INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi has had a very important moral and political influence on the country. His political strategies or at least what we understand of his political strategy¹ seem to form an important part even of our current protest movements. Moreover even today off and on wherever public morality, political activism and social actions are concerned, Gandhi’s voice still seems to be alive and influential in many parts of the country. Therefore he has been the subject of massive research works. His philosophy, ideology, and strategy have been increasingly questioned and constantly put under scrutiny. But how did Gandhi influence the history and society of a region? On this issue there is little information available to us. Ravinder Kumar and others for example did bring out essays on the locality specific interpretations of Gandhi’s politics.² Kumar perceives that Gandhi’s political leadership had provided a spark to the already existing social-economic disturbances. He emphasizes that Punjab’s social milieu was not simple but there were different depths and shades to its complexities which had made its case somewhat different. The Akali Movement in Punjab with which Gandhi was closely associated though influenced by him actually was not Gandhian in nature.³ The Akali Movement was an indigenous product which was organically linked to its local society and culture. Similarly Gandhi’s equation with the leaders of Punjab was colored by complexities. Though Gandhi with his political persona was able to win their respect but could not influence their approach. The Punjab Congress led by leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai

was not particularly enamored of Gandhi’s ideals, though they did participate in the various all-India movements which Gandhi launched. Even in the case of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh Gandhi earned considerable ire of the people of Punjab for whom Bhagat Singh was a very special young man. Even in the election of 1937 where neither the Congress nor Gandhi seemed to have won the hearts of the elite of Punjab. It was the Unionist who formed a government even while the hoi polloi continued to stand with Gandhi and the Congress as was evident during the Quit India Movement. Though this influence of Gandhi began to fade by 1946 when Gandhi failed to prevent the Partition of the country. Partition of India however meant that the people of Punjab had to suffer in many more ways than the other parts of country.

Perhaps the Gandhian legacy of politics, protest and social work came to be questioned in Punjab much more as the consequence of partition experience. Though Gandhi died soon after Independence, it was his philosophy which guided the young nation during its formative years. Gandhi came into the public life through his ideas especially by influencing the entire Community Development Programme that was sponsored by Government of India in all states including Punjab. Even apart from political hartal and boycott which was adopted in a big way in Indian public life after partition Gandhi continued to play important role in public morality even after partition. The available literature which place Gandhi’s stance in the context of Punjab presents an ambiguous picture. Survey of the literature indicates certain trends which can be classified in a following manner:- (a) Impact of Gandhi and the Gandhian Movements (b) Increase of Communalism and Violence (c) Inadequate Attention.

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Impact of Gandhi and the Gandhian Movements has been traced by Malhotra in his four volumes study. The study is a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth century. The author has primarily focused his study on the Gandhian Movements in Punjab. He tries to place Gandhi in the context of Punjab during the Rowlatt satyagrah, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, Quit India Movement and the Partition of Punjab. He examines the role played by Punjab during the social and political movements led by him. His study places the data pertaining to Punjabis participation in satyagraha, civil-disobedience and constructive programme. He did not provide any grass root level information as who these people were and why they participated in it. He claims that Gandhi’s technique of fighting injustice cannot be evaluated before understanding the state of society in which it has been operated but his account gives no such insights into it. He concludes by giving a strong statement that his study refutes the common belief among scholars and politicians that the flow of Gandhian Movements started fading as soon as they touch the soil of Punjab. But surprisingly he does not mention any precise viewpoint against Gandhi’s impact or mention any other scholarly view point to substantiate Gandhi’s impact. He simply overlooks the significant viewpoints on Gandhi. He also stresses on Gandhi’s immense efforts to solve Punjab’s complex communal conditions by propounding several solutions but the study does not provide any concrete analysis of the events narrated. Mere assertions cannot be accepted as assertions needed to be substantiated with facts. After making a rigorous study of these four volumes I found that the author has not confirmed his claims with required and relevant facts. Manju Verma centers her work on Gandhi’s influence on the women of Punjab by emphasizing their zealous participation in the Freedom Movement. Though she provides evidences from varied sources i.e. newspaper, personal interviews to accentuate the influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the women of different sections but her study provides much information about the group of elite women whose families were already involved in the freedom struggle. However, these works no doubt made
an effort to study Gandhi’s impact on Punjab and Punjabis but lack in giving an analytical view of the basic concept.

Though there are certain works which locate the impact of Gandhi and the Gandhian Movements with a broader approach. These works place Gandhian impact by studying the various social-political and economic factors. Kumar’s Lahore essay is one such work which places the micro view of the mass agitation led by Mahatma Gandhi. His account answers some basic questions relating to the nature of social groups which responded to Gandhi’s call for the satyagraha, level of support from different classes of Lahore and the various factors for his success. He examines as how Gandhi was able to provide a spark to the prevalent local discontent and which surprisingly had nothing to do with the Rowlatt Act. Kumar provides an understanding of Indian social milieu. According to him, Punjab has its own peculiar social-cultural complications and which requires clear understanding from different standpoints. Brass pioneering work also provides an insight into the deep rooted complexities of the Indian society. He in his work viewed Indian society as a multi-ethnic society and explains as how the processes of social differentiation and assimilation between the communities take place. He examines the development of the Sikhs communal consciousness and briefly indicates Gandhi’s take on language and religion in comparison to the other national leaders. So both these accounts provide an understanding of the social fabric of the Punjab. There are few analytical works which study Gandhi’ leadership and political strategies with a broader approach. Brown in her work Gandhi’s rise to power investigates his way of working, organizational skills and the nature of his strengths and weaknesses. She analyzes Gandhi’s role in the politics and the mechanism of his rise to power. She traces Gandhi’s emergence as a leader step by step. Her work not only answers the questions regarding the emergence of Gandhi but also reveals the intricacies of Indian social order. She distinguishes the role of local leaders who according to her acted as sub-contractors in Gandhi’s rise to power. Erikson’s psychoanalytical work distinguishes Gandhi’s great
leadership. The work provides a better understanding of Gandhi’s way of working and the organizational skills. He study’s the impact of Gandhi’s social experience in shaping his identity. He explains as how Gandhi orchestrates himself and made his ‘Sublimated Materialism’ a part of his positive identity. He analyzes Gandhi’s techniques and his time with a new approach. These works provides a broader understanding of Gandhi’s emergence and the social context in which he emerges. Thus these works led to comprehend a broader perception of Mahatma Gandhi.

Communalism and Violence has played a vital role in shaping the politics and society of Punjab. A lot has been said about the potential role of Gandhi in the politics of communalism in Punjab and at the same time there are certain works which notices it to be a complex phenomenon.

Malhotra devoted an entire volume to the politics of communalism. According to him Mahatma Gandhi right from the beginning had exhibited serious concern regarding the tense communal equation of Punjab. He also claims that Gandhi suggested various solutions and remedies to alleviate the deepening gulf between different communities. He explains as how Gandhi with his untiring efforts tried to solve this communal triangle of the Punjab. He held the local leaders and the communal organizations responsible for the heightened communal violence which consequently resulted in the partition of the country. Mohan perceives that instead of the growing influence of Gandhi in the Indian politics the Rowlatt agitation released forces which resulted in the growth of the revolutionary ideology. She refutes the common notion that India achieved political Independence by the means of Non –Violence alone. She traces the growth and development of Militant Nationalism between Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh. It is an analytical work which focuses on the ideological aspects, broader approach and the contribution of Militant Nationalism. While on the other side, writers like Josh who was a Communist and an Akali acknowledge the techniques of Gandhi in the form of non-violent satyagraha. The Akali according to him adopted this technique during the
Gurudwara Reform Movement and set an example before the country regarding its effectiveness. The peaceful struggle of Akali according to Josh had also prepared them for a bigger struggle of their country's liberation. Mukherji attempted to analyze as how the traditions of Gandhi's non-violence ideal were sown in the soil of Punjab. He also explains as to how this process of change provided a laboratory for Gandhi to make important formulations on Non-Violence under the concrete conditions of an ongoing movement. Author is of the view that even today there is strong parallel tradition of non-violence co-existing with violent extremism in Punjab. These works put forward different perceptions regarding the impact and the role of Gandhi in the history of communalism and violence in Punjab. Yet instead of providing any clear understanding they create an atmosphere of ambiguities. Whereas, various secondary sources have condemned Gandhi and the Gandhian movements for releasing violent forces during Rowlatt Satyagraha; for involving religion with politics during Non-Cooperation Movement; by involving politics during the Gurudwara Reform Movement; for not placing the case of Bhagat Singh and his Comrades as a condition for the truce. In addition, the available literature concerning Gandhi and Punjab shadows Gandhi's approach while analyzing the communal politics of Punjab.

Inadequate Attention: Study of the scholarly works leaves one in the state of profound confusion as they reflect different stand points with partial clarity. So in order to go beyond the ambiguity thus created I have tried to balance the view through different personal observations of the Punjabis in the form of Memoirs, Biographies and Reminiscences. As a sensitive observer Tandon provides an absorbing view of the culture of Punjab. The author was a retired Chairman of the Board of Hindustan Lever. Though he was away from 1928 onwards but his comments about nationalist's politics are revealing. However, he shares only a brief understanding of Gandhi's new idiom of nationalism. Face to Face is an

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autobiographical account of Ved Mehta in which he depicts his family experiences during the time of Partition of Punjab. Author shares the agony of his family when they were driven from their homes during the riots of 1947. He also shares his critical views regarding Gandhi and his ideals. As a layman he was expecting much from a leader of immense stature.  

9 Indu Banga’s work provides an introductory biographical account of J. S. Grewal. She quotes in her account that historical research reflects the historian’s own intellectual and cultural environment. Surprisingly, the author does not share any observance of a Historian during the time of Partition.  

10 Mohan Lai was a Finance Minister (1956), Chairman of Punjab Khadi and Village Industry Board up to 1980 and was associated with the Punjab politics for a long time. The author in his work dealt with currents and the cross-currents following the disintegration of Punjab. He highlights Partap Singh Kairon’s period as an eventful in the history of Punjab but had nothing concrete to say about Gandhi and his influence on Punjab.  

After reviewing the available literature what comes to mind is the basic question why Gandhi and Gandhian Movements found only fleeting presence in Punjab’s literature? Most of the accounts either openly blame the Gandhian Movement for the rise of militant nationalism and communalism or are reluctant to say anything. Overview of all these secondary sources cast doubt on the only account of S. L. Malhotra who claims Gandhi’s impact on Punjab as he leaves out all those details which would have given a different complexion to the concept. Identification of research space leads to examine ‘Mahatma Gandhi’s Presence in Punjab’.

To investigate the basic question I will firstly try to understand Gandhi through his own writings right from his young phase to a phase in which

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he emerged as a leader in South Africa and subsequently to his formative phase in India. With a perspective of young Gandhi’s aspirations and new experiences while London journey I will try to identify Gandhi during his long struggle in South Africa. Basically what interests me is to know as how Gandhi with his strength of mind faced the challenges on a new land in a unique way and which evidently marked him as a model satyagrahi across the globe?

How his experiences while London journey helped him to understand the complexities of the problem in South Africa? How Gandhi’s way of working went through different stages and how he emerged as a leader of the masses? But once he was successful with his unique way of working, he took no time to move his attention towards his aspirations for India. He was well equipped with his new strategies but in spite of that he initially organized the essentials to place the working of his satyagraha technique to the masses. Subsequently the idea is to understand as how his way of working helped him in confronting the challenges in his formative phase? How he created a space for himself amidst the established leaders of the Indian masses and what exactly he did before getting a supportive support from leaders of the localities? To understand Gandhi at all these levels, I am simply trying to trace his initial moves in India as how he made his preliminary steps to place the practical working of his ideals so to explain the force of his ideals. How his experience helped him to capture the opportunities which were coming in his way as well as how intensely he was searching ways to link with the masses of the localities. The first chapter is basically to comprehend a broader perception of Mahatma Gandhi which has been altogether neglected in Malhotra’s four volume study on Gandhi and Punjab. To understand his subsequent endeavors with a broader perspective it is imperative for me to retrace Gandhi’s consequent steps through the Rowlatt Satyagarha and the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy. Through the second chapter I will try to identify his preliminary steps to execute the satyagraha technique at a wider level. Focus through the chapter is to connect his line of action during the Rowlatt Sayagraha with the locality where its repercussions
become intense. So the basic query to answer through the chapter is how he conveyed the idea of non-violent satyagraha to the different localities in general and Punjab in particular? How leaders and the masses of Punjab responded to his idea? How he connected with the Punjabis while his tours all over India. He was outlawed to visit Punjab during the Rowalit Satygarha but what interests me is why Gandhi did not make his physical presence in Punjab during his tours? Before coming to Punjab whether Gandhi had any acquaintances with the Punjab and Punjabis. Why Gandhi did not took any initiative to introduce his ideals to Punjabis before his Satyagraha call? Why he did not established any link with the established leader of the masses of the Punjab? Subsequently how Gandhi acted in response to its repercussions in the case of Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy?

Subsequently it is essential to trace Gandhi’s broad intent in joining the Khilafat struggle and then the Non-Cooperation Movement. So the basic queries dealt in this chapter are: how he executed his idea through the different phases of the Khilafat struggle? How he was able to connect the Muslim struggle into a mass struggle? Primarily Gandhi’s view point will be considered which is generally overlooked while comprehending the Non-Cooperation Movement. Additionally, few analytical sources are taken into account which provides a broader understanding of his leadership skills of organizing a mass movement. After having an idea about Gandhi’s broad intent and its execution through the different levels I will try to trace its connectivity with the Punjab and Punjabis. Specifically what interests me is to know what exactly he did to introduce his ideals to the Punjabis during the Khilafat movement? How he connected the Muslim dominated locality with his mass movement? How the leaders and the masses of Punjab act in response to his movement? After having a broader understanding of Gandhi and the Gandhian mass movements I will try to understand a long drawn struggle which was specific to the province of Punjab. It was a peaceful struggle which started during the Non-Cooperation Movement and advanced gradually by the Sikhs of Punjab for reforming their sacred Gurudwaras.
Analytical research works provides meager information about Gandhi’s approach during the struggle. In addition they misinterpret his approach due to lack of essential understanding. Thus basic query through the chapter is to locate Gandhi’s approach during the Gurudwara Reform Movement with a broader perception. The following related queries will also be traced as what made Gandhi to support the local struggle when he was already occupied with the bigger issues? How Gandhi dealt with the leadership of the Gurudwara movement? What was his line of action during the local struggle in comparison to a national mass movement? Gandhi guided the leaders of the struggle in two phases so I will try to identify his role in each phase and its outcome too. So it is important to trace as why Gandhi advised the leaders to suspend the movement in the second phase? And most importantly what kind of dialogue was maintained by Gandhi with the leaders of the Punjab?

For the continuous working of his non-violence movement he was maintaining composure in his expression as well as dealings. Yet, he was confronted with the actions of some individuals like Sardar Bhagat Singh and Sir Muhammad Ali Jinnah who tried to interrupt the consistency of his movement. In the fifth chapter I will try to trace as how the steps of these two individuals changed the pace of Gandhi’s movement? So the basic query through the chapter is how he managed to confront his position in both the cases? And how he saved the consistency of his movement in both the cases? Some related queries which interest me to identify are; why a leader who was persistently working to create public opinion in favor of his non violence ideal was not able to support the public opinion in the Sardar Bhagat Singh’s case? Why a preacher of non-violence ideal has been narrowly portrayed as a responsible figure for the execution of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades? What intrigued us is why a leader of immense stature is portrayed as powerless at the time of Partition of India? What factors made him to be helpless at the time when he was needed the most by the masses that had immense faith in his ideal? Why Gandhi calmly accepted the Congress decision for the Partition of India? It’s basically the primary source material and few
analytical sources which lead me to trace the reasons behind his powerlessness at the time of Partition. While tracing this kind of query, it was essential for me to trace some of the calculated steps of Sir Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Men who were opposed to these violent outcomes were joining him in his endeavors and becoming a part of his non-violence dialogue. In the sixth chapter I will try to explain as how these men aimed to have a collective thought process so to expose the violent forces around the globe. On the other hand, men were being inspired from him for having similar traits so it is important to classify men who gradually became his constant strength for being collective in thought. After locating a broader picture of Gandhi's distinctive force, I will try to study three individual cases from the erstwhile Punjab who proved their potential by reflecting the strength of their character through their own lives.