Both Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh are two legendary figures of Indian freedom movement. Both adopted different strategies and were equally popular among masses. Among martyrs who willingly treaded the thorny path with courage and faced the gallows with fortitude, the name of Bhagat Singh shines as a star and is reveredly remembered as Shaheed-E-Azam. So, Bhagat Singh has been ranked as a rival of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi considered Satyagraha as a strategic, ethical and pedagogic tool. On the other hand, Bhagat Singh criticized the upliftment of Satyagraha from a political strategy to a vague moral appeal. Gandhi was a strict follower of Non-violence (Ahimsa) while for Bhagat Singh the question of violence or Non-violence was merely a question of strategy of the political struggle. Although Bhagat Singh’s acts of violence were heroic and truly patriotic yet they yielded not much success because the masses were not ready for violence, and the political leadership also had opted for another strategy. On the other hand, Gandhian Non-violence resonated with the Indian masses and offered them a chance to serve the nation. Gandhi’s Satyagraha involved mass-participation and became quite popular. Due to this popularity, he is
affectionately remembered as Bapu. Gandhi despite his disapproval of
Bhagat Singh’s action, regarded his sacrifice a patriotic one, and
described his death as a great loss to nation. After studying and
comparing the perceptions of Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh, the
present study concludes that:

1. Mahatma Gandhi's perception of freedom was Swaraj. He used the
term Swaraj in multiple aspects. As per him, Swaraj means total
freedom and he expressed Swaraj through four aspects of freedom:
India's national independence; political freedom of an individual;
group freedom from poverty (economic freedom) and the capacity
for personal self-rule (spiritual freedom). According to him,
national freedom means elimination of alien rule and handing over
of power to people; political freedom means right to choose
without any fear of oppressive force; economic freedom means
freedom from British capitalist and capital, as also their Indian
counterpart by bringing equality between poorest and rich; while
spiritual freedom means self-realization and self-restraint.

2. Bhagat Singh’s perceptions of freedom included socialism and
revolution. His concept of freedom may also be expressed into the
following aspects: India's national independence, political freedom
of an individual, group freedom from poverty (economic freedom)
and the spiritual freedom. By national independence, he meant abolition of imperialism and he expressed political independence as socialist republicism. By economic independence, he meant elimination of capitalism and by spiritual freedom he advocated the freedom from religious fanaticism.

3. The major causes behind conversion and diversion between Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagat Singh were the methods and strategies.

4. Although both aimed to achieve one common goal, yet the methods adopted by them were as different as chalk and cheese. It would not be right to term their ideologies as contrasting. Rather their ideologies were complementary to each other and both of them contributed to Indian’s freedom struggle in their own ways.

5. Gandhi believed in the use of non-violent force and was also willing to compromise. Gandhi considered Satyagraha and Non-violence as two strategic tools for achieving freedom. For Gandhi Satyagraha was a form of ethical-political operation to reinforce rationality in an otherwise irrational and inhuman system of oppression and exploitation that denied humanity of its essential dignity. For Bhagat Singh, such a view was, at best a naivety that failed to gauge the political task at hand. It could be practiced
against individuals – even the most hideous ones – but not against a system that was much beyond any individual or group of individuals.

6. Bhagat Singh was not blind adherent of violence. He differentiated between ‘violence’ and ‘force’, the former being used by the ruling classes, the oppressors or the state to perpetuate exploitation and their rule, while the latter being the resistance put up by the exploited or oppressed people and insist that what they were resorting to was ‘force’ and not ‘violence’.

7. Singh was not a total contrast to Gandhism as he also adopted various forms of struggle such as hunger strike and Satyagraha while in jail. He had also actively participated in the Non-cooperation movement.

8. One of the prime reasons behind Mahatma Gandhi’s success in achieving self-rule in India was the participation of masses. His Satyagraha movement made it possible for participation of the vast masses in the political struggle for independence.

9. Although Bhagat Singh’s acts of violence were heroic and truly patriotic yet they yielded not much success because the masses were not ready for violence, and the political leadership also had opted for another strategy. On the other hand, Gandhian Non-
violence resonated with the Indian masses and offered them a chance to serve the nation.

10. Majority of people are familiar with both the leaders. So both are equally popular amongst masses.

11. People admire Mahatma Gandhi for his ideology, charisma and above all for his role in freedom struggle. However, few people disliked him also and the chief reason for their annoyance with Gandhi was due to his role in Bhagat Singh’s execution trial. Most of the people believed that Gandhi did not put his best efforts to save Bhagat Singh and held him responsible for Bhagat Singh’s execution. On the other hand, Bhagat Singh also holds a very special position in the hearts of Indians. People like him for his charisma and above all for his supreme sacrifice during India’s struggle for freedom.

12. Most of the people have only superficial knowledge regarding Gandhi ji’s principles and ideology. They generally associate Gandhi ji with Satyagraha and Ahimsa. But infact, Gandhi ji’s ideology is not just restricted to Satyagraha or Ahimsa. This reflects the lack of proper understanding of Gandhi ji’s ideology.

13. Most of the people had an opinion that Gandhi ji’s ideology is not relevant today. But as indicated by results Gandhi ji’s ideology is
as relevant today as it was in the pre-independence period. Thus the present study attributes lack of complete knowledge as the chief reason for people’s inability to perceive Gandhi ji’s ideology in contemporary society.

14. Similarly, mostly people generally associated Bhagat Singh with revolution, violence and socialism. Although a large section of participants had claimed full awareness regarding Singh’s ideology and considered it very much relevant in the contemporary context yet none of the participants were able to correctly identify all the elements of Bhagat Singh’s ideology. This reflects the lack of proper understanding of his ideology. This indicates that most of the people admire Bhagat Singh for his supreme sacrifice and have only superficial knowledge regarding his philosophy.

15. A psychological analysis of participants indicated their orientation towards the basic principles of Gandhian ideology which reflects the existence of these elements in the contemporary society. So, it may be concluded that Gandhi ji’s philosophy is still relevant.

16. On the other hand, in case of Bhagat Singh’s ideology, participants demonstrated orientation towards anarchism and socialism only. So it may be concluded that although people admire Bhagat Singh yet most of them are unable to fully pursue his philosophy. Social
insecurity, fear, lack of courage or boldness etc. are assumed as some of the reasons which make it difficult for people to pursue Singh’s ideology. This leads us to the conclusion that due to a variety of reasons, just like pre-independence period, today also ordinary Indians only prefer to admire Bhagat Singh rather than following his philosophy. It reflects that till today Gandhi ji’s ideology has mass appeal.

17. Success of Anna Hazare’s Indian anti-corruption movement indicated that most of the elements of Gandhi ji’s ideology are relevant today. The analysis of other case studies also indicated that all the elements of Gandhi ji’ ideology like Truth, Satyagraha, Non-violence, Fasting and Non-cooperation are still relevant. So it becomes evident that Gandhi ji’ ideology has the same potential to change the heart of the opponents.

18. Results of the present studies indicated that few people had an opinion that Gandhi did not put his best efforts to save Bhagat Singh and thus disliked him. But the fact is that Gandhi despite his disapproval of Bhagat Singh’s actions, made desperate efforts to save Bhagat Singh's life till the end and described his death as a great loss to nation. So there is an urgent need to clear this public misconception and create awareness in public in this context.
19. On the other hand, all the people stated that they liked Bhagat Singh. They liked him for his ideology, charisma and above all for his role in freedom struggle. Most of the people like him due to his supreme sacrifice for the country. But if required, many of them would not be ready for any sacrifice for the country. Rather everyone expects a sacrifice from some new Bhagat Singh. People admire his ideology but do not bother to follow it. So just fascination and admiration is not sufficient, rather there is a need to understand his ideology in right perspective and follow it in spirit.

20. In addition, the present study reported that people have only superficial knowledge regarding Gandhi ji’s as Bhagat Singh’s ideologies. So, for fructification of their legacies, there is an urgent need to provide clear understanding to the younger generation.