The gigantic task of achieving independence of India from British Imperialism was not one man or one party's handiwork. Various streams of thought and ideology contributed to the freedom of the country. Leaders of different political shades along with their organisations, put their might together to wrest independence. Names of Gandhi, Nehru and Patel are outstanding amongst them. Patel and Nehru worked as Gandhi's lieutenants and gave political shape to his vision of independence of India.

Mahatma Gandhi has been hailed as the chief architect of India's Independence and builder of Modern India. As the leader of the masses, he triumphed as the embodiment of India's will to complete freedom from the shackles of British Colonialism. He used 'Non-Violence' as a potent instrument for raising the dormant energies of the people in his struggle for freedom and enabled his countrymen to get independence with the help of non-violence, truth, self-suffering and sacrifice. The uniqueness of Gandhi's leadership lay in his successful application of the technique of 'Non-Violent Satyagraha' for resolution of conflicts in political and social spheres. In his struggle against British Imperialism, he devised two fold programme. The first was revolutionary, consisting of mass movements including Non-Co-operation, Civil Disobedience.

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and Quit India Movements, for frontal attack on the British Empire. The other was reformatory, i.e. constructive programme, which included social equality, communal harmony, eradication of untouchability, emancipation of women, promotion of cottage and small scale industries, village reconstruction etc. which were instruments for establishing a secular and egalitarian nation.

Sardar Patel, a man of indomitable will, clear vision and strong determination, has left an indelible impression of his remarkable personality on the Indian political scene. He stands as a symbol of unity and discipline. He endeavoured to imbue the virtue of self restraint and spirit of dedication to the national cause. The key to his success in different fields of public activities is to be found in his capacity to take the right decision at the right time.

Vallabhbhai Patel’s assistance was the most significant contribution to Gandhi’s satyagraha movements in India. He helped Gandhi to build a strong, disciplined, non-violent army of satyagrahis and also a party machine capable of conducting a fight against the British Raj for nearly three decades. He was the only disciple whom Mahatma Gandhi permitted to launch and lead satyagrahas independent of him. Sardar Patel worked as Gandhi’s second-in-command in local satyagrahas viz. Kheda, Ahmedabad, Bardoli Satyagraha etc. and also in his all India campaigns viz. Non-Violent Non-Co-operation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements. Initially he was a yes man of the Mahatma but later on differences started cropping up between the two.

In this thesis an attempt is made to study the relation
or interaction between the two leaders in their struggle for independence of the country. How they came together; what was the bond that held them together and how long they could work in unison? The comparison between the two leaders has been specifically made in this context. The nature of the present study is purely theoretical and historical. The work is mainly based on primary source material such as the original writings of Mahatma Gandhi, the Story of My Experiments with Truth, Satyagraha in South Africa, Hind Swaraj, Constructive Programme, Volumes of Young India, Harijan and one hundred volumes of Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

Similarly, for Patel, the Collected Works and the Selected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, his original writings enumerated in the works such as on Indian Problems and for a United India, Patel’s Speeches (utterances and letters) edited by G.M. Nandurkar, his letters edited by Durga Dass and various Biographies of Sardar Patel were thoroughly scanned through.

Besides, Reminiscences and Biographies of their contemporaries and important Indian political leaders have also been consulted. Alongwith this, All India Congress Committee Files, Private Papers, Oral History Transcripts, housed at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, Home Political Files and Intelligence Reports of Government of India, housed at National Archives of India, New Delhi, have also been scrutinized. For keeping a track on day-to-day developments, the Indian Annual Register, Journals and Files of Newspapers such as the Times of India, the Hindustan Times, The Tribune and the Pioneer have been scanned. Besides, Speeches, Biographies and Reminiscences of British
statesmen have been helpful in the preparation of the thesis. The collected data has been thoroughly examined, interpreted, analysed and finally presented in the form of this work.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter deals with the early life of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel and their initial contacts. In the second chapter role of Gandhi and Patel in local satyagrahas such as Kheda, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Borsad and Bardoli has been discussed. The third chapter deals with their involvement in first All India Satyagraha Movement viz. the Non–Co–operation Movement. The fourth and fifth chapters enumerate their participation in the Civil Disobedience and the Quit India Movements. The relation between Gandhi and Patel during this period have been examined in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter the author has analysed their relations during transfer of power. Interaction between the two leaders after independence is discussed in the seventh chapter. A comparative study of Gandhi and Patel is summarised in the concluding chapter.