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## **Impress of Mazzini on Mahatma Gandhi: A Comparative Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Indian nationalism was aroused under the impact of exploitation under colonial rule. In the course of the struggle against British oppression Indian nationalism took shape. There were many factors which aroused nationalism in India. Among one of them was the spread of western education and modern political thought. This education provided an opportunity to study the nationalist struggle for freedom in different countries. There was a close link between the story of unification of Italy and the rise of Indian nationalism. Indian nationalists were greatly impressed by thought and actions of Italian great nationalist heroes. The present paper intends to explore the impact of Italian leader Mazzini on Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Indian freedom movement, Gandhi, Swaraj, Italy, Mazzini, Political thought.

### **Introduction**

Indian nationalism was the product of certain specific environment and result of international linkage. Indian liberation movement derived inspiration from Italian unification movement. Both the Indian and Italian liberation movements found a unifying factor in that they drew great inspiration from the ideals of the Italy into fulfillment. The nationalist movement in Italy and her heroes Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour exerted a tremendous influence on the educated class in India. The ideas of Italian nationalist leaders influenced the pioneers of Indian nationalism. In this connection, the present paper attempts to explore the extent to which the thought and action of Italian Mazzini influenced Indian Gandhiji.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study may be enumerated as follows:

1. The present study seeks to explore the similarities between the political thought of Italian Mazzini and Indian Gandhiji.
2. The study attempts to evaluate the impact of Mazzini's young Italy on Gandhiji.
3. The study wants to seek any common factors in their personal faith.
4. The study also seeks to highlight the impact of the writings of Mazzini on Gandhiji.

### **Methodology**

The present study is based on qualitative research for the purpose of collecting and analyzing data and is historical, comparative, descriptive and analytical in nature. This study is based on the use of books, journals, periodicals, internet etc.

Unification of Italy is a significant episode of world history. The credit for the unification of Italy goes to eminent leaders like Joseph Mazzini, Count Cavour, Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel. Mazzini is considered the

founder of Italian nationalism. Italian Risorgimento was completed in 1870. After 1870, Italy became a constant source of Indian nationalist discourse. Like other Indian nationalists, Mahatma Gandhi was also impressed by Mazzini. Mahatma Gandhi wanted India liberated from British rule as Mazzini and Garibaldi had liberated from Austrian rule. Here, this paper starts with the discussion of political actions and thoughts of Mazzini and Gandhiji, and then tries to find out the similarities and also difference of thought of the two leaders. Thus the present paper, in concluding part, wants to explore the extent to which Mazzini influenced Gandhiji.

### **Political activities of Joseph Mazzini**

The prophet of Italian nationalism was Joseph Mazzini. He is considered the founder of Italian nationalism. At the age of sixteen he, walking one Sunday with his mother, was stopped by a man who asking for alms for the refugees of Italy. 'The scene made a tremendous impression on the youth's mind, for the first time he felt that the cause of freedom was not a scholastic subject, but one demanding the height of sacrifice'<sup>1</sup>. Mazzini and his friends had writing against government in 'Indicator' newspaper. It had been published from Genoa. 'After banned, by the order of government, this paper had been published from Leghorn'<sup>2</sup>. After 1815, secret societies had grown up; whose type was the Carbonaria. For the cause of Italian liberty, Mazzini had joined the Carbonari. There was too much ritual, too little effort and no definite plan for Italian unity in Carbonari. Within a few days he attained its second class membership and a prominent member but could not know clearly what its political motives were. The revolution of July in France inspired Mazzini to begin active preparation for a military uprising. But Mazzini had been captured and exited from Piedmont. In 1831, he established the society of young Italy for the youth of Italy with the aim of Italian liberty. 'Italy united, free, democratic and republican was the one absorbing passion of his life; an ideal to be pursued at all costs and by all means'<sup>3</sup>. Even though Mazzini could not succeed in establishing the republic, the young men of Italy felt urged to uproot foreign rule. He was convinced that Italy would be able to achieve her political emancipation through her own efforts. He gave to the Italian people, the ideal of a united Italy. At the same time, he published his young Italy Manifesto. He declared to say to Italy, 'Arise in all strength and energy of self-devotion'<sup>4</sup>. 'The members of young Italy tries to raise two insurrections, first from Genoa and then Geneva in 1833, but these two raising had failed for betraying his plans'<sup>5</sup>. The Duties of Man, Essays, Royalty And Republicanism in Italy, Mazzini's Letters, Selected Writings, Life and writings of Joseph Mazzini, are some of his prominent writings. His writings gradually gathered the young to unite Italy into one free republic. He had stirred men's minds to fever-heat in the great cause of Italian unity.

### **Political thought and activities of Gandhiji:**

Mahatma Gandhi dominated the Indian Politics from 1920 to 1948 so much that this period is called the Gandhian era in Indian history. Though he was not a political philosopher in the ordinary sense of term, but for the welfare of the masses Gandhiji pushed himself into politics. It can be said that Gandhiji considered politics as an instrument for the uplift of mankind in social, economic, rural and spiritual spheres. Gandhi's political thinking needs to be studied in association with his work in South Africa, his leadership of the Indian struggle for independence from British rule in general and his relation to the congress party in particular. An important contribution of Gandhiji to politics and political philosophy was his spiritualization of politics. To Gandhiji, non-

violence was a total philosophy of life. Satyagraha is the heart and soul of Gandhism. Its two major components were truth and non-violence.

In 1919, Gandhiji decided to fight against the Rowlatt Act. This movement was known as the Rowlatt Satyagraha. This was a unique success. Next year Gandhiji decided to start a Satyagraha movement on the Khilafat issue. 'The Non-Cooperation-Khilafat alliance made 1921-22 was possibly the point of greatest strength and unity in the entire history of the national movement in Bengal.'<sup>6</sup> 'At the Calcutta session, the Congress resolved in favour of the non-violence, non-cooperation movement and defined Swaraj as its ultimate aim. But the incident of mob-violence caused at Chauri-chaura shocked Gandhiji, and he called off the non-co-operation movement. To achieve the goal of complete independence, Gandhiji launched Civil-Disobedience movement. It took the shape of a nationwide movement in which middle-class women also participated. To give India a constitutional reforms, a Round Table conference was held on 1930 but the congress was absent from this conference. After negotiations, the Gandhi- Irwin pact (1931) was concluded. But the second Round Table Conference failed as Gandhiji could not agree with British Prime Minister on his policy of communal representation. The last manifestation of Gandhiji's charismatic leadership came in 1942 Quit India Movement. Though Gandhiji could not provide leadership to the Quit India Movement as he along with other Congress leaders were arrested at Wardha. But violence spread throughout the country and the movement was suppressed by the British Government.

The concept of Swaraj or self-rule contains Gandhi's ideas on the kind of political economy that he envisaged for free India. He wanted a decentralization form of government with the village as the unit and functioning for the benefit of the individual. According to Gandhiji, Swaraj means freedom from all kinds of bondage and injustice. The basic features of Swaraj are spiritual democracy, equality, justice and trusteeship. He believed that Swaraj is the champion of the down-trodden and starving people. To Gandhiji, moral freedom as emancipation from slavery, national freedom as emancipation from the bondage of alien rulers and spiritual freedom as emancipation and realization of truth were all phases of freedom. Being an apostle of non-violence, he was repelled by the coercive character of the state. He postulated that in the ideal state of Ramrajya, there will be sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. He was against the modern industrial system, asked Indians to return to villages and preserved the values of ancient Indian civilization. Even 'In the international field, Gandhiji was the greatest advocate of world peace in modern times. He need that injustice and tyranny exercised by one nation over another were intolerable and must be resisted, since individuals as also groups, could not remain for long under such considerations without revolt. Gandhi wanted this revolt to be open and peaceful'.<sup>7</sup> In the age of full sickening horror and secrecy, he advocated the gospel of truth and non-violence.

### **Similarities of thoughts between Mazzini and Gandhiji**

The political and personal believes of both Mazzini and Gandhiji were the overflow of a philosophy of life. There were no contrast between their philosophy and their practical life. After seeing the miserable condition of refugees, Mazzini what struck at heart even he wrote the simple, poor black mantle. Like Mazzini, Gandhiji also saw poverty, slavery in Indian subcontinent and he dress himself in a simple cloth. This gave the two leaders a control over the masses. Even 'Mazzini's young Europe of 1834 and his young Italy inspired Gandhiji to start his young

India Movement. Mazzini wrote in 1834 that his La Giovan Europa was an association of men believing in the future of liberty, equality, fraternity for all mankind. Similarly, Gandhiji proclaimed that his young India movement went beyond the geographical frontiers of India and embraced the entire human family'.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhiji studied the life of Mazzini, Ruskin and others when in prison. 'In a letter to his son Manilal, dated March 25, 1909, Gandhi wrote: Now I have read a great deal in the prison. I have been reading Emerson Ruskin and Mazzini'.<sup>9</sup> In reply to the question of driving away the British from India, he said, 'In the same way as Italy did it. What was possible for Mazzini and Garibaldi, is possible for us. You cannot deny that they were very great men'.<sup>10</sup> 'Each time Gandhi returned from prison some indefinable growth had taken place in him. He got an opportunity this time to study about thirty books which comprised English Hindi, Gujrati, Sanskrit and Tamil works'<sup>11</sup>.

Various writings of Mazzini and Gandhi were derived from one common factor that is their faith on God. Their religious believes were opposed to all forms of sectarianism. Like Gandhiji, 'Mazzian sociology, ethics and political philosophy, as mirrored in his life and writings.... are all derived from his intense religious psychology which hungered and thirsted after righteousness, which could not brook, injustice, inhumanity and slavery anywhere'.<sup>12</sup> Gandhiji was impressed by Mazzini's 'Duties of man'. Mazzini had shown that every man must learn how to rule himself. Like Mazzini, he put equal stress on the duties of man. 'One may find parallels between Gandhi's and Mazzini's ideas about nationalism..... Mazzini's nationalism had meaning as a new tie for humanity and the emphasis was always on its fraternal and liberal development'.<sup>13</sup> Gandhiji felt himself closer to Mazzini's concept of nationalism and independence. As Mazzini and other Italian humanists, Gandhiji dedicated his whole life to the service of the people. For Gandhiji, Political freedom from British rule was not an end but a necessary step in the entire development of men.

To Gandhiji, both Mazzini and Garibaldi were adorable and he learned much from their lives. The fundamentals of Gandhi's conception of swaraj were drawn from Mazzini's writings on the Duties of Man. In a chapter of his 'Hind Swaraj', he compared Italy and India. Though the Italian leaders wanted liberty for their agriculturalists people but after independence they remained in a state of slavery. He states, 'If you believe that because Italian rules Italy, the Italian nation is happy. You are groping in darkness..... By patriotism, I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hand of the English, I should bow down my head to them'.<sup>14</sup> Like Mazzini, Gandhiji emphasized on self-rule of the people, that is Swaraj.

### **Differences between Mazzini and Gandhiji**

There was one different thought between the two leaders Mazzini and Gandhiji. Mazzini envisaged a strong centralized and Republic Italy opposing decentralization and federalism. But Gandhiji wanted more and more decentralization of power. He wanted the millions of people of India to be happy and did not want to concentrate power in his hand. Though Mazzini's dream was thwarted with the advent of Italian monarchy in 1870. Like Mazzini, Gandhiji's dream of Indian unity was defeated with partitioned in 1947, that giving birth to India and Pakistan.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion we may conclude by saying that inspired leadership of Mazzini attracted the attention of Gandhiji. The writings and work of Mazzini were very much known to him. Gandhiji was impressed by Mazzini's Duties of Man. Gandhiji's conception of Swaraj were drawn from this book. Mazzini's young Italy inspired Gandhiji to start his young India movement. Like Mazzini, Gandhiji's religious psychology was all-inclusive. So, lastly we can say that Gandhiji was impressed by and learned much from Mazzini's life, activities and thoughts.

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