PREFACE

Great men in all generations have been anxious, above everything else, for the improvement of the lot of human beings all over the world. Sometimes what happens is that even if the ultimate goal is the same, the means to achieve that goal can be many and varied. And this difference of approach even to achieve the same end can generate a lot of controversy. This is precisely what happened between Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, the two great statesmen of modern India, as a result of which Subhas Bose has been ranked as a rival of Mahatma Gandhi. It has been held in some quarters that while Gandhi was the sun of nationalism around which all the planets of the Indian National Congress revolved. Bose was a star that pursued an orbit of its own.

Gandhi fired the spirit of nationalism and gave a clarion call to his countrymen to join for the liberation influence him for the liberation of motherland. It was due to his magnetic influence and personality that he was greeted with a warm response and, as a sequel, many distinguished lawyers including C.R. Das. Motilal Nehru, Patel brothers, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajagopalachari gave up their princely career and joined the national
struggle wholeheartedly. Many aspiring students discarded the educational institutions for the sake of the freedom of the motherland. A few resigned government jobs. Among them Subhas Bose was the first Indian who refused to drink elixir at the fountains of imperialism and quitted the Indian Civil Service (ICS) as a thing of naught while others were hugging it to their breast as a feather fallen from the 'blue bird'.

Immediately after quitting the covetous ICS, Bose rushed to Gandhi’s residence at Bombay and Gandhi received the young patriot with his characteristic hearty smile. His very first meeting with Gandhi revealed the gulf between their thinking and approach to the problems. Bose recorded: ‘But though I tried to persuade myself told me clearly again and again that there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he himself did not have a clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to her cherished goal of freedom’.

When the eruption of violence at Chauri Chaura led Gandhi to call off the Noncooperation Movement, Bose recorded his reaction to it as follows: ‘To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was
reaching the boiling-point was nothing short of a national clamity’.

Bose slowly became of the opinion that Gandhi was not a shrewd politician. In his own words. “At times, he (Gandhi) is as obstinate as a Fanatic, on other occasions, he is liable to surrender like a child. The instinct or the judgement so necessary for political bargaining is lacking in him. Whenever he goes for bargain, he gives more than he takes. On the whole, he is no match in diplomacy for astute British politicians’. He criticized Gandhi when the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed.

Bose also believed that at times Gandhi used to appease the communalist Muslims. He thought that it was a disastrous policy, as the communalists were reactionaries and puppets of the British Government. By doing so, Bose thought, Gandhi gave an opportunity to the British government to highlight the communal differences existing in India.

Gandhi, on the other hand, had all praise and regard for the qualities of leadership of Bose. He had great faith in the patriotism and courage of Bose. But he differed with the latter over the question of means for the attainment of independence. Gandhi felt that Subhas was an impatient young revolutionary who should not
become that President of the Congress because that would put unnecessary impediment in the non-violent it struggle. But when a radical section of the Congress proposed his name for the Presidency in 1938, Gandhi ensured that Bose be elected unanimously, though earlier in a letter to Sardar Patel on 1 November 1937, Gandhi gave the clear indication of his feelings thus, ‘I have observed that Subhas is not at all dependable. However, there is no body but he who can be President’.

Subhas having become the executive head of the Congress, the differences between the radical section of the Congress led by him and the other section led by Gandhi became irreconcilable. The real trouble began when Bose sought and elected for the second term the Presidency, of the Congress.

Whatever their differences may be Subhas always respected Gandhi from the core of his heart and always sought his blessings. “It will be a tragic thing for us” said Subhas, immediately after this episode, ‘If I succeed in winning the confidence of other people but fail to win the confidence of India’s greatest son’ Subhas was the first man who called Gandhi ‘Father of the Nation’ and asked for his blessings for INA.

Gandhi always admired the bravery, self-
sacrifice, patriotism and organizational capability of Subhas and used to ask the other Congress leaders to learn these qualities from Bose. Speaking at a prayer meeting in 1946, he said, 'Netaji Subhas was like a son to me. I came to know him as a lieutenant full of promise. His last message to the INA was that, whilst on foreign soil they had fought with arms, on their return to India they would have to serve the country as soldiers of non-violence under the guidance and leadership of the Congress'.

Undoubtedly these two illustrious sons of India had deep personal regard for each other, in spite of their equally deep differences over matters of public policy. In fact their relations bear testimony to Gandhi's formula that difference of opinion is no bar to union of hearts. This conforms to his experience that our differences may be the result of looking at the truth from different angles and not the result of any evil design on the part of the opponent. Accordingly, one should bear with the views of the opponent even while remaining steadfast to one's own convictions.

The main aim of the present work is to make a comparative probe of the Ideology of the Subhas Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi.
Objectives

1. To attempt a comparative probe in the political ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose.
2. To understand the rationale behind Subhas Chandra Bose critique of Gandhi.
3. To examine the journey from contrast to convergence in Subhas Chandra Bose.
4. How difference of opinion is no bar to union of hearts.
5. To understand and appreciate the views of opponent even while remaining steadfast to one’s own conviction.

Methodology

Primarily the subject followed a Historical approach. The historical procedure was used to understand and assess the events and personalities in terms of the conditions that gave rise to them. Alongwith the objective background ethos of the period understudy will also be taken into consideration. Historical method is also an empirical procedure which shares many methods of enquiry such as observation and take of the form of discovering and studying old documents. The methods which are analogous to comparative anatomy will also be used. The study will
be based on the primary sources. Besides Hind Swaraj Satyagraha in South Africa and an Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth all the voluminous writing of Mahatma Gandhi such as his journalistic articles, letter and memoranda and his speeches of which the texts are available are now available in the 100 volumes publication project, 'The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi'. His weekly journals Indian opinion, which he started in South Africa, Young India and Harijan are also available. Similarly all the writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose published by Netaji Research Bureau are also available as Netaji collected works. Other primary sources such as Government Record, Documents, Oral History, Transcripts, Private Papers, Memories, Letters, Reminiscences and Autobiographies of the prominent personalities of the period understudy will be scanned. The books written by historians, biographies of the leaders, newspapers, letters, journals, records of the period under Study etc. will also be used to supplement the original Sources.

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