar's disposal, though he had not done it earlier which he could do easily if he wanted.

When Gandhi launched his non-cooperation movement in 1921 Jamnalal played a very significant role in it and became a prominent figure. He advocated boycott of British cloth and stood for Swadeshi. In that spirit, he started wearing Khaddar in 1921. According to his wife Janaki Devi Bajaj,

"In 1921, we made a bonfire of everything we had that was British, ... the carpets, the upholstered furniture, the silk saris. What we burned was worth three hundred thousand rupees. (That would be thirty million rupees today, says her daughter)".  

Jamnalal helped the lawyers who in the wave of boycott had left their practice and were facing hardship alongwith their families by donating two lakhs to the fund established for this purpose. At that time it was observed in Young India,

68. Parvate, T.V.; Jamnalal Bajaj. op. cit.; p. 25.

"As long as India has sons like Seth Jamnalal, India need not despair of retrieving her honour and freedom."\(^70\) Jamnalal wrote in a very determined mood to his wife,

"Our whole family must use Khaddar and take to plain living. We must follow this path steadily and steadfastly. No foreign cloth must find its way in the family temple any more and you must see to it."\(^71\)

Soon after the chouri-choura incident, Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement since he thought that people were not mature enough for a non-violent fight for winning Swaraj. But for Jamnalal the struggle did not end. On April 13, 1923, there appeared another historic fight when in the memory of martyrs of Jallianwalla Bagh, a National Week celebration was being observed in Nagpur under the leadership of Jamnalal. Government imposed a ban on the procession and on the display of the National flag. Gandhi was in prison at that time. But his message was with him communicated through a letter dated March 16, 1922 the instruction of which was that a true Satyagrahi be ready to sacrifice all his possessions in search of truth.\(^72\) So, Jamnalal, in Gandhi's absence, took up the challenge and launched the Satyagraha movement with full spirit at Nagpur. Addressing the masses he said, "We shall not tolerate any insult to our National Flag. We shall have to

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\(^70\) ^\text{Young India; May 4, 1922, p. 219.}\)
\(^71\) ^\text{Parvate, T.V.; Jamnalal Bajaj, \textit{op. cit.}; p. 27.}\)
\(^72\) ^\text{Kalekar, Kaka; \textit{op. cit.}; p. 50.}\)
uphold its prestige as the glorious emblem of the nation. People responded to his call with great enthusiasm. The secret of his campaign was to keep the participants in utter discipline. He further stated, "We shall embark upon Satyagraha from the first of May. We must be ready to stake our all for this purpose. The essence of Satyagrahi is to undergo suffering in order to convert the heart of the opponent, for whom we must have no hatred in our hearts, and we all must never lose sight of this."

Jamnalal gathered Satyagraha volunteers from all parts of the country. A batch of ten Satyagraha volunteers, with tricolour flag in their hands, began to march through the streets of Nagpur towards Civil Lines. Batch after batch followed singing Iqbal's inspiring song, "Sare Jahan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara". Jamnalal was watching them as a Commander. British resorted to repressive methods, imposing Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and those who violated the ban were lathi charged by the police. The police snatched the flags and beat the Satyagrahis with their poles. This was repeated day after day by the Satyagrahis in non-violent methods.

Jamnalal decided of mass-Satyagraha on June 18, with 250 Satyagrahis. As soon as British Government sensed it, Jamnalal, the leader of the Satyagraha with all those volunteers

74. Ibid.; p. 70.
was put under arrest. The day before his arrest he wrote a letter: "I trust that by God's grace and the blessings of Bapu and all other elders I shall be able to pass the incarceration with courage and peaceful mind and utilize the time in spiritual meditation." 75

During the trial in the Court Jammalal gave an example of his fearlessness. In his reply to Government pleader Jammalal said in Hindi that he was ready to suffer the most rigorous punishment possible. The interpreter translated that Jammalal was asking for highest punishment among the comrades because he was the greatest offender. This puzzled the Government pleader himself and the Court referred to Jammalal as to what he had meant. Jammalal replied in a calm and cool manner that it was for the court to choose any interpretation it liked. This reply from Jammalal gave the Magistrate a great surprise that he was voluntarily ready to face maximum suffering. Jammalal was given 18 months rigorous imprisonment with the fine of Rs.3,000. He, however, declined to pay the fine. As a consequence, Government confiscated a car, a horse carriage and a cash box containing Rs.400/- for recovery.

Meanwhile, the flag Satyagraha got more momentum by attracting a large number of volunteers who met the Government repression by offering themselves to imprisonment. There was no place in Nagpur jail and the new Satyagrahis were sent to Akola

75. Young India; June 21, 1923, p. 205.
Jail. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took the leadership in hand on Jamnalal's imprisonment and the Satyagraha went continuously for 109 days and 1848 Satyagrahis offered themselves for arrest. In Gandhi's absence, Jamnalal proved himself to be his real son and did his best to keep up always high on Gandhian lines.

Jamnalal's patriotism and courageous stand was felicitated in the All India Congress Committee meeting wherein a resolution was passed as follows:

"This meeting of A.I.C.C. offers its congratulations to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj on his incarceration for his part in the Satyagraha campaign at Nagpur and assures him of its whole-hearted support of the said campaign".76

On his heroic fight C. Rajagopalchari said, "No one had tasted like Jamnalalji the sweets of domestic happiness, wealth, position, influence and what is coveted by men more than anything else-friendship with the great and the powerful; in short, everything that makes for abstinence from the sufferings and privations involved in the great enterprise initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. Yet in a moment he changed his life completely and spurning all the ease and pleasures that could be purchased by his wealth and the power and influence that lay at his feet he plunged into the thick of the fight like the humblest worker. Who can say our nation has not risen in stature?".77

77. Young India; June 21, 1923, p. 205.
satyagraha led by him filled the gap of Gandhi's absence from the scene as it was carried on with the spirit which was the hallmark of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. In the words of Mahadev Desai, "I saw batches of volunteers with the Swarajya flag, being led to the scene of Satyagraha by Seth Jammalal. I saw with my own eyes the dream of Mahatmaji realised". To Jammalal to whom the matter of the salvation of the soul was a great concern, liberation of the nation was equally necessary. Though he was not interested in the game of politics, he learnt from Gandhi that the participation in the politics was a part of spiritual exercise. To set aside the decorations and offering himself for the sufferings for the sake of millions was Seth Jammalal's job. The letter which he wrote to his wife on January 6, 1917, shows really the depth of his heart and feelings,

"I am getting a number of congratulatory letters and telegrams because I am made a Rai Bahadur. This is all empty show, but if God so wills, even this could be made use of for service of the people. It is necessary to pray always to God to grant good sense and strength to render selfless service".

Like ordinary businessmen, Seth Jammalal was not for piling up the riches but he regarded service of the nation as his real wealth and advised his dutiful family members also to do so. From this he received his spiritual satisfaction.

78. Ibid.; — May 17, 1923, p. 166,
While Gandhi was in Yervada Jail sentenced for the term of six years in 1922, in his devotional endeavour, Jamnalal founded Gandhi Seva Sangh to bring all those workers together who had firm faith in Truth and Non-Violence. He made a donation of Rs. one lakh initially to help such workers who were facing hardships during Satyagraha movement. Jamnalal remained the President of the Sangh till 1931. His total donation for the Sangh went up to 2.5 lakhs.

It was the constructive work that attracted Jamnalal more than politics. In his opinion it was Khadi which could lead the nation towards Swadeshi and hence liberation. For the dedication and love for the cause of Khadi he was appointed the Chairman of All-India Khaddar Board in the Coconada Session of the Congress in 1923. On Jamnalal’s love for Khadi Gandhi said, "Jamnalalji gave as much time as, if not more than, I to Khadi. I may have given the mantra, but Jamnalalji devoted his intelligence, his powers of organisation, and his money to give form to the scheme. He had the gift of seeking out and creating workers too. He felt, with me that Swaraj was to be found in Khadi, and he organised it while I was in jail, or else it might have died".

According to Gandhi, "What is called politics is neither my love nor Jamnalal’s. He entered politics because I was

81. Harijan; March 8, 1942, p. 69.
in it. But my politics is the pursuit of constructive work. His politics is also the same.\textsuperscript{82}

This shows the unification of ideas and merger of heart and soul to the cause of constructive activities in the process of winning the freedom. On Khadi, Jamnalal said,

"I consider it as the religion of the present age. I hold that if even a Brahman does not perform his daily morning and evening prayers, God will forgive him. But if he does not work on the Charkha at least for a few minutes everyday, he shall not be forgiven. Similarly, if a Bania abstains from going to Thakurji's temple for a few days he will not be regarded as a defaulter in Thakurji's durbar, but if he does not ply the Charkha he will be regarded as an offender. The day I realized that mill-cloth deprives the poor of their food and work, I began to believe that using Khaddar was meritorious and using mill-cloth was sinful."

Jamnalal thought that Khadi will help in eradication of unemployment and removal of the country's poverty along with march towards the attainment of Swaraj. For Swadeshi, Khadi in his view, was the perfect form, and he held it as useful in character-building as for the attainment of Swaraj.

With Gandhi, Jamnalal went side by side for the upliftment of Harijans and felt it necessary for the removal

\textsuperscript{82.} C.W.M.G.; Vol. 75, p. 315.
of untouchability. This problem was deep-rooted in the form of religious conceptions and Jamnalal reacted very strongly against the treatment meted out to untouchables by the Hindus. He worked sincerely for the removal of untouchability on humanitarian rather than social grounds.

He was the first person in the country who opened the 'Lakshminarayan Mandir' at Wardha for the untouchables in 1928. This was really a bold decision that Jamnalal took despite stiff opposition from orthodox 'Sanatanis'. He took his meals cooked by Harijans at the 'Bhagvadbhakti' Ashram at Rewari for which he was excommunicated by his own Marwari community. He made efforts to throw open public wells to the so-called untouchables and offered scholarships to Harijan boys to raise their status in society.

The orthodox groups who took Jamnalal's actions as danger to their religion made final appeal to Gandhi to dissuade him from his proposed action. But to Gandhi this signified the nobler cause of Jamnalal's higher mission. He said, "Jamnalalji has chosen a wider field of service. He cannot exclusively identify himself with any particular community. The world is his family, and he can serve his community only through the service of humanity. So let Jamnalalji go his way. One can overcome opposition only by love, untruth by truth, not by compromising truth. See the state of society we are living in, it is full of falsehood, hypocrisy and hatred. Our Panchas
should be the Gangotri of our society. But today they have become corrupt. What would be left of the sacredness of the Ganges if its streams were polluted at the very source? Let us, therefore, try to purify our Panchas, by doing penance, by suffering for rights' sake. That is what Jammalalji is doing. You should give him your blessings even if you cannot follow him. For a day will come when not only you but even the orthodox section will recognise that by his action Jammalalji rendered the truest service to Hinduism and the future generation will thank him for it*.83

Jammalal went ahead with this noble cause with full vigour and spirit and did not bother about the opposition by the orthodox people. He became the Secretary of the Untouchability Removal Committee organised by the Indian National Congress. He successfully opened to Harijans the famous Battatreya temple of Ellichpur in July 31, 1929. On the eve of opening ceremony he made an appeal to the trustees of Hindu temples throughout the country as follows:

"Untouchability among the Hindus is no ordinary evil. That a community known throughout the world's history for its religious toleration and its most catholic culture... It is an irony of fate, that such glorious inheritance notwithstanding, we should have come to treat today one third of our own kith and kin as pariahs worthy of treatment which we may not mete

83. Young India; December 13, 1928, p. 414.
out even to dogs or to domesticated animals. Our weavers, our artisans, our sweepers and scavengers, who are the real toilers of the land and producers of national wealth, who help to keep us clean and healthy and fit for life's vocations... to those we deny social and civil rights..." He further elaborated, "The remedy, however, lies in our own hands, we must admit with open arms these 'little brothers' of ours in the social fold without reservation. The barest justice requires us to let them draw from the village well drinking water, to let their children have the same benefit of learning the three B's at the village school as our own, and to fling open for them the temples of God that we open to the rest of the Hindus. We have got to take these unfortunate brethren of ours to our bosom, and befriend them in all humility as a matter of penance for all our sins of omission and commission".84

Essentially, it was Jamnalal's spiritual urge that was at the root of treating equally all the members of society. For this, he had to face many times challenges from orthodox sections but he stood as a rock for the success of his mission. Even before coming in contact with Gandhi, he was invested with these inborn qualities. As observed by Gandhi himself,

"Let me tell you one thing which you may not know, and perhaps many do not know. This passion for removal of untouchability and freedom from communal feelings, as well as

84. Young India; September 5, 1929, pp. 289-290.
equal regard for all religions, Jamnalalji does not at all owe to me. It is not possible for any one to transfer his conviction to another. All one can do is to help another to manifest that conviction which is already in him. But in respect of Jamnalalji, I could not take the credit for having even helped him to arrive at or to manifest those convictions in his life. He had these convictions in him long before he met me, and he had lived up to them. It was these inner convictions of his that brought him and me together and made possible the close co-operation in which we have been able to work together for so many years. 

Jamnalal dedicated himself equally to the propagation of Hindi as a national language and put his heart and soul into it on Gandhi's inspiration. He felt that the Indian national language must be developed. Gandhi blessed him for this very essential programme of constructive work. In a special resolution held in Cochin in 1929, Jamnalal's services for the cause of Hindi were highly praised. He was a lover of Hindi from the very beginning. Even when he was only of 17 years of age, he had made a donation of Rs.100/- of the savings from his pocket money for Hindi Edition of 'Kesari'. He also collected the sizable amount of funds for Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held in Indore in 1918.

85. Harijan; October 10, 1936, p. 293.
In his presidential address explaining the importance of Hindi in All-India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Madras in 1937, he said,

"I am fully alive to the importance of literature and education in the scheme of promoting national weal... Literature is not my field... But from a very young age I have been feeling the urgent necessity of having a common national language for India... By conducting our political work through the medium of English, the masses do not get any political education, nor any inspiration. It was my heart-felt desire that even a half-read person like me should be able to understand our country's problems and serve the country in at least some little measure. That is why I was eager and enthusiastic to see the propagation of Hindi-Hindustani".

Emphasising on the role of Hindi for national unity, he said at the same place,

"I have firmly come to the conclusion that unless we have one national language, we cannot have national solidarity... Hindi is the language which will serve as the symbol of truth, love, liberty and national unity". 86

Being a practical man, Jamnalal did not believe in ideas and speeches. To facilitate the use of Hindi and make it popular he proceeded with many concrete suggestions. He persuaded the constructive workers to use maximum use of Hindi in their day-to-day activities in meetings and discussions.

86. Parvate, T.V.; op. cit.; pp. 50-51.
In this direction, all the activities of Gandhi Seva Sangh, the Charkha Sangh, the Harijan Sewak Sangh, All-India Village Industries Association and other such organisations were conducted in Hindi.

Appreciating his work in this direction, Gandhi's Secretary Mahadev Desai writes, "Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who can claim the rare privilege, like some of our saints of old, of describing himself as practically unlettered and has served the cause of Hindi Prachar as no other businessman has done and certainly as few lettered men have done".87

Jamnalal had promised Gandhi to collect Rs. one lakh for Hindi propaganda at the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Indore in 1935. However, only Rs. 60,000 could be collected and the remaining short fall of Rs. 40,000 was made up by Jamnalal himself.

Gandhi established a new organisation under the name of Hindustani Prachar Sabha after the end of Madras Session of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. Jamnalal assured all help to Gandhi for this new organisation in full spirit. The basic aims of this organisation was to encourage every Indian to learn Hindustani with a view to forge national unity and solidarity. Jamnalal undertook a tour of Madras with Rajagopalachari with this end in view and appointed many Hindi Prachar workers at

87. Harijan; April 3, 1937, p. 57.
his own expenses. He secured a sum of Rs.50,000 from the Agarwal Mahasabha for the Hindi work.

Jamnalal helped financially the Navjivan (Hindi Edition), Rajasthani Kesari, Hindi journals Karamveer and Pratap.

Speaking on Jamnalal's contribution to Hindi Gandhi said, "He was principally concerned in drawing me to the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. It was due to his sole effort that the great work of Hindi prachar in the South became possible. It was again due to his help that I was able to carry the resolution about giving an extended meaning to Hindi so as to include Urdu". 88

Jamnalal was deeply interested in the welfare of his parent state of Jaipur. He was well acquainted with the people's problems under Princely States and began to take active interest in the activities of All-India State’s people conference and Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal in their struggle for their political rights. Though, Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal was organised in 1931, it started working actively from 1936 with the support of Jamnalal. Jaipur Darbar declared it illegal which was observed by the people as an assault on their civil liberty. The increased differences between the people and Jaipur Darbar became more serious when Jaipur Police fired at a train on July 4, 1938, killing a few Rajputs. The Rajputs and Jats in Sikar became agitated over this incident but Jamnalal pacified them. Pointing out the futility of violence

88. Ibid.: March 8, 1942, p. 69.
in his public speech on May 13, 1938, he said,

"If the citizens of Sikar cooperate with me, I shall certainly get the maximum success in my efforts... I shall advise the people of Sikar to start a non-violent Satyagraha campaign and I shall register my own name as the first volunteer in the campaign. This is my solemn assurance". 89 This speech made a considerable impact on the people who remained peaceful and Jamnalal could successfully negotiate a settlement with the Jaipur Darbar and thus averted the crisis. Sir Beauchamp St. John, Dewan of Jaipur being aggrieved at this settlement considering it as a loss of prestige, was bent upon to have a show-down with the Praja Mandal and Jamnalal.

In December 1938, while Jamnalal was to attend the Executive Committee meeting of Praja Mandal at Jaipur, he was served with a prohibitory order on the ground that his "presence and activities within the state were likely to lead to a breach of peace. It is considered necessary in the public interest and for the maintenance of public tranquillity to prohibit your entry within Jaipur state. You are, therefore, requested not to enter Jaipur territory until further orders". 90

89. Parvate, T.V.; Jamnalal Bajaj. op. cit.; p. 60.
This order was taken by Jamnalal as a challenge to the existence of Praja Mandal and a trial of Strength but without any hasty step he moved to Delhi to discuss the whole matter with Gandhi.

Some leaders of Praja Mandal met at Bardoli on January 5, 1939, who came to the conclusion that imminent struggle was inevitable. They further sought Gandhi's approval for the Satyagraha campaign under the leadership of Jamnalal. Soon after, the authorities withdrew the recognition of Praja Mandal as a public body. Jamnalal was placed under arrest as soon as he entered the Jaipur state but he was taken outside the state and released. But he repeatedly defied the ban until the authorities put him behind the bars. In the meantime, many other active workers of Praja Mandal offered Satyagraha and were placed under imprisonment.

While he was in prison, he remained there as a true Satyagrahi and never made any complaint of ill-treatment by the jail authorities. He kept himself cheerful despite his bad health. Although, he was advised to go to Europe for his medical treatment, his reply to the Doctors was characteristic: "I was born here and I wish to die here. Medical treatment in Europe is not available to my poor countrymen. I do not, therefore, desire to take advantage of it simply because I can afford it. I shall prefer death here to treatment abroad".  

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The Jaipur authorities decided to release Jamnalal with other Satyagrahis unconditionally in August 1939, on the realisation that it would be impossible to suppress the revolt of the people any more. On this occasion Gandhi said, "For this happy result both the Maharaja and Seth Jamnalalji deserves to be congratulated. The Maharaja for his just mindness and Sethji for his wisdom and moderation in conducting the negotiations on behalf of Jaipur Praja Mandal".92

By the end of 1941, Jamnalal took to Go-Seva (Cow-protection). When Gandhi was asked by Kaka Sahib why Go-Seva and not Harijan welfare work had been selected for Jamnalal, Gandhi replied, "But of late Jamnalal has become more and more introspective, and is always thinking of self-purification. He wants to take up some work that will be consistent with his plan of self-purification and spiritual growth. That is why I specially chose Go-Seva work for him, as best suited to his present mood. In this work he will not have to come in contact with men and their affairs and so he will have better opportunities for introspection and the widening of his sympathies".93 At a Go-Seva meeting, highlighting the other reasons behind Jamnalal's accepting Go-Seva, Gandhi said,

92. Harijan; 23.9.1939, p. 284.
93. Kalekar, Kaka Sahib; To A Gandhian Capitalist. op. cit.; p. XIX.
"Jamnalal's health is not so good that he can be allowed to go to jail again. If he falls ill after going there, I shall not be able to bear it. This struggle is going to be prolonged one. When the time comes, I shall myself ask him to go to jail. But to-day it is my duty not to send him to jail. What should be his field of activity then? He placed before me a few suggestions such as Harijan (work), Khadi, Cow-protection etc. of them I liked Cow-protection. He was associated with this work from very inception and whatever work has so far been done has not been wasted. It was by and large being conducted according to my own understanding and advice now it will be run under Jamnalal's guidance.  

In his inauguration speech in the month of February 1942 at Go-Seva Conference about Jamnalal's dedication to Go-Seva Gandhi observed,

"As an act of renunciation his last was the crown of all. He wanted to take up a constructive activity to which he could devote the rest of his life; and in which he could use all his abilities. This was the preservation of cattle wealth of India personified in the cow. He threw himself into the work with a single mindedness and zeal I had never seen surpassed."  

94. C.W.M.G.; Vol. 74, p. 364.  
Jamnalal thus liked to devote rest of his life to Cow-protection. He lived with the cows in simple hut at Gopuri near Nalwadi. He looked after the cows personally, bathed them with his own hands, fed them at proper times and kept clean the environment. Through keen interest in this work, he tried to improve the condition of the cows in the country.

In the words of Kaka Sahib Kalekar:

"Earlier, Jamnalal had shifted from his palatial house in Wardha to an ordinary bungalow to lead a life of simplicity. Now he got a simple, crude thatched hut built for himself at a cost of about Rs. 250. Its floor was unpaved, hard and uneven. It was bare of all furniture except for a low rough cot for sitting and sleeping. There he went and stayed in the midst of dumb-driven cattle, leading a life of hardship and austerity and spending all his time in contemplation and service of the cow. He was quite happy and contented in the midst of these surroundings when I visited him there". 96

Jamnalal passed away on 11th February, 1942. Gandhi was deeply moved and said, "Childless people adopt son, but Jamnalal adopted me as father. He should have been a heir to my all. Instead he has left me an heir of his all". 97

96. Kalekar Kaka Sahib; To A Gandhian Capitalist, OR. CIT.; P. XIX.
Jamnalal was traditionally a businessman but his close association and identification with Gandhi made him follow Gandhian way even in business. Though cotton and indigenous banking was the traditional business of Bajaj family, he also started business in sugar and steel. He expanded his business in crores but his dealing was honest and straightforward. This rich businessman was of a highest repute in business circles. But his response to Gandhi's call was whole-hearted and complete without any reservations and was ready to sacrifice all for the national cause. On Jamnalal's contribution Mahadev Desai wrote, "Treasurer of the nation's wealth, he was also the treasurer of the nation's honour. He was among the very few capitalists who recklessly threw themselves in the fray for the nation's freedom, and bore the rigours of imprisonment every time the call was made. His faith burnt brightest when that of others flickered in times of stress and strain and dark despair. It was to revive the faith of others that when Gandhiji was in jail under a six years' imprisonment he donated Rs.2,50,000 and founded the Gandhi Seva Sangh. Politics he could understand, but he often regarded it as a sorry game which might soil one's heart and soul."

How cheerfully and willingly he followed his master during his life time which Gandhi recognised after his death

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98. Kaka Kalakar; To A Gandhian Capitalist, \textit{cit.}; p. 34.
as saying that, "Whenever I wrote of wealthy men becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good I had always this merchant prince principally in mind". 

Seth Jamnalal spent nearly 25 lakhs of rupees for the national cause but there is no account of his unrecorded charities. Some of his important donations are given here:

1. Gandhi Seva Sangh, Rs. 2.5 lakhs;
2. Tilak Swaraj Fund, Rs. 2 lakhs;
3. Satyagrahashram, Wardha, Rs. 1 lakh;
4. All India Village Industries Association, Rs. 1,30,000/-;
5. Sabarmati Ashram, Rs. 35,000/-;
6. Marwadi Shiksha Mandal, Wardha, Rs. 80,000/-;
7. Scholarships to Muslim students, Rs. 21,000/-;
8. Gujarat Vidyapeeth Ahmedabad, Rs. 21,000/-;
9. Marwadi Agarwal Mahasabha, Rs. 61,000/-;
10. Sir Jagdish Chandra, Bose's Science Institute, Rs. 35,000/-;
11. Banaras Hindu University, Rs. 51,000/-;
12. Nagpur Flag Satyagraha, Rs. 10,000/-;
13. Gurukul Kangri, Rs. 18,000/-;
14. Nagpur Congress Session, Rs. 10,000/-;
15. Rajasthan Kesari, Rs. 10,000/-;
16. Nasik Kumbha Mela Sewa Samiti, Rs. 10,000/-;

100. Parvate, T.V.; op. cit.; p. 135.
Jamnalal spent huge amount on many other items of constructive programme. Similarly, it is difficult to assess the unrecorded amount he spent for the national movement and other worthy causes which may certainly go up in crores of rupees.

Gandhi always cited Jamnalal Bajaj as an ideal of his trusteeship concept while talking of other businessmen and industrialists. Sharp minded Bajaj could have earned in millions like other businessmen and industrialists but he was not a businessman to earn profits for his personal satisfaction. He always acted upon Gandhi's direction and had once gladly given up all possessions but with Gandhi's consent he continued that because Gandhi was acquainted with Jamnalal's mind that he was honest. Whatever Bajaj earned, he mostly spent for the national service and particularly for Gandhi's constructive activities. Jamnalal thus earned by honest means and spent for human service and philanthropy. It is for this reason that Kaka Sahib Kalekar designated Jamnalal Bajaj as a 'Gandhian Capitalist'.

Gandhi also acknowledged this fact and wrote in Harijan, "of those you have named, only Seth Jamnalal Bajaj came near my idea of a trustee".

101. Kalekar Kaka; To A Gandhian Capitalist, op. cit.
102. Harijan; April 12, 1942, p. 116.
In Gandhi's life we find all kinds of people around him. Perhaps it was based on his grasping of human nature, virtue and social behaviour which made him to bring out the best in man. For this outlook of Gandhi, his following was very wide and varied. Many people of different talents became his devout followers, though differed with him on many aspects. Ghanshyamdas Birla was also one among them who became his follower, tried to understand him, but differed on many aspects.

Man of remarkable and many-faceted personality, Ghanshyamdas was a young man of about 22 years of age when he first met Gandhi in 1916. The first meeting resulted in close relationship between the two. This relationship continued to grow in an increasing measure and transformed into a family bond and lasted for about 32 years until the Mahatma disappeared from this world in January 30, 1948. Commenting on their first meeting Louis Fischer said,

"On Gandhiji's arrival at the Railway Station, Birla then as a young broker, and several other friends unhitched the horses of the Mahatma's landau and pulled it through the streets. Birla became a devotee."

G.D. Birla, a leading Indian capitalist and most respected father figure of the Indian business community,

enjoyed an important place among the chosen few close associates of Gandhi. But his forefathers were not so affluent. Writing in the introduction of his personal memoir entitled 'In the shadow of Mahatma' Birla recorded, "My great-grandfather was a manager in commercial house on a paltry pittance of Rs.10/- and when he died, my grandfather, at the age of eighteen, decided to start his own independent business". Now the House of Birlas occupies the top position among the industrial houses in the country. This remarkable achievement that Birlas have earned today, is a result of their business talent and hard work. In the economic field, G.D. Birla always liked to utilise his own experience and talents and never appreciated anybody's interference. Birla and Gandhi had diametrically opposite views on economics. He did not see eye to eye with Gandhi, particularly in matters relating to his economic programme. He himself admitted,

"He (Gandhi) believed in small-scale industries - Charkha, Ghani and all that. I, on the other hand, led a fairly comfortable life and believed in the industrialization of country through large-scale industries". While Gandhi believed in labour intensive (small-scale and cottage) industries, Birla was for heavy industries based on modernisation. Despite these ideological differences

105. Ibid.; p. XV.
Ghanshyamdas became a relentless supporter of Gandhi during
national freedom movement. Now the questions arise how did
then, despite different outlook and character, the two came
closer on the point of affinity? What was common between
the politician and the industrialist?

According to Birla, "During my association with the
Britishers, I began to see their superiority in business methods,
their organising capacity and their many virtues. But their
racial arrogance could not be concealed. I was not allowed to
use the lift to go up to their offices, nor their benches while
waiting to see them. I smarted under these insults and this
created within me a political interest". 106

In his experiences in South Africa, Gandhi too had
smarted under racial insults of these Imperial - rulers and
perhaps this was common in both which brought the two closer
to each other. "Racial discriminatory attitude of Britishers
awakened", according to Atulananda Chakrabarti, "Birla's
patriotism and the 'hidden hand of destiny' drew this passionate
patriot to play the role of the 'destined financier' 107 towards
the national freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma
Gandhi. For, Birla is unable to tell the immediate cause
which attracted the man of big business towards Gandhi except,
'kind hand of fate'. According to him, Gandhi's non-violent
and religious character too became the cause of attraction
towards Gandhi. Birla, who prior to Gandhi's advent, had

106. Ibid.: p. XV.
107. Chakrabarti Atulananda; The Mahatma and His Men - G.D. Birla
(Calcutta; Rupa & Co., 1956), p. 10.
involved himself with terrorist activities and went 'underground' for nearly three months, found Gandhian way far superior to any other method. In his own words "I started as a critic and ultimately became his fast devotee". He further records,

"My point is that Gandhiji's influence over me was more through his religious character-his sincerity and search for truth-then his power as a political leader."

He found in Gandhi a saint whose spiritualised politics went deep down his mind and soul. The penetration of virtue and greatness put in Birla's heart devotional charm which crossed further and turned more in the nature of a family attachment, of a father and a son.

To quote him again, "The hidden hand of destiny which works in an inscrutable manner, should alone be credited with his fortunate occurrence in my life. I had no political background and therefore hardly worthy to be noticed by a world figure."

Gandhi too acknowledged this fact in Birla when he said,

"God has given me mentors, and I regard you as one of them."

108. Birla G.D.; In the shadow of Mahatma. op. cit.; p. XV.
Before coming close to each other, on the issue of non-violence, the ideological difference between the two is discernible in their correspondence with regard to communal riots. Ghanshyamdas advocated the violent method as earlier he had come under the influence of the extremist groups and nationalist Hindus like Lala Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malviya. In his letter to Gandhi in 1924 he said, Hindus should take up arms in order to protect themselves from Muslim atrocities. Two hundred years ago the Hindus, who had been forcibly converted to Islam, must have then been angry with proselytisers, but are today as fanatic as the early Muslims who came from Arabia and Iran. So why should the Hindus not rise in revolt for self-defence and the deliverance of those Hindus, who had been forced to embrace Islam. However, doubting the rationale of his position, he further wrote to Gandhi;

"I should like to make it clear, however, that I do not at all approve of these violent methods (as they are increasingly becoming distasteful to me). I am inclined towards non-violence, but at times I begin to ask myself if this propensity is not the result of sheer inertia. I have only set forth my doubts and should like to have convincing answers to them".112

In reply to the above questions Gandhi goes on explaining the significance of non-violence and said, "we should remain non-violent and unmindful of whether we succeed or fail in our undertaking. This is the only natural way of explaining the principle of non-violence. A more proper way of understanding

non-violence is having a firm faith in its sure success. Let us not concern ourselves as to whether our efforts are crowned with success today or years later. Those who were forcibly converted to Islam, say two hundreds year ago, cannot be a source of strength to it in as much as the policy of compulsion was resorted to in converting them. Similarly there lie hidden the germs of destruction in the propagation of Hinduism through force of deceit. What happens is that we are misled by immediate results; in a large society two hundred years are a mere nothing. 113

In his next letter Gandhi goes on saying,

"I regard my salvation as the dearest of all objectives, but if that salvation goes against Truth and Non-violence, I will give up the former for the latter". 114

Though well established businessman earlier, it was dynamic leadership of Gandhi which made him active in the national freedom movement as well as in the constructive activities. Birla earned abundantly and spent generously on every good cause. To the rich capitalist Birla, Gandhi advised to adopt Trusteeship of wealth saying that,

"Property is often cause of quarrels leading even to murder... therefore, it is advisable to give it up and to act as its trustees until such time when you relinquish your claim to it and till then to spend your income derived from your share of it mostly on public work and little on personal account". 115

But Birla was not a convert to Gandhi's economic philosophy. He had his own vision and views on economic development. His mission in life was economic revolution through big industrialization. His participation in the national freedom movement was perhaps aimed with this view.

Despite fundamental differences in outlook and character between the two, Birla who considered Gandhi as father, received fatherly affection from him. Giving him ethical and moral guidance in his letter of 16th March 1927, when Birla made his first tour to England, Gandhi writes,

"Do not eat any thing at a stranger's place; eat only three times, and not six or seven times as the Europeans do; do not eat anything after 8 p.m.; do not drink too much tea; walk at least six miles every day; do not wear foreign cloth; contact poor people in Europe; save yourself from mental prostitution; and never give up reading of Gita and Ramayana". 116

Birla played a significant role as the Mahatma's unofficial representative interpreting and explaining the viewpoint of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress to the British Government from 1927 to 1947. Mahatma Gandhi, introducing Birla in the thirties to the then Prime Minister of England Lloyd George, wrote;

"Dear Friend, this will be presented to you by Shri G.D. Birla, one of my closest friends among moneyed men who try

to earn and spend for the sake of the poor. Shri Birla is well known for his charities. He has made a fair study of political situation in the country. His ambition is to see a living peace established between India and Great Britain. Naturally, he seeks your assistance in his mission. I may say that he was a member of the Round Table Conference ..."

Birla supported Gandhi's programmes of constructive activities with heart and soul. His letter written to Gandhi in October 1927 confirms how readily he offered his monetary help. He writes,

"My next instalment of money may be spent on any activity chosen by yourself that would bring us nearer to the goal of Swarajya... If you ever find any work impeded for lack of funds, please do not hesitate to write to me. Even as it is, I will continue sending money off and on". 117

During the Lahore session in December 1929, the Congress passed a resolution of complete independence and asked all nationalists to resign from the assemblies to participate in civil disobedience movement. Birla too resigned from the assembly in April 1930. But at the same he did not want to sacrifice his business interest. This is evident from his letter to Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India. In this letter he is only trying to save himself and his business interest from wrath of the British Government.

He acknowledged in a letter which he wrote to Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India, "I have literally financed his (Gandhi's) Khaddar producing and untouchability activities... I have never taken any part in or financed his Civil Disobedience Movement. But I have been a very severe critic of the financial policy of the Government and so have never been popular with them". 118

Birla could not persuade Mahatma Gandhi to participate in the First Round Table Conference. However, as a result of Gandhi Irwin Pact, Gandhi was the representative of Congress to take part in the Second Round Table Conference. Birla attended it as a representative of Indian business class.

However, Birla was successfully trying to do his role of mediator between the British Government and Gandhi. In the year 1935, he went to England with the aim to facilitate negotiation between Gandhi and Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. He tried to find out the avenues for an honourable settlement and explained India's point of view.

He informed Gandhi about his talks in England but could not impress him. Being a pioneer among industrialists of the country it was very innate for him to make efforts for peaceful congenial atmosphere which was needed for the successful development of industries. He was not much interested in active politics, as he himself maintained, "My main function is to prepare a congenial atmosphere for the success of Indian industry.

118. Ibid., p. 181
Extremism of any kind will obstruct my work. My attempt should not be allied to any extremist elements but to bring them closer.

Gandhi was essentially a spiritual man and whoever came in his contact, he exchanged his views with him. Giving Birla his spiritual guidance, Gandhi writes in a letter on April 13, 1925,

"In this dark age I give considerable weightage to Ram-Nam. In my own experience I have come across friends who have derived great peace of mind from Ram-Nam, Ram-Nam means God's name and yield the same result if used as a charm... The world is sunk deep in indulgence of base passions. Now, how to keep them under restraint is the big question... I go through the papers dealing with the dignity of motherland. I find quite a number of writers who advocate nursing of animal passions. There are certainly means to win over passions. And the supreme means is Ram-Nam... If one prays truely, attainment of this stage is certain, no matter today or tomorrow. What is important is that we should never lose sight of the disembodied image of God. It is all simple but it requires constant practice".119

Birla's generosity for master's call was immediate with ready response. Gandhi utilised Birla's wealth to the most possible-extent as he had the art to use the talents of all those who came in contact with him.

This industrial friend kept himself always at the disposal of Gandhi, promising,

"Whenever you find any particular kind of work impeded for lack of funds, you have only to write to me". G.D. Birla says further,

"Whatever sums he asked from me (and he was, as he put it, an inveterate beggar for the causes he worked for) he knew he would get because there was nothing I could ever refuse him".

During the communal riots of Hindu-Muslims, Gandhi asked Birla to donate to the Aligarh Muslim University which was facing great financial hardship. Though it was impossible for Ghanshyamdas to refuse, he was in horns of a dilemma since his brothers were unwilling to help the Muslim University cause, because in their opinion it was anti-Hindu. In such a situation any donation would have created unpleasantness in the family or family dispute. But to the devotee of Mahatma, there was no question to decline because he fully knew the causes and methods for which the money was required.

Eventually, Birla decided to contribute Rs. 25,000/- conditionally that his name should not be disclosed. Gandhi accepted it, though unusual for him to conceal any fact from the public.

In 1925, he also donated Rs.50,000/- to the Aligarh Muslim University. On Gandhi's asking, the amount of Rs.1,00,000/- for All-India Deshbandu Chitranjan Das Memorial Fund, Birla gave promptly. Birla's donation of Rs.5 lakh to Banaras Hindu
University in 1920 are also worth mentioning.  

Once Rabindra Nath Tagore became involved in debts in maintaining the institutions at Shantiniketan and Ghanshyamdas paid the amount of Rs. 60,000/- (sixty thousand) at Mahatma's gesture.

Untouchability was the big problem and black spot on Hinduism. In Gandhi's opinion, a sin against God and man, like a poison slowly eating into the very vitals of Hinduism. Nearly to 40 millions, it was denial even of the ordinary amenities of life.

Gandhi appointed Birla as President of the All-India AntiUntouchability League (All-India Harijan Sewak Sangh, as known later) on September 30, 1932 which he served for 27 years. It was formed on all India basis with its provincial and district branches. While Gandhi was in Yervada jail in 1932-33 with his formal approval Ghanshyamdas Birla took upon the responsibility of starting a weekly Hindi Harijan from Delhi. He also took the task of editing, production and management and got Gandhi's appreciation in a letter written to him on April 26, 1933:

"My dear Ghanshyamdas, the only thing we find worth in the Hindi HARIJAN are your articles. Your language is both sweet and forceful. Your style is pleasing simple and idiomatic..."

120. The Tribune; March 18, 1991.
121. Ghosh, P.G.; Mahatma Gandhi As I saw him, (Delhi; S. Chand & Co. 1968), p. 163.
122. Harijan; Feb. 11, 1933, p. 2.
The All India Harijan Sewak Sangh did commendable work under the guidance of Birla which is evident from the 1st year report of the Sangh (October 1932 to September 1933). It was mentioned in the report that day and night schools for Harijans which numbered 497 and Rs. 18,564 were spent. About 27 hotels and homes for Harijan boys and three for girls were opened. Third year report mentioned the donation of Rs.5,850/- by the Trustees of Raghumal Charity Trust, Calcutta which was used for scholarships to 112 Harijan boys and girls studying in schools. The number of primary school increased from 909 in the previous year to 1,298. The number of students also went up to 34,273 and 2,816 girls as against 23,164 boys and 1,660 girls in the previous year.

The Harijan Sewak Sangh made the expenditure over Harijan education during the third year came to Rs.2,75,480 as against Rs.1,63,945/- in the previous year.

The most important step during the year about vocational training to Harijans was the South India Rural Reconstruction Scheme. Ghanshyamdas Birla announced a donation of Rs.20,000/- for rural reconstruction in Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

J.K. Pani Fund was started on his brother Shri Jugal Kishore Birla's initiative who, had up to the 5th year, donated

125. Ibid.; p. 150.
62,000/- for the Fund which included Rs.25,000 donation announced by him.  

Seth Jugal Kishore Birla donated Rs. one lakh for the rebuilding of temples on the condition that Harijans would be allowed to enter these temples along with other Hindus. Gandhi opened the Lakshmi Narayan temple of Delhi to Harijans and Hindus, built by Seth Baldeo Das Birla, father of G.D. Birla.  

After his release from the jail in April 1933, the Harijan work got a new momentum. He advised Ghanshyamdas that the best use to make of the Sabarmati Ashram was to give it for the service of the Harijans. In his reply Ghanshyamdas said, "It was so very generous of you and of the Trustees of Sabarmati Ashram to make an offer of the grounds and buildings of that Ashram in your letter to dedicate them to the service of the Harijans' cause and for that purpose to hand over the same to the Servants of the Untouchables society. I have no hesitation in accepting the kind offer, and hope that society will prove worthy of the trust that you have reposed on it. I am accepting the offer without waiting for the opinions of the members of Central Board, fully hoping that they will approve my action."  

Regarding Khadi and indigenous cloth Birla had differences with Gandhi. He did not agree with Gandhi's way of thinking on small scale industries. According to Gandhi,  

126. Ibid.; p. 151.  
127. Ibid.; p. 83.  
"If we would get rid of the economic slavery, we must manufacture our own cloth and at the present movement only by hand-spinning and hand-weaving".

Gandhi presented spinning wheel to Ghanshyamdas in March 1925 as 'Khadi' according to Gandhi's economic programme, 'represents human values'. His search for a remedy against urban based heavy industry led to the establishment of the All-India Village Industries Association. Despite his differences on ideological grounds, Gandhi's industrial friend backed him fully. He took to Khadi. He spun yarn on that wheel presented to him by Gandhi. Appreciating it, said Gandhi, "Your yarn is quite good. I hope you will never give up the sacred work you have started."

G.D. Birla gave full support to Khadi. But he would not mix up business with philanthropy and Mahadev Desai communicated to him Gandhi's appreciation of it. When it was a question of supporting a business concern, he gave money as a loan.

Inviting Birla's backing for Khadi, Gandhi wrote on 1st July 1925, "Then there is a third proposition. The All-India Spinners' Association and you can co-operate in this work. I would like you to donate a handsome amount to All-India Deshbandhu Memorial Fund". On Birla's prompt response Gandhi wrote on August 7, 1925, "I had praised your action in contributing Rs. 1,00,000/- to the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund".

129. Ibid.; p. 10.
130. Chakrabarti Atulananda: Birla. op. cit.; p. 27.
Again on April 16, 1926 Gandhi wrote to Birla,

"I would like to have a portion of the loan, promised by you for the Spinners Association on the stocks of business nature" and he also gave freely and liberally to Khadi. In a letter on 1st October 1927, Gandhi observed, "My thirst for money is simply unquenchable. I need at least Rs. 2,00,000/- for untouchability and Education. The daily work makes another Rs. 50,000/-. Then there is Ashram Expenditure".  

On the question of Khadi and indigenous cloth, a big difference of opinion was between Gandhi and Birla. To Ghanshyamdas, boycott of foreign cloth means encouragement to the Indian industries. On April 1928 Gandhi wrote in the Young India, "People have purchased mostly mill-made Khadi, mistaking it to be genuine and with the Congress impronature it". On this Birla reacted, "This you have said not for the first time, nor are you the first person to have said it. But you are not exaggerating the effect of the expansion of Khadi? It is certainly true that because of your publicity, a revolution is noticeable in the tastes of all sections of people. They feel no shame or inferiority in wearing the roughest clothes. But I know that people purchase mill-made cloth under no mistaken impression that it is real. If you ask hawkers to go to the villagers with mill-made Khadi bhandar "Khadi" and tell them the difference between the quality and price, I have not an iota to doubt that 90% of them would prefer a cheaper and more durable, and also because it has been manufactured in our own

Gandhi, on the other hand believed that Indians mills can neither make effective boycott of foreign cloth nor serve the poor man for two reasons. Firstly, they cannot manufacture in the near future all the cloth needed by the Indians. Secondly, they are raising their profits under the cover of swadeshi. For the reason only Khadi movement whereby each family produces their requirement of cloth alone can save India's economic problem.

Ghanshyandas learnt a great deal from Bapu. His moral and saintly character had deep impression in Birla's heart and soul. However, it was great man's ideals and nobility which prompted the industrialist Birla to spend generously for the good cause. Or in other words, it can be uttered that Birla adopted Gandhi's advice for philanthropic purposes.

As he himself accepts Gandhi's influence over him, "My point is that Gandhiji's influence over me was more through his religious character and sincerity and search for truth than his power as a political leader".

A remarkable testimony of Gandhi's religious influence is that Birla did not marry after his second wife's death in his young age of 32 years and became Brahmachari, that was probably a part of the bond between him and Gandhi.

In the words of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who had the privilege to watch and observe this unique relationship over a number of years between Gandhi and Birla and his influence over the later,

"It has been one of Gandhi's teaching that those who are blessed with wealth should regard themselves as Trustees and treat their wealth as trust property for the benefit of others. The large number of institutions which are to be seen in so many parts of the country either in the shape of educational institutions or religious temples and Dharamshalas or Hospitals with their apex at Pilani and Delhi are testimony to the fact that Birlas have imbibed this part of Gandhiji's teachings in no small measure. They have earned abundantly and likewise spent also generously and abundantly on every good cause". 134

There is no disputing the fact that G.D. Birla made liberal donations for the national freedom movement, for the running of Gandhi's asramas and also for the implementation of his political and constructive works. Sevagram Ashram, which was taken up by Ghanshyamdas Birla in 1935 and he contributed at the rate of Rs. 50,000/- a year for its maintenance. Besides the regular payments to Sevagram, Birla's contributions to social reforms and rural uplift work ran into millions. 135

135. Chakrabarti Atulananda; op. cit.; p. 23.
Gandhi's stay at Birla House either in Delhi or Bombay raised a controversy. According to Birla, Gandhi was a leader of great reverence for him and he always enjoyed by rendering hospitality to Gandhiji by offering whatever service he could make. The socialists never liked Gandhi's identification with and soft corner for the rich capitalists, especially in such a period when nation building was at the door. Also these critics not liked Congress Working Committee meetings in Birla house for the same reason. Although, both these arguments have good reasoning from the critics' point of view but Gandhi's approach and vision of looking at things was his own. Though Birla was rich yet he had offered himself at the disposal of Gandhi for the service of the poor and downtrodden. He contributed a lot through his money for the nation. His patriotism and sincerity is perhaps beyond doubt and also Gandhi's judgement in his relations with Birla is without reason and question when Gandhi says,

"I have accepted donations from them", it clearly means that Gandhi's acceptance of donation is self-explanatory, believing firmly and consciously in the concept of purity of 'means and ends'. Gandhi, thus would not accept knowingly donations from bad men because he knew well 'as the means so the end'. Then he goes on maintaining that he has accepted these (donations) for his constructive works, not earning in return any practical benefit for themselves.
Basically, G.D. Birla was a man of business and as an industrialist he was all along aware of his economic interests. He had attained the pre-eminent position in the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Birla had his own mind and interests. He financially supported Gandhi but it did not compromise his position in business. Gandhi opposed capitalism and big industry but Birla managed, flourished and attained the supreme position in the big industry under his shadow.

G.D. Birla, a leader of business community seems to be interested in the national freedom movement with his prime aim to develop the nation on the capitalistic lines. Throughout, we find a big gap of opinion and outlook between Gandhi and Birla on economic matters. Birla, the big capitalist and man of industry, supports Gandhi by financing Congress and innumerable organisations liberally during the freedom movement despite differences of economic nature. He never likes Gandhi's approach of rural re-construction based on village handicrafts and small scale industries. Also the socialism of Gandhi is unacceptable to him but appreciates Gandhi's attack on scientific socialism or communism which he considers more fruitful by a person who had no personal property.