

Politics of Caste Orthodoxy: Hindu Muslim Relations (1919-1935) — A Critical Study

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This research is a critical evaluation of the Hindu Muslim relations during the period 1919 to 1935. It is argued that the Indian political arena was dominated by the caste-oriented politics that created serious frictions between the Hindus and the Muslims. It antagonized the relations between the two communities to an extent that in 1940s, the partition of India seemed to be the only option that could avoid a bloody civil war in India. It will be discussed how the Congress led nationalist movement, from 1919 onwards, transformed the nature of Indian politics from interest-based politics to the communal-based hatred and thus caused serious suspicions among the minorities regarding their political existence in India. In this regard the Gandhi-led Khilafat Movement 1919-1922 was the beginning whereas the Round Table Conferences (1930-32) at London marked the end of the first phase of India's epic drama of partition. Both the political events are analyzed here in order to demonstrate to what extent one is justified in presenting the Hindu ideology of caste orthodoxy as the most potent force that widened the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims and subsequently led the subcontinent towards its partition followed by the communal war of 1947.

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(1)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was probably the first citizen of British India, who with the help of European educational and scientific revolution, was determined to alleviate socio-economic stagnation as well as achieve the eventual independence of the Indians from colonial rule.¹ The All Indian National Congress (AINC), founded in 1885, was the product of this modern thinking. Its first breed included moderate and westernized nationalists like Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Dadabhai Naoroji and last but not least Mohammed Ali Jinnah — all sharing the same vision that India should acquire independence through constitutional means rather than mob violence and agitational politics. All the above were defined as moderates, liberals and constitutionalists in the pre-independence political vocabulary of India. The propagators of Indian Renaissance were the moderate Indian elite who were trained and educated under the British system. In order to break their backwardness they rejected the stumbling principles and premises of ancient Hindu Golden Age of *Satya Yuga* and boldly tied the future of India with modernization. As early as 1820s these moderates predicted that Britain's commitment to the principles of democracy and the growth of the political system in India would eventually lead to political independence, and therefore, the Indians must equip themselves with modern education, scientific knowledge and civic norms so that they are able to justify their ability to handle or lead Western-based representative democracy.

For as long as Congress remained in the hands of liberal and moderate politicians, it applied a *Realpolitik* approach to some extent particularly while dealing with the Muslims, with the intention to recruit them into a large-scale movement of independence. The Lucknow Pact 1916-17 was the first and the last power-sharing pact between the Hindus and Muslims or the

1 See for reference, Raja's letter to his English friend written in 1828 wherein he wrote, "supposing that some hundred years hence, the native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirements of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, it is possible that they (i.e., Indians) will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectively any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society?" Quoted in Sasadar Sinha, *Social Thinking of Rabindranath Tagore* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p.4.

Congress and the Muslim League. It was the product of the non-caste section or a realist leadership of Congress,² as on one hand it tried to solve the conflict of interests between the two warring communities of India, on the other it brought both of them on a united platform strong enough to force the government to transfer the power to the Indians through an effective and steady constitutional channel. It was a *quid pro quo* to which the Muslims adhered, and lent full cooperation to the Congress-led movement for “*Swaraj*” (independence), and the achievement of political power from Britain. In return, Congress on behalf of Hindus, accepted a ‘separate identity’ of the Muslims and pledged to redress their anxieties by the allotment of more representation in the legislatures than their numerical ratio had entitled them. Arrangements were also made to protect language, education, religion and culture of the Muslims. It was the masterpiece of statesmanship by Tilak and Jinnah, and the latter, due to his efforts in bringing the two communities together on equal footing through Lucknow Pact, received the title of ‘an Ambassador to Hindu Muslim unity.’³

(2)

If the spirit of the Lucknow Pact had been seriously implemented, neither the Muslims would have worried about their political future in India nor Pakistan would have ever come into being. But this did not happen because Congress was taken over by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920, who apparently lacked in both political wisdom and sagacity, and ‘far from being infallible’, committed serious blunders, one after another, in pursuit of some ‘Utopian ideals which had no basis in reality’.⁴ Gandhi took the leadership

2 Not all the members of the Congress were democrats. As a matter of fact, majority of them belonged to the traditional upper and middle Hindu castes. For reference see G. Aloysius *Nationalism Without a Nation in India* (Delhi: Oxford Press, 1997).

3 Sarojini Naidu gave the title to Jinnah in realization of his role to strengthen the unity of India through the Lucknow Pact 1916. Jinnah as the dual member of All India Congress and Muslim League exerted his influence on both and brought them together on equal footing. See Sarojini Naidu, *Mohomed Ali Jinnah: An Ambassador of Unity*, Madras, 1917).

4 See Indian Historian R.C. Majumdar, who believed that an honest historian must admit that Gandhi lacked political wisdom while tackling the political issues. R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firm A.K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963), Vol.3.

of Congress in 1919-20, a time when Hindu-Muslim unity was at its peak. Moderates and the extremists of the Congress had reunited and the historic Lucknow Pact had been agreed upon, between the Muslim League and the Congress. The 1920s was the time when Gandhi began to dominate the Indian political scene in a manner unparalleled in British-Indian history. A disciple of Gohkle and a successful mass leader of the Indians in South Africa, Gandhi was trained in the western education and traits. Naturally, he belonged to the liberal and moderate cult of the All India Congress. But the death of Gohkle in 1915 and Gandhi's own obsession with the principle of political mobilization under the name of *ahimsa* or non-violence, which he had successfully practised in South Africa, quickly took him away from the politics of moderation. He soon realized that the failure of liberals was due to their inability to recruit the bulk of emotionally spirited masses, who could paralyze the government and compel them to grant concessions.⁵ Keeping this logic in mind the Mahatma appealed to the religious sentiments of masses, presenting himself as a saint-cum-politician and in this way claimed to be the 'Great Soul' of India.

Hindu-Muslim unity for him was as important a mission as *Swaraj* or freedom for India, but in the end he failed to preserve it, mainly because of his dual, metaphysical and unrealistic, politics (clearly reflected in his personality and actions). He intentionally or unintentionally failed to comprehend the Muslim problem in India along realist lines. His universalization of Hinduism could not integrate the various warring and distinct communities of India, because it served more for the Hindu elites and middle class, and still less for the lower castes, and seemed to be completely unattractive for the Muslims of India.

Politically incapable to deal with the matter in a *Realpolitik* manner, Gandhi proved to be more naïve when he Hinduized the freedom movement by incorporating the ancient Hindu doctrines and Hindu symbols in the contemporary political fabric of India. This might be the weak aspect of Gandhi's all India leadership, the one which we could argue, eventually divided the country.

5 M.R. Jayakar, *Story of My Life* (Bombay: 1962), Vol.1, p.317.

However, we also find that he claimed himself to be a liberal reformer. And it can be argued, if he had adopted the path of liberalism and realism in the homogeneous society like India the history of India would have been different. But his liberal zeal was overshadowed by his religiously oriented political manoeuvres and frequent use of Hindu phrases on almost every occasion.⁶ It was an irony that a Western educated person like Gandhi who called himself ‘reformer through and through’ contradicted his modernism with his permanent insistence upon the values of orthodox Hinduism. Gandhi, who was to be the leader of both the Hindus and Muslims, became communal when in an unambiguous language he exposed himself as a “sanatanist” (orthodox) Hindu, and hence created misunderstandings and suspicions among the Muslim ranks.⁷ His repeated insistence on the greatness of class or caste divided society, his high regard for ‘idol of worship’ and ‘cow protection’ and blind faith in the Hindu laws of ‘*Vedas, Upanishads*’, ‘re-incarnation’, ‘Hindu scriptures’⁸ only painted him as an orthodox Hindu. Even the political weapons he employed, and the political language he adopted in his battle against the British and other opponents were characteristically Hindu.⁹ The Hindus found sheer satisfaction in Gandhi-generated Hindu symbols and his open loyalty to the *Vedic* laws. The majority of the Hindu Congressmen too came under Gandhi’s spell

6 “For me there are no politics but religion. They subserve religion. The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake, from which one cannot go out, no matter how much one tries. In order to wrestle with the snake, I have been experimenting with my self and my friends in politics by introducing religion into politics.” Gandhi in *Young India* 12 May 1920.

7 One of the prominent Muslim leaders Mohammed Ali conceived Gandhi’s religio-political strategy as ‘Mr. Gandhi is fighting for the supremacy of Hinduism and the submergence of Muslims’ cited in Khalid bin Sayeed, (Karachi: OUP, 1960), p.60.

8 “I call myself a Sanatanist (orthodox) Hindu because, firstly I believe in the Vedas....and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures. Secondly, I believe in the caste system. Thirdly, I believe in the protection of cow as an article of faith, and fourthly, I do not disbelieve in idol worship.” Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, 12 Oct., 1921.

9 Gandhi openly declared, “I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice, for *Satyagraha* and its off-shoots, non cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The *Rishis* were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater than Willington.” Gandhi, *Young India*, 1920 (Madras, 1922), p.261.

because they rightly or wrongly believed that “he” could alone revive the Hindu civilization, its values and traditions.¹⁰ His saintly-cum-political outlook, identification with orthodox Hinduism and belief in the Hindu doctrine of *ahimsa* or non-violence as the mode to obtain *Swaraj*, naturally rendered him the prophet of Hindu India. Nehru was right in noting that Gandhi’s Hindu mantra ‘with our [Hindu] background and tradition was the right policy for us [Hindus]’.¹¹ But the Muslims did not share Gandhi and Nehru’s historic-religious past. And Gandhi’s repetition of ‘Ram Raja’¹² as an ultimate goal for India, quite unfortunately appeared to them as a desire of the Hindu who wanted to revive the golden Hindu age of Ram;¹³ the age in which the Cow was worshipped as god, and where the caste system did not have any active political role for lower and foreign castes.

Mr. B.R. Nanda and Parekh in their defence of Gandhi,¹⁴ repudiated the anxieties which emerged among the Muslims regarding Gandhi’s use of Ram Rajya as an ideal society for independent India. Nanda believes that by using Hindu terms and phrases, Gandhi was not referring to the unjust Hindu religious ‘monarchical kingdom’ of Hindu prophet Ram, ‘but to an ideal polity, free from inequality, injustice and exploitation’.¹⁵ The most interesting analysis is of Professor Parekh, who introduced Gandhi as a revolutionary Hindu who ‘marginalized’ the teachings of ‘*Sastras*’ (sacred texts), broke the traditional ‘religious basis of Brahminic authority’ and alleviated the ranks of the untouchables as the ‘privileged children of God’. For Parekh, Gandhi’s

10 For the Hindus ‘when Mahatma speaks,’ as noted by the President of the Congress Subhas Bose ‘It does so in the language.... of the *Bhagvat Gita* and the *Ramayana*....he reminds them of the glorious *Ramrajya*.... and they accepted him.’ S. Bose, *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942* (Bombay, 1964) p.293.

11 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1946).

12 Gandhi stated ‘I have described *Swaraj* as *Ramrajya*, and *Ramrajya* is an impossibility unless we have thousands of *Sitas* (The wife of Hindu prophet Ram). Gandhi quoted in *The Quintessence Gandhi in His Own Words* (Delhi: M.M. Publishers, 1984), p.51.

13 As noted by Bose ‘when the Mahatma talks to them of *Swaraj*....he reminds them of the glorious *Ramrajya* (the golden kingdom of Hindu’s prophet Ram)....’ *op.cit.*, p.293.

14 B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.74.

15 *Ibid.*, pp.73-74.

'Sudrisation' (Lower Class) of the religion curtailed the rights of the Brahmin upper caste on one hand and rendered the former as a great reformer on the other who wanted to establish a national culture or classless 'Indian family'.¹⁶ However, both the defences seem to be weak because they completely ignore the important evidence contained in Gandhi's own words and statements where he himself declared his enthusiastic support for a class-divided society in which the Hindu elites were at the helm of the affairs, not on the basis of merit but due to the privilege of their birth.¹⁷ Furthermore, the matter is not as simple as Parekh and Nanda have presented. Gandhi's open and unconditional support to the caste hierarchy with its social-political evils; his use of orthodox religion for the justification of traditional caste discriminations between the ruling classes and the servile lower classes; his determination to present Congress as the sole negotiator of power with the Britain and his reluctance either to implement the Lucknow Pact or to explore a new power-sharing deal with the Muslims became the root cause for the disintegration of trust between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority. And this caste branded leadership of Gandhi, one could argue, in the final outcome became one of the strongest *raison d'etat* for the separation of Muslims and the Partition of India.

In order to demonstrate the above points and the role of Gandhi in the Partition of India it is necessary to evaluate Gandhi's class/caste ideology with the argument that the latter was in itself a great hindrance to the amalgamation of various factions of India into one united Indian family and hence could not bridge the frictions and points of conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims in the context of India's unity. Secondly, it shall be explained how Gandhi's treatment of the Lower Classes left an adverse impact it left on the Muslims who were being identified and treated in India as no better than the Untouchables. Thirdly,

16 B. Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (New York: McMillan Press, 1989), pp.108-109.

17 See, for instance, 'I believe that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration. I consider the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural and essential.... I am certainly against any attempt at destroying the fundamental divisions. The caste system is not based on inequality.' Gandhi quoted in B.R. Ambedkar's *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (Bombay, 1946), pp.45-49.

with the evaluation of the Round Table Conference 1931, and the Khilafat Fiasco 1919-1927 it shall be argued that had Gandhi adopted the realist path of his political mentors i.e., Gokhale and Tilak, and instead of pushing the communities from interest-based politics to the religious extremism and extended and implemented the Hindu Muslim power-sharing settlement of Lucknow Pact, Pakistan or the Partition of India would have never come into being.

(3)

For centuries the Hindu caste system has been the root cause of India's weakness, which stands for a complete loss of identification between the upper castes and the lower caste masses. The caste order, which was derived from the sacred Hindu text of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, created barriers between the rulers and the ruled, the middle classes and the lower masses, by investing power permanently in the hands of the upper caste Brahmins and their strategic allies the *Kshatriyas* (the administrators or military) and *Vaishya* (the caretakers of money and finances). The status of the lower caste was curtailed to serve this hierarchal society not through executive skills but through carrying out physical labour. The caste system, therefore, demanded an unconditional and religious sort of total submission from the lower castes by threatening and bullying them, a tradition unparalleled in the history of mankind.¹⁸ This system closed the opportunities for progress and power for more than three fourths of the total population of India by declaring them Sudras, or untouchables;¹⁹ they had no participation in the national course except to serve the elites. This socio-economic order logically stands in a sharp contrast to the democratic principles of liberty, fraternity, equality

18 Following accounts are useful for the study of the Indian caste system: Ram Manohar Lohia, *The Guilty Men of India's Partition* (n.d., n.p.), p.36; Sir Percival Griffiths, *Modern India* (London, 1967), Ian Stephens, *Pakistan* (London: Ernest Benn Publishers, 1963), B.R. Ambedkar, *What Gandhi And Congress Have Done to the Untouchables* (Bombay: Thacker, 1945).

19 For the Untouchables' leadership 'There is not inequality only in Hindu society but inequality is the official doctrine of the Hindu religion. The Hindu has no will to equality. His inclination and his attitude are opposed to the democratic doctrine of one man one value. Every Hindu is a social Tory and political Radical.' Ambedkar quoted in B.R. Ambedkar, *Gandhi and Gandhism* (Jullander: Bheem Patrika Publishers, n.d.).

and justice for all regardless of class, creed and sect. Any attempt to revive such an uneven structure of governance meant that the power and privileges would remain confined to the upper and middle castes (then represented by the Congress)²⁰ whereas the minorities (like the Muslims), and the lower caste Hindus (the untouchables) would remain subservient to this caste hierarchy.

But in all fairness to Gandhi, it must be admitted that, he did not create these caste barriers, he was rather heir to them; his tragedy was that in the age where democracy and liberalism were prominent and when the Muslims and the Lower Caste were contending for power, Gandhi was constrained by his religious biases and thus, he refused to rise above the class discriminations. Instead, he came forward as a potent force to reinforce it with an open emphasis on orthodox Hinduism; and with a strong insistence to keep traditional power barriers between the ruling elite and masses, middle classes and lower classes, the capitalists and labourers, and between the feudals and the peasants. The fact which he did not realize was that in the new political realities when power was devaluating through the elective democracy and the Government of Indian Acts; and when the Muslims and Untouchables were contending for power, Gandhi's insistence to revive the caste system, of leaving power and governance to selected castes (which created disparities between the higher castes and the lower classes) were bound to cause frictions, thus disunity and weakness in the Indian freedom movement led by the Congress.²¹ This had direct implications for the Muslim majority of India which included a body of converts from the lower caste Hindus and those were treated no better than the Untouchables in almost every part of the country.

As discussed earlier under the liberal influence of Ram Mohan Roy and later Gohkle, the non-caste components of Congress conducted the power-sharing deal with the Muslims, but the two

20 The Congress even prior to the advent of Gandhi contained the vast majority of upper and middle class Hindus. See for reference, G. Aloysius, *Nationalism Without a Nation in India*, (Delhi: OUP, 1997), pp.88-89.

21 See the argument of a prominent Congress man Ram Manohar Lohia, who believed that it was the class divided Hindu society which lacked the political and national unity and hence unable to block the foreign invasions over India. Ram Manohar Lohia, *op.cit.*

outcomes remained: a) the Pact was never seriously implemented or even acknowledged by the later leadership of Gandhi and b) the Congress never extended the spirit of power-sharing by revolutionizing the caste system and by allocating to the lower classes an equal and respectable status along with the upper and middle class Hindus. Conversely, the Congress led by Gandhi carried the pro-Brahminic caste agenda, with a two-fold policy to restrict power to the hands of the upper ruling castes implementing a policy of no-consolidation with other interest groups on the basis of political concessions on one hand; and secondly, by making obsessive attempts to present the Congress as the sole representative of entire nation in order to become the sole successor of colonial India. And in order to implement and justify the above political strategy he used the logic and power of orthodox Hinduism and its hereditary caste ideology.

Gandhi, though spoke of the spiritual equality for all but also believed in the caste system as an ideal social order and hence for the minorities, he seemed to be an orthodox Hindu who wanted to revive Hinduism with its class-divided socio-political exploitations. Gandhi's caste/class theory which he wanted to implement in free India can be seen in the following section. Gandhi believed that for the unity of Hindu India the society should remain divided among the four traditional castes on the basis of the accident of birth, rather than merit — First the *Brahmins* (the learned and ruling elite); second the *Kshatriyas* (whose occupation was fixed as warfare); third the *Vaishyas* (whose occupation was trade and business); and last of all the *Sudras* (the lower caste whose occupation was to serve the upper three classes with their 'bodily labour').²² The Brahmin caste is a ruling elite, 'predominately a man of knowledge the fittest by heredity', whereas the lower caste *Sudras* could only best serve the upper caste with his 'bodily labour' because by heredity or birth,

22 Gandhi stated that "The four divisions define the duties...all are born to serve God's creation, a Brahmin with his knowledge, a *Kshatriya* with his power of protection, a *Vaishya* with his commercial ability, and a *Shudra* with bodily labor..." See Gandhi quoted in *Speeches and Writings of Mahatama Gandhi*, 4th edition (Madras: G.A. Nateson and Co., 1933), pp.1055-1056.

he did not possess the intellectual capabilities and ‘special qualities’ of other castes.²³

Gandhi’s concept of class system was used to determine the occupation of a person, as well as his status and position.²⁴ Regardless of the fact that how able a person may be, if he was born in a lower caste he was to follow the ‘profession of his forefathers, i.e., to serve the upper caste Hindus with his ‘bodily labour’. A lower caste *Sudras* could never rule his country, or execute the higher administrative tasks because according to Gandhi ‘in the *Varna* (caste) system no man has any liberty to choose his occupation. His occupation is determined by heredity.’²⁵ For the same reason Gandhi refused to provide assurance to the lower castes regarding their representation in the future Indian Cabinet because it would ‘harm the (interests of the) country’.²⁶ Secondly, although education was opened to everyone including the lower castes but as far as ‘the way of earning, his living is concerned’ Gandhi’s decision was that ‘he must follow the occupation of the *Varna* to which he belongs’.²⁷ In other words, the lower castes could only acquire knowledge to serve the upper castes and not to execute it for their own progress. Though Gandhi declared untouchability as an evil but equally he clarified that for the sake of this Hindu caste ideology neither a lower caste

23 “His birth makes a Brahmin predominately a man of knowledge, the fittest by heredity.... a Shudra can acquire knowledge but only he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities....” Gandhi quoted in *ibid.*, pp.1056-1057.

24 “I believe in... Birth and Karma... it [caste system] does attach to birth. A man cannot change his *Varna* (caste) by choice. Not to abide by one’s *Varna* is to disregard the law of heredity”, Gandhi in *Gandhi and Gandhism, op.cit.*, pp.75-77.

25 *Ibid.*, pp.74-75. Gandhi was against any mass revolution that could break the caste disparities in India, therefore, he insisted ‘the *object of the Varna system is to prevent competition and class struggle and class war. I believe in the Varna system because it fixes the duties and occupation of persons.*’ *Ibid.*, pp.41-45.

26 When asked in 1942 in All India Untouchables Conference that whether he and the Congress would nominate the Cabinet members from among the Scheduled Caste Legislators, who enjoyed the confidence of the majority of Scheduled Caste members, Gandhi replied. “I cannot. The principle is dangerous. Protection of this neglected class should not be carried to an extent which will harm them and harm their country.” *Ibid.*, p.17.

27 The extracts are taken from an article written by Gandhi on the caste subject and is reproduced in the book, *Varna Vaayavastha* (Ahmedabad, 1925).

sweeper could join the Brahmin Caste nor could he enjoy their privileges, nor could he 'marry' or 'dine' with them.²⁸ Gandhi might have known that the matrimonial relations between the upper and the lower caste could destroy the heredity and rigid supremacy of the upper castes hence he insisted that *Swaraj* (independence) would only be achieved if Indians remained opposed to 'inter-marriage' and 'inter-dining'.²⁹

On the economic plank his class ideology suggested that the labourers should always be subservient to their capitalist 'masters' because the former by birth belonged to a lower caste who neither have any 'intelligence' nor 'wealth' to challenge the power and leadership of naturally 'intelligent' and wealthy higher caste capitalist. He condemned all the labourers who threatened the interests of the Hindu capitalist class through strikes or other forms of violence. He suggested them to 'take their stand on pure justice' and should not harm the industrialists' interests but themselves 'suffer in their person to secure it', as by doing so 'not only will

28 "To destroy caste system and adopt Western European social system means that Hindus must give up the principle of hereditary occupation which is the soul of the caste system. Hereditary principle is an essential principle. To change it is to create disorder. I have no use of Brahmin if I cannot call him Brahmin for my life. It will be a chaos if everyday a Brahmin is to be changed into a *Shudra* (lower caste Hindu) and a *Shudra* is to be changed into a Brahmin." Also see 'I want to uplift Hinduism. I regard the untouchables as an integral part of Hindu community. *I am pained when I see a single Bhangi [sweeper] driven out of fold of Hinduism*. But I do not believe that all class distinctions can be obliterated.... Prohibition against inter-marriage and inter-dining is essential for a rapid evolution of soul.' *Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

29 'I most emphatically discourage inter-dining and inter-marriage between divisions' because 'prohibition against inter-marriage is essential for a rapid evolution of a soul.... I believe that inter-dining or inter-marriage are not necessary for promoting political unity. That dining together creates friendship is contrary to experience. If this was true there would have been no war in Europe...taking food is as dirty an act as answering the call of nature. The only difference is that after answering call of nature we get peace while after eating food we get discomfort. Just as we perform the act answering the call of nature in seclusion so also the act of taking food must also be done in seclusion.'" Gandhi's views in a Gujarati journal called *Nava-Jivan*, Nov., 1920. 'In India children of brothers do not inter-marry do they cease to love because they do not inter-marry? Among the *Vaishayas* (one of superior castes) many women are so orthodox that they will not eat with the members of the family nor they drink water from common water pot. Have they no love? The caste system cannot be said to be bad because it does not allow inter-dining or inter-marriage between different castes.'" *Ibid.*

they always succeed but also they will reform their masters'.³⁰ He uplifted the rights of industrialists at the cost of the interests of wage earners. The strike against an unjust empire was legitimate, but the same strike was being condemned by Gandhi, if it threatened the monopoly of industrialists or aimed at improving the conditions of the poor labourers. He even denied the strikers any support from Congress and their 'sympathizers'.³¹

Similarly, following the creed of caste hierarchy and in a quest to avert mass eruption against the traditional social order he propagated that the prestige and powers of the feudalism should be retained even at the expense of the just rights of peasants. For Gandhi the 'social boycott' of the peasants against the cruelty of landlords is an 'instrument of violence'.³² However, he did encourage the peasants to cooperate with the Congress when it asked them to 'suspend the payments of taxes to Government',³³ at the same time warning them that there was no justification 'at any stage of non-Cooperation (that) we would seek to deprive the Zamindars (landlords) of their rent', no matter how harsh the latter were *vis-à-vis* the peasants.³⁴ It is the peasants who have to sacrifice and must 'abide by the terms of their agreement with the Zamindars whether such is written or inferred from custom. Where a custom or even a written contract is bad, they may not try to uproot it [contract or power] by violence or without previous reference to the Zamindars (landlords)'.³⁵

The above picture persuades one to accuse Gandhi and the politics of the Congress as a forerunner for implementing the traditionally dominant caste system rather than striving to break away from it. Gandhi through Congress used religion and its logic of caste classes by maintaining the traditional power of discrimination between the ruler and the ruled, the middle classes and the lower, the capitalist and the labourer, the feudal and the peasant. Gandhi, throughout his political leadership used or

30 Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, 11 August 1921.

31 *Ibid.*

32 Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, 18 May 1921.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

misused the slogan of freedom under the authority of religion and instead of asking the governing classes to surrender their privileges, he rather snubbed the servile classes and their demands for quotas in the legislatures, in the executive and in the public services by raising the cry that India's unity, freedom and 'nationalism is in danger'.³⁶ For Professor Parekh Gandhi's greatest contribution was the bringing in of people from various groups, classes, creeds, and religions into one common community of "Indian family".³⁷ But he does not mention on a single occasion the caste-dominated ideas of Gandhi, and his partial philosophy of change of heart in which the latter only asked the poor, and victims to change their attitudes from revolt against oppression to the unconditional submission to the oppressor. This is the reason that the critics describe Gandhi's mass mobilization as ambiguous in both its 'intent' and the 'content', which aimed to build a moral legitimacy and saintly image for Gandhi and enabled him to battle the masses and even get away with this; and to 'unleash just enough of the mass movement in order to drive a successful bargain' of power for Congress, and at the same time 'to save India from revolution'.³⁸ M.N. Roy too may be right in commenting that Gandhi used peasants and labourers as tools to pressurize the Government to obtain concessions for his strategic allies — the feudal lords and the capitalists, in order to save India from a masses' revolution.³⁹

But his critics might not have been aware that, Gandhi as a true caste orthodox had other reasons and fears to justify his overwhelming emphasis on the caste discriminations. The new political structure, introduced by the British government, was based on elections or the transfer of power to masses. Hence the

36 B.R. Ambedkar quoted in *What Congress and Gandhi have done to Untouchable* (Bombay: Thacker, 1945), p.125.

37 For Parekh in Gandhi-organized *Satyagraha* we find the peasants and landlords, the capitalists and the workers, the intellectuals and illiterate masses, the westernized intellectuals and the traditional elite, the Hindus and the Muslims, the high caste Hindus and Untouchables all working for each other's interest. B. Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989).

38 R.P. Dutt, *Freedom For India* (London: Communist Publishers, 1946), p.359.

39 M.N. Roy quoted in D. Dolton, *Mahatma Gandhi, Non-violent Power in Action* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

western system of democracy came as a natural blow to the monopoly of power to the traditional Brahminic ruling classes headed by the Congress.⁴⁰ Instead, democracy sowed the seed of competitive politics in India by transforming both the Muslims and the lower Hindu classes into the serious contenders for power, and since both the Untouchables and the Muslims (the majority of whom were the converts from lower class Hindus) were the victims of the caste system. It became natural for them to make an alliance to pressurize the middle and high class Hindus and their representative, the Congress, to acknowledge their equal status and provide them protections in political and economical terms, in return for their support for the freedom movement.⁴¹ Hence, prior to the advent of Gandhi (1920) many parts of the country witnessed the united and common struggle of the anti-Brahmin groups, consisting of the Muslims and lower classes headed by Dr. Ambedkar, struggling for the homogenization of power through the open protest against the caste prejudices.⁴² It is interesting to note that this minority alliance consisting of the Muslims and the lower classes, formed the majority of the population⁴³ and hence not only posed as a political blow to the supremacy of Congress but also rendered Congress a *microscopic minority* of the upper and middle class Hindus. The anti-caste Muslims-lower classes alliance described Congress-headed freedom movement as Hindu, upper casteist and *Brahminic*; and the latter in reply branded both the lower castes and the Muslims as minorities, and communalists

40 G. Aloysius, *op.cit.*, pp.87-89.

41 The Lucknow Pact 1916 though provided the safeguards to the Muslims but it was never seriously implemented by the Congress particularly after the advent of Gandhi. Hence the similarity of the early Muslim political awakening with that of the masses of lower castes, both in their common priorities of education, 'diversification of occupation, reforms within and reservation in employment etc., and in their antagonistic posture towards (the Congress led movement of) the dominant communities sectarian-nationalist thrust has been noted by many historians.' *Ibid.*

42 In Bengal, in South, in Madras, in Mysore, in the West one could observe the non-Brahminic movement as a corporate effort between the different non-Brahmin groups and Muslims. (E. Irrschick, 1969). In Bombay the Muslims consistently extended support and cooperation to the anti-Brahminic struggles of Dr. Ambedkar, p.152).

43 J. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

or pro-imperialists.⁴⁴ Keeping in view the momentum of the movement it can be argued that had these two groups of minorities remained united to strive homogenization of power within, they could certainly have acquired an equal political status based on the principle of interest-based politics. The situation was also a shock to the Congress's claim that she alone represented all the communities of India, who were said to include the Muslims and hence the government should negotiate power with her rather than the All India Muslim League or any other Muslim party.⁴⁵ Moreover, the success of this alliance would have made the lower classes free and independent of the upper castes as well as seriously curtailed the vote bank of the Congress. No doubt the continuity of this situation was alarming for the ruling classes of Congress, as it could potentially reverse the balance of power between the majority and minority.

Against this bitter reality Gandhi, who himself was an upper caste Hindu, and who had strategic alliance with the Brahmin Nehrus⁴⁶ and the Hindu Capitalists⁴⁷ emerged as a saviour of the ruling community. He negated the anti-Brahminic and anti-

44 P. Hardy, *Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) pp.261-72.

45 Since 1885 the Congress claimed to represent all the groups and communities of India. See for reference, *An Official History of the Congress*, pp.17-18.

46 Gandhi's silent alliance with Brahmin Nehrus could be evaluated from the fact that as early as 1928 the former appointed J.Nehru the son of Moti Lal Nehru as his 'political heir' in order to tell Indians that leadership would remain confined to the Brahmins rather than the masses. The details of this official announcement regarding J. Nehru succession could be found in many books such as Nanda, *op.cit.*, p.259.

47 Indian political analyst S.K. Majumdar observed that from 1920s onwards the industrial labourers were organizing themselves and were emerging as a powerful class in the socio-economics of the country. They were fighting not only imperialism but also the Indian Capitalists who were great exploiters of Indian labourers. '*Gandhiji was never in sympathy with socialism. His chief financial supporters were capitalists in whom he had implicit trust. He rather saw that unless (labour) Leftism is nipped in the bud, it would ultimately devour the Congress.*' He therefore entered the arena again in 1928 with the '*determination to check Leftism in the Congress*'. Given this, Majumdar maintains that Gandhi's advice to capitalists was to make themselves the trustees of the poor, so that the poor shall not revolt against them and the power and resources remained in the hands of the capitalists rather than working poor classes. See S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi: Their Role in India's Quest for Freedom* (Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay Press, 1966), pp.117-18.

Congress alliance with such strong words as ‘the untouchable hooligans would make alliance with Muslim hooligans and kill upper caste Hindus.’⁴⁸ In order to restore the traditional status quo of power, he surged forward the caste ideology under the twofold constructive programme i.e., the propagation of traditional caste ideology under the divine spell of religion to destroy the anti-Brahminic or anti-Congress, Muslim-Untouchable alliance by strictly binding the services, status and loyalty of the lower class Hindus with the upper three classes; and secondly, in order to win over the *votes* and *heart* of the lower class masses he elevated their spiritual status, by declaring them the ‘children of God’ by describing untouchability as an evil; and by launching for them a ‘Temple and School Entry Movement.’⁴⁹ But given this he kept them socially and politically under the sovereignty and mastery of the upper and the middle classes of Hindus, headed, at the time, by the Congress. Since a lower caste labourer could never execute the job of a Brahmin, according to the caste ideology of Gandhi, and a Brahmin could never find himself in the position of a lower caste labourer, in Gandhi’s concept of the ‘Indian family’, the political and economical patterns of superiority and inferiority were bound to continue.

With the help of above strategy Gandhi successfully broke the momentum of the anti-Brahmin movement led by the Muslim-lower caste alliance, which was then threatening the political power of the Congress.⁵⁰ It is in this context that the Untouchables, after 1930s, with great regret, described Gandhi’s whole political movement as an exploitation in which the latter wanted ‘Hinduism and Hindu caste system to remain intact’ and the Untouchables to

48 Gandhi uttered these words in order to reject the political safeguards to the Muslims and the Untouchables granted by the British Communal Award 1931. Gandhi quoted in *Indian Round Table Conference (First Session) Proceedings*, 1931, Cmd. 3778.

49 In 1920s Gandhi started a Temple-Entry Movement to seek admission for the Untouchables in the upper caste Hindu temples.

50 For the first time in 1929 the Untouchables launched the *Satyagraha* protest against the upper caste Hindus in order to secure their civic rights, such as temple entry, school entry, permission to take water from public wells, etc., but Gandhi declared the movement illegal with the reply that “the satyagraha was to be used only against the foreigners and not to be used against ones own kindred and countrymen [the Hindus]” Gandhi quoted in Ambedkar, *Congress and Gandhi*, *op.cit.*, p.289.

remain a part of Hinduism 'not as partners but as the poor relations of upper caste Hindus'.⁵¹ Ambedkar the leader of the lower classes was probably right in arguing that Gandhi's half-hearted attempts to uplift the cause of the Untouchables by starting anti-untouchables temple and school entry movements,⁵² which did not bring any change in the social and political status of his people on the one hand, and insistence to keep them powerless under the rigid and exploitative caste system on the other, was an attempt on his part to break the momentum of the anti-Brahminic movement and taking full control of millions of their votes to create the hegemony of the Congress and of the upper caste Hindus in the whole of India.⁵³

Above is a different, rather contradictory picture of Mahatma Gandhi, the prophet of non-violence, who, though committed to the philosophy of *ahimsa* and equality of all, brought the caste prejudices and class biases into the socio-political fabric of India. Gandhi's universalization of Hinduism no doubt made him the undisputed Mahatma of Hindu India. But it left serious implications for the Muslims, of whom many were lower caste Hindu converts.⁵⁴ This previous conversion, however, had helped the Muslims to escape some severe forms of caste oppression and disabilities, but it did not result in significant 'vertical mobility'; hence most of them remained agricultural labourers, marginal farmers or tenants, artisans and petty traders, bound to the upper castes, and a small number were Muslim landlords and money

51 *Gandhi and Gandhism, op.cit.*

52 Gandhi's stance on the temple entry was the most ambiguous in intent and content. He in the beginning opposed it, 'how it is possible that the (lower caste) *Antyajas* should have the right to enter all the existing temples?' When the Untouchables put forth a demand for political rights he changed his position and became a supporter of temple entry. When the Hindus threatened to defeat the Congress in the election, if it pursued the matter to a conclusion, Mr. Gandhi in order to preserve power in the hands of Congress gave up temple entry. B.R. Ambedkar, *Gandhi and Congress, op.cit.*, pp.107, 125.

53 Ambedkar quoted in *Gandhi and Congress, op.cit.*, pp.18-19.

54 P. Hardy *Muslims of British India, op.cit.*, p.262. Also see a classic account of the same issue by the same author, in P. Hardy, *Patterns in Freedom and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India. 1912-1947* (Scandinavia Institute of Lurd and Studentlitterat, 1971).

lenders.⁵⁵ Things had become more complex because in the view of caste Hindus, all Muslims, high and low, like the lower castes, were polluted and held an inferior status in the socio-religious hierarchy.⁵⁶ This situation caused disparities between the Muslims as a whole and upper caste Hindus throughout India, particularly in Bengal, Malabar and in the Punjab. In such circumstances when the Hindu majority was treating the Muslim minority as the untouchables, could Gandhi's insistence to lead the country along caste lines and declaring that Ram Raj was an ideal polity for India, have been a right policy to deal with the post-1857 community-based Muslim challenge that posed serious threats to India's unity? How could a person who overwhelmingly loved orthodox Hinduism ever be in a position to deal with the other minorities like the Muslims equally and democratically?

As a matter of fact, Gandhi, from 1920-47, never seemed to realize on a single occasion that his loyalty to orthodox Hinduism, and opposition to the socio-political rights of the lower classes would only intensify the fear of the Muslim minority regarding their political future in a caste-structured India. Muslims who already suspected the Hindu majoritarian rule and the latter's habit of absorption, in the wake of universalization of caste-based society, apprehended the decline of their own status and prestige as a first rate nation. It enabled Muslim leaders ranging from Shaukat Ali to Iqbal and Mohamed Ali to Jinnah to present Gandhi's freedom movement as the 'instrument for the revival of caste Hinduism'.⁵⁷ His open denial of the principles of social and political equality to the untouchables; his universalization of the religious principles of the ruling castes for political gains; his unfair treatment to the lower classes in social and political terms,

55 In the U.P. and to a lesser extent in the Punjab there were Muslim landlords, the remnant of earlier ruling and warrior groups, exerting dominance over their dependent Muslims or otherwise, much in the same manner as other landed gentry of the area. See G. Aloysius, *op.cit.*, p.85.

56 'The feeling was of mixed concern and contempt for the Muslims whom we saw in the same light as we saw our lower caste Hindus or in other words as our livestock.' N.Chaudary quoted in S.Sarkar (1973), p.412.

57 For Jinnah and Iqbal's views, see their correspondence cited in Merriam, *Gandhi and Jinnah Debate* (Columbia, 1980). For Mohamed Ali's views, see Khalid bin Sayeed, *op.cit.*

rightly or wrongly, instilled in the Muslims the fear of a possible Congress-led Hindu Raj in which, they thought, they would be forced to live like the Untouchables — the subject race of Hindus.⁵⁸ Needless to say that such fear and misunderstanding among the minority could neither unite the warring factions of the country nor live up to the communal challenge of India. Besides, Gandhi himself never tried to overcome this fear, he rather remained a determined force to aggravate it by merely providing the moral commitments, rather than concrete pacts and a rule of law as a guarantee to safeguard the interests and rights of the minorities. The Gandhi-led political movement, therefore, could only facilitate antagonism rather than fraternity, frustration rather than harmony and separation rather than the unity of India.

The above points can partly be supported by the earlier description of Gandhi's loyalty for a class based society and partly by his actions that aimed at hammering every attempt, which granted concessions to the Muslims and the lower castes by recognizing their separate identity in terms of political representation. The Round Table Conference 1931 and the Gandhi-led Khilafat Movement 1919-1922, both were important in this regard. The latter, from the Muslim perspective, appeared to be an attempt on Gandhi's part to deflect the Muslims from their interest-based politics by throwing them into the religious euphoria that sparked the communal rifts between the Hindus and Muslims and widened the divisions between the two. The Khilafat Movement will be discussed later, but first shall be discussed the Round Table Conference and its implications on Hindu Muslim relations.

(4)

Round Table Conference 1931: A Case Study

The London Round Table Conference 1931 of the Indian leaders, under the auspices of the British Prime Minister, was significant as it aimed at forming a constitution for self-governing India by solving the communal problem, with the establishment of the balance of power between the majority (Hindus and their representative Congress) and minorities (the Muslims, Sikhs,

58 Khalid bin Sayeed, *op.cit.*, pp.26-27.

Untouchables). The British Government agreed to frame a constitution to form an Indian government by the people on the basis of communal representation of all the minorities, including the Untouchables and the Muslims, in order to safeguard the latter from the tyranny of the majority.

This was the occasion for Mr. Gandhi to easily justify the findings of Parekh and Nanda regarding his 'national family' and an 'equality-based ideal Indian polity'; it was also the opportunity for Gandhi to repudiate the Muslim fears and claims that being a 'sanatist' (orthodox) Hindu and believer in the caste hierarchy, Gandhi's India did not intend to pave way for a Hindu Raj at the expense of the minorities. But Mr. Gandhi with his acts and statements repudiated the findings of the above scholars. He attended the Conference with the intention that 'I am here today to ask for a reprieve for my caste Hindu brethren'.⁵⁹ He appeared to be more concerned with being the sole recipient of the power settlement instead of the terms of the settlement itself. Hence he passionately claimed that he was the person to be the sole representative of every single citizen of India — i.e., being the 'sole spokesman' of all the communities of India,⁶⁰ with the insistence that the Government should bargain power with him rather than the Sikhs, the Untouchables and the Muslims.⁶¹ He declared that neither the Muslims, nor the Untouchables and Sikh

59 *Indian Round Table Conference (First Session) Proceedings*, 1931, Cmd. 3778.

60 The Congress President S. Bose failed to understand Gandhi's sole representative claim in such words "Was it due to the vanity of Mahatma who wanted to appear before the world as the sole representative of dumb millions of Indians? Or was it only an error of judgment on the part of the Working Committee? The decision itself was a thoroughly wrong one. Alone in an Assembly of one hundred men ...arrayed against him like solid phalanx, he would be at a great disadvantage...but there was no help for it. *The blind followers of the Mahatma could not be expected to criticize him and those who were not his orthodox followers had no influence on him regardless of their wisdom, or experience.*" See S. Bose, *Indian Struggle, 1920-1942* (Bombay: 1964).

61 "What a great difference it would be today if this claim on behalf of the Congress was recognized. I feel that I have to state this claim with some degree of emphasis... for the sake of achieving the purpose which is common to all of us...although you have invited the Congress you distrust the Congress, you reject its claim to represent the whole of India. If you find me asserting that claim, I do so because a tremendous responsibility rests upon my shoulders." Gandhi quoted in *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference* (Madras: G.A. Nateson, 1933) 4th edition, pp.879-80.

leaders represented their respective communities, and it was the Congress alone that stood for the Sikhs, the Muslims and the Untouchables;⁶² hence the British Government should settle the terms for the transfer of power only with the Congress headed by him.⁶³

In his quest to save the disintegration of Caste orthodoxy and the political power of the Congress, Gandhi offered the Muslims his acceptance for the Muslim's Fourteen Points demands of 1929, earlier rejected by him,⁶⁴ if they sided with Congress to oppose the Depressed Classes demand of political privileges such as the separate electorate, the allocation of which to the Untouchables meant the alleviation of their status from subordination to that of equality with the Hindu upper castes.⁶⁵ When the Muslim leaders refused to oblige, Mahatma in anger, reacted in opposition rejecting the special privileges to the Muslims and Lower Castes because 'the untouchable hooligans will make common cause with

62 'I would not sell the vital interests of the Untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself, in my own person, the vast masses of the Untouchables ... Ambedkar (did not speak) for the whole of the Untouchables in India.... The grant of separate electorate (to the Untouchables) will create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to...' Gandhi quoted in *ibid.*, pp.833-34. The Gandhian claim to protect Untouchables by denying their separate representation was described by the Madras Adi Dravidi Jan Sangha as a "cobra seeking the guardianship of the young frogs". Quoted in D. Keer (1962), p.33.

63 'Congress alone claims to represent the whole of India and all interests... its platform is universal... but I went further, that the Congress claimed also to represent the Princes if they pardon my putting forth that claim.... I wish I could convince all the British public men....that Congress is the only all India wide national organization....the Congress, I say claims to represent all these Minorities.' Gandhi quoted in *Speeches at Round Table, ibid.*, p.879.

64 Congress had valid fears that the British would concede the Muslim demands, embodied in the 14 Points, which were rejected by the Congress in 1929. Hence Nehru wrote to Gandhi in London that 'if I had to listen... the most mitigated nonsense about the [Muslim's] Fourteen Points for any length of time, I would have to consider the desirability of retiring to the South Sea Islands, where there would be some people who were intelligent or ignorant enough not to talk of the Fourteen Points...' Nehru's letter quoted in R.J. Moore, *The Crises of Indian Unity, 1917-1940* (Delhi: 1974), pp.241-42.

65 D. Keer reports an incident in which Gandhi went to Aga Khan, the Muslim leader at the Round Table in 1932, with a copy of the Quran asking him to swear not to support the Depressed Classes demand for special protection in return for conceding all the Muslim demands. This incident is quoted in many books one of them is G. Aloysius, *Nationalism Without a Nation, op.cit.*

Muslim hooligans to kill upper caste Hindus.’⁶⁶ But in the end Mr. Gandhi failed; the British government granted all the ‘Fourteen Constitutional’ safeguards to the Muslims besides giving additional political protections to the Untouchables of India. Gandhi, who considered the additional safeguards to the Untouchables, a blow to Hinduism and his ideology of the four classes,⁶⁷ went on a ‘fast unto death’ until the Government cancelled the political concessions to the Depressed Classes.⁶⁸ In order to save Mahatma’s life,⁶⁹ the untouchables gave up the

66 Gandhi quoted in *Indian Round Table Conference (Second Session) Proceedings*, 1932, Cmd. 3997.

67 Gandhi rejected the additional political safeguards to the Untouchables by arguing that the “separate electorates to the Untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Muslims will never cease to be Muslims by having separate electorates. Do you want Untouchables to remain Untouchables for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma...with the Adult franchise you give the ‘Untouchables’ complete security. *Even the orthodox would have to approach them for votes*”. Gandhi quoted in *The Proceedings of the Round Table Conference*, Dated: 13.11.1931. The Secretary of State for India, however, repudiated his anxieties by clearly saying that besides the additional grants the Untouchables would remain the part of Hinduism. See the complete text: ‘Whilst in view of the numerous appeals we have received from Depressed Class Organizations and generally admitted social disabilities under which they labour and which you have often recognized, we felt it is our duty to safeguard what we believe to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislature. We were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world. You yourself stated in your letter of March 11, that you were not against their representation in the legislatures. Under the government scheme the Depressed Classes will remain the part of the Hindu community and would vote with the Hindu electorates on an equal footing but for the first twenty years, while still remaining electoral part of the Hindu community. They will receive through a limited number of special constituencies, means of safeguarding their rights and interests we are convinced, is necessary under present conditions.’

68 See *Gandhi’s Letter to the Prime Minister of England*, where he says: ‘I have read the British Government’s decision on the representation of minorities and have slept over it... I have resisted your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death... the fast will cease if during its progress the British Government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revised their decision to withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes, whose representation should be elected by the general electorates under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is.’ See for reference, *Proceedings of the Round Table Conference*, dated: 13.11.1931.

69 Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchables, withdrew from British granted Communal Award in order to save Gandhi’s life and his own which was being threatened by the extremist Hindus during Gandhi’s fast unto death. See B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, *op.cit.*

demand for separate representation but this incident left a deep mark. It indicated Gandhi's urge to stop every effort for giving the lower classes a respectable citizenship as it meant a possible destruction of the hierarchical aristocracy of Gandhi's 'Indian family'. Gandhi's 'fast unto death' also explains that he condemned any effort, which by politically organizing the lower classes, deprived the Congress of some eighty million votes of the former that could be used as weightage against the Muslims.⁷⁰ For Gandhi's biographer Pyaralal, Mahatma's 'fast unto death' and opposition to separate electorates for the Untouchables was the 'diplomacy of love' and an 'epic fast' to save the national unity of India;⁷¹ but for the realist politicians Gandhi's 'Fast Unto death' was an attempt of an opportunist to exploit the voting power of Untouchables for the establishment of the Congress rule of elite classes all over India.⁷²

This by no means, means that Gandhi hated Muslims or the Untouchables; he hated none. But it is also a grave reality that, whether in the pursuit of making millions of upper caste Hindus happy or to serve his strategic allies like the Capitalists who accompanied and assisted him throughout the Conference,⁷³ at the

70 Ambedkar, the political leader of the Untouchables, is probably right in observing that 'my experience of cooperation (with the Congress)...proves that while these leaders hope to achieve some object of their own by securing our cooperation they leave us finally in the lurch... Mr. Gandhi from his threatened immolation by sacrificing our political interest... Congress dominated by caste Hindus did not represent our right to elect through a panel of men who truly represented the wishes of our community; but on the other hand, invited men of our community to join Congress promising them support of the caste Hindu majority. This naturally broke and weakened our own political organization and made our men the camp followers of the Congress' *Dawn*, the English Newspaper 29, Dec 1942.

71 See Pyaralal, *Mahatma Gandhi The Last Phase* (Ahmedabad: Nava-Jivan Publishing House, 1965) pp.112-13.

72 See British Prime Minister's reply to Gandhi's Fast unto Death and opposition to the special representation to the Untouchables "*Your fast unto death is solely to prevent the Depressed Classes...from being able to secure a limited no. of representatives of their choosing speaking on their behalf in the legislature which will have dominating influence over their future.*" Letter of British Prime Minister to Gandhi quoted in Dennis Dolton, *Mahatma Gandhi and Nonviolent Power in Action* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1993).

73 Gandhi did not bother to take a single Congress representative with him but it is interesting to see that his capitalist friend, G.D. Birla constantly assisted him in the Conference. Since the emergence of Gandhi on the Indian political scene the Indian capitalists made alliance with him. In 1930s they 'wanted financial supremacy with

critical juncture of 1930s when the political future of India was at stake under the alien rulers, Gandhi seemed to be more interested in the preservation of Hinduism, and seizing of entire political power for the Congress rather than an all India unity of divergent factions and communities. This quest to establish the supremacy of the Congress with an open negation of a special political status to the depressed classes and the Muslims could hardly create an atmosphere of mutual trust between his leadership, the Congress and the Muslims. His claims to bargain power for all of the Indian communities and his open betrayal of the Untouchables' cause put the Muslims in a dilemma. They wondered how they could trust Gandhi and his conception of a free India, who not only denounced their own constitutional rights but equally rejected the political and social status to its own people, the *Sudras*. Gandhi, deliberately or undeliberately, wanted the Muslims to see and believe that Gandhi was a pro-caste Hindu who in his love for orthodox Hinduism did not hesitate to negate the socio-political rights of his own co-religionists; and that Congress, essentially a Hindu body, was the instrument to block every effort, either from the third party or from the victims, that threatened her class interests versus the political interests of the minorities.

The above considerations, rightly or wrongly, brought certain questions in front of the Indian Muslims. Though Gandhi talked about the 'common citizenship' of all Indians, and the equality of all minorities, could the Muslims viewing his conduct, actually trust his goodwill and join the Congress-led movement for united and independent India? Could they believe that after the departure of the neutral power — Britain, Gandhi's 'common citizenship' of India would be based on merit rather than caste?; and could they be certain that his 'Indian family' would be erected along the democratic lines where the elite Hindus and their children would

its necessary adjunct of political supremacy. Indian Capitalists fought their battle in the Round Table Conference behind the scene. See for instance Sir Edward Benthall's confidential letter to its constituents as follows: "*If you look at the result of the last session, you will see that Gandhi and Indian Federated Chamber are unable to point to a single concession wrung from the British government as the result of their visit to St James's Palace. He landed in India with empty hands*". Quoted in Sitrammappa, *The official History of the Congress*, Vol.I, p.519, *op.cit.*

be treated on an equal footing with the Muslims and the untouchables?

The scholars could spend their lives to answer the above questions in one way or the other but Mahatma Gandhi himself did not leave Muslims in any confusion regarding their political future in India. He openly denounced any power sharing deal with the Muslims because the latter were not a distinct nation, instead they were either a 'body of converts from the Hinduism' or part of the Hindu India, hence they did not need any special protection.⁷⁴ It is naive to ignore the ideological differences between the Hinduism and Islam. But Gandhi in his own convictions overruled any such isolation between the two. He might have done this in good faith but Muslims were more shrewd than Gandhi thought of them. They appreciated Gandhi's brotherhood but also explained to him that being a distinct and minority nation they had only one vote against the three votes of the brother Gandhi,⁷⁵ hence they would only cooperate if Gandhi and Hindus assured them their political rights through a concrete pact. Gandhi, in reply denied to accept Muslims even as a minority. His argument was that there were no minorities in the 'technical' sense of Oppressed communities, they were minorities in the numerical sense only, which meant they were no minorities at all.⁷⁶ The above policy of Gandhi provided ample opportunities to the Muslim leaders to describe Gandhi as a 'Hindu revivalist' who was unable to explore a single political compromise with the Muslims or conducting a dialogue that could concede the political concessions to the Muslims. An alliance or pact meant partnership, and partnership meant an even and fair distribution of resources and this doctrine of equality was not only an absolute antithesis to Gandhi's caste ideology but also posed a

74 Gandhi quoted in M.K. Gandhi, *The Way to Communal Harmony* (Ahmedabad: Nava-Jivan Publishing House, 1963).

75 Jinnah quoted in *Pakistan Movement: Historic Documents* (Karachi: Paradise Subscription Agency, 1967), p.180.

76 'I have endeavoured to show that there is no such thing as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed classes there is no minority which is not able to take care of itself.' See Gandhi's article reproduced on 21st October 1938 in the Editorial of the *Harijan* under the title 'The Fiction of Majority'.

blow to the one party doctrine of the Congress.⁷⁷ This was the real tragedy of India that when the Muslim League, the founding party of Pakistan, was pleading the Congress to compromise and conduct a Lucknow Pact type deal to resolve the communal problem of India, Gandhi repudiated the whole question of minorities with his unique logic.

Secondly, in the financial area too, Gandhi seemed to be unable to comprehend the problem of Muslim business and industrialist classes. On the other hand, the Congress's complete dependence on the Capitalist Hindus, showed the revival of a historic alliance between the Brahmin elite and *Vaishya* (the higher merchant caste). By the rules and virtues of this alliance the Hindu capitalists would financially support the Brahmin-led Congress in order to enable the latter to seize the power from Britain and rule the post-independence India undisputedly. And in return the Congress would provide them financial concessions through the Congress-dominated federal Centre in the post-colonial India.⁷⁸ Mr. Gandhi himself admitted that Congress was entirely depended upon the capitalist Hindus.⁷⁹ Moreover he added that he was not a

77 See the antagonistic Muslim reaction to Gandhi's Hinduianization of the movement in the following accounts. Khalid bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase, op.cit.*, pp.25-28. And Abdul Hamid, *Muslim Separatism, op.cit.*, pp.182-89.

78 Ambedkar, the leader of Untouchables of India observed that 'Hindu society being molded in the caste of *Chaturvarna*, wealth has, from very ancient times, been most unevenly distributed. It is the *Bania* who is the heir to wealth and property among the Hindus...the *Bania* (or Hindu capitalist) is money-made and his pursuits are solely for private gains...if money is expected, he is not much above the brute in the conception and manner of life. Only one service on the expenditure side has found a place in his budget. That service is politics. This happened since the entry of Mr. Gandhi as a political leader. That new service is the support of Gandhi in politics...being depended on his money it is impossible for Brahmin (the Congress and Gandhi) to exclude the *Bania* from the position of a governing class...the result is that governing class in India today (i.e., after independence) is a Brahmin-Bania.' B.R. Ambedkar quoted in *Gandhi and Gandhism, op.cit.*, p.9.

79 Mr. Gandhi made to Louis Fischer on June 6, 1942 the following confession. Fischer writes: 'I said I had several questions to ask him (Gandhi) about the Congress party. Very highly placed Britishers, I recalled, had told me that Congress was in the hands of big business and that Mr. Gandhi was supported by the Bombay mill owners who gave him as much money as he wanted. 'What truth is there in these assertions,' I asked. 'Unfortunately, they are true,' he declared simply. 'Congress hadn't enough money to conduct its work. We thought in the beginning to collect four *Anas* (eight pence) from each member per year and operate on that. But it hadn't worked.' 'What proportion of the Congress budget,' I asked, 'is

‘visionary’ but ‘a real *bania* and my business is to obtain *Swaraj*’.⁸⁰ From the perspective of minorities who are always afraid of the financial hegemony of majority, there appeared a strong possibility that in such an alliance only the Hindu middle class and elites would be benefited rather than the Lower Castes and the Muslim minority. His ‘alliance’ and ‘confession’ confirmed the fears of minorities that in independent India the Hindu Capitalist would monopolize business, commerce and industry, as a reward for their investments to the Congress-led ‘freedom movement’, and where the middle and merchant classes of Hindus would rule the Muslim landlords, Muslim industrialists, Muslim officials, Muslim business classes and Muslim middle classes.⁸¹

This was the tragedy of a great man like Mahatma Gandhi who was, when being dubbed as ‘caste Hindu’ and ‘humbug’ by the Muslims and others,⁸² did not take a single politically rational step to refute such an image. He instead seemed unwilling to transfer power even to the ordinary (lower) Hindu masses, whom though he needed, just like he needed the 90 million Muslims, to strengthen his bargaining power, but who were still in his own opinion, ‘dumb millions who did not know their own interests’,

covered by rich Indians? ‘Practically all of it,’ he stated, ‘in this ashram, for instance, we could live much poorly than we do and spend less money. But we do not and the money comes from our rich friends.’ L. Fischer, *The Life Of Mahatma, Gandhi* (New York, 1950).

80 Gandhi quoted in the *Collected Works of Mahatma* by Tendulkar, Vol.2. 1920-29, (1951) p.457.

81 The Muslim apprehensions regarding Gandhi’s *Brahmanization* could be seen in the separatist tones of Punjabi Muslim nationalist politician Muhammad Iqbal, who later emerged as the national poet of Pakistan. Initially a staunch Indian nationalist, as a reaction to Gandhi’s politics, he became the first President of Muslim League who in 1930 presented the idea of separate Muslim states where the Muslim interests would be saved from a Gandhi-headed India.

Also see Iqbal letters to Jinnah in late 1930s in which he stressed upon the latter that ‘alternative to a free Muslim state or states would be a civil war.’ He condemned Gandhi’s universalization of Hinduism and asked Jinnah that ‘a separate Indian federation of Muslim provinces... is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of Hindus.’ See Iqbal’s letter dated June 21, 1937 to Jinnah cited in *Pakistani Movement: Historic Documents, op.cit.*, pp.130-131.

82 Ambedkar in *Gandhi and Congress, op. cit.*, p.145.

hence it was Gandhi to 'decide their future.'⁸³ Not only this, but he seemed to have a positive fear of them also and to quote him, 'I know the only thing that the government dreads is this huge majority I seem to command. They little knew that I dread it even more than they.'⁸⁴ Even his strategy of non-violence appeared to be an absolute check on the masses to prevent the bloody revolution that could threaten the Brahmin caste order and his own leadership.⁸⁵

(5)

Khilafat Fiasco 1919-1922: A Case Study

The above situation leads one to the important question that, if political realism was not the path of Gandhi, then what was his strategy in confronting the Muslim challenge which was a permanent threat to the unity of India? We already know that as early as 1916 the Lucknow Pact was aimed to create concrete political unity between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi could have strengthened this bond of friendship by presenting the Pact to the Government as a mutual accord for the future constitution of India. But his political farsightedness persuaded him to take the opposite track of Non-Cooperation, blending of religion with politics and thus plunging both the communities into Khilafat⁸⁶ euphoria. Instead of power sharing, Gandhi on behalf of the Congress merely offered religious and moral friendship to the Indian Muslims through the uplifting of the Khilafat cause. The agenda of Gandhi's Congress apparently aimed at confining all political power to Hindu middle and elite classes under the absolute divine spell of religion.

83 Gandhi quoted in B.R. Ambedkar (1970), p.70. Also see Gandhi's desire '*I wanted to save them (masses) against themselves.*'

84 Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, 2 March 1922.

85 For Michael Edwards Gandhi's mass mobilization under the principle of nonviolence was an attempt on his part to control the masses' revolution against the upper classes of Hindus. See Michael Edwards, *The Myth of The Mahatma: Gandhi, the British and the Raj* (London: St Edmunds, Suffolk, 1986).

86 The Indian Muslims started the anti-British Khilafat Movement in 1919, under the leadership of Ali brothers to save the Ottoman Caliphate from disintegration by the Allied powers at the end of the First World War. Gandhi assumed its leadership with the consent of the Muslims in 1920-1922.

Gandhi supported the religious cause of the Muslims apparently to achieve the objective of Hindu-Muslim unity,⁸⁷ but one can argue that since Hindu India was a class-divided society where a wide gulf existed between the Hindu elites (Hindu Brahmins) and the lower castes (or untouchables), as well as the Muslims and the Hindus for running an effective national movement complete support of all the Indian communities and castes was indispensable. Gandhi's wisdom convinced him, that the upper caste Hindus could not settle for less and the masses (including the Muslims) could not, ask for more. Thus the Gandhian formula was to blend or join the various strong opposing classes or groups — the caste Hindus, the Muslims and the untouchables — over a dignified twin programme of Khilafat and anti-touchability for the holy cause of national independence. This might be a reason that Gandhi encouraged the hesitant Congressmen⁸⁸ to support the Khilafat because for him this was a great chance for the Hindus to recruit Muslims in the name and for the 'honour of Islam' in the Hindu-dominated movement of Non-Cooperation, and with their (Muslims) help, to 'play the game' i.e., to paralyze the Government in order to achieve the complete transfer of political power to Congress.⁸⁹ Ambedkar may have rightly commented that the 'slogan of nationalism' launched by

87 Gandhi believed at the advent of Khilafat that 'such an opportunity to unite the two would not come in thousand years'. Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, 1920.

88 Nearly all the Congressmen were afraid of the fact that once the religious sentiments of Mohammedans had been aroused, they could easily turn against the Hindus. See B.R Ambedkar who held that Gandhi was the only Hindu who wanted to support the Khilafat in the Congress. (p. 146) Hindu groups feared that massive Muslim mobilization along religious lines would encourage the latter to invite the Muslim Ameer of Afghanistan to invade India, which meant the 'the subjugation of India to Muslim Raj' Ambedkar, *Pakistan or the Partition of India, op.cit.*, p.146.

89 Gandhi told the hesitant Congressmen to join the Khilafat cause because the Muslims will remain busy with their Khilafat agitation and 'make sacrifices [whereas] the Hindus will play the game and join them in the campaign of Non-cooperation... (it is the only way therefore for the Muslims to carry on an effective struggle on behalf of the honour of Islam is to take up (Congress-sponsored) Non-cooperation in real earnest... the whole thing depends upon the Muslims themselves. If they will but help themselves, Hindu help will come and the Government, great and mighty though it is, had to bend before this irresistible force. Gandhi in *Young India*, 9th June, 1920.

Gandhi was not to sacrifice anything but to 'reinforce' the nationalists' own traditional and 'inscriptive privileges'.⁹⁰

By taking up the trivial cause of Khilafat,⁹¹ that had nothing to do with any real political problem of India, Gandhi utilized the physical strength of the Muslims in order to transform Congress into a mighty political power. One must appreciate the political strategy of the Mahatma who played with religious sentiments, and emotionally compelled the Muslims, who since 1885 were reluctant to join the pre-dominantly Hindu body of Congress, to throw themselves to the voice of Mahatma in the hope to save the fragile institution of Ottoman Caliphate.⁹² To the Muslim masses it was a religious cause without any serious consideration for Indian freedom whereas for Gandhiji it was a weapon for his own ends. It was a religious rather than a political bargain. He could not ask directly the Muslims not to eat Cow, but he was tactful enough to plan that 'by laying my life for the Khilafat, I ensure safety of the Cow, that is, my religion from the Mussalman knife'.⁹³ The Hindu-Muslim unity over the Khilafat movement was therefore based on shaky rather than a concrete political foundation. It quickly collapsed and transformed into a dreadful communal 'civil war' when due to the breaking out of violence at Chaura Chauri,⁹⁴ Gandhi who was strongly committed to the Hindu doctrine of *ahimsa* or nonviolence, unilaterally abandoned the movement when it was at its zenith.

90 See Ambedkar, *Gandhi and Congress*, *op.cit.*, p.16.

91 It was a trivial issue because the Indian Muslims were determined to keep the Caliphate, when the masses of Turkey themselves wanted to abolish the Caliphate making Turkey a Republic.

92 Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of untouchables and an important witness of Gandhi's politics, was compelled to accept that 'The truth is that the effect of its taking up the Khilafat cause upon the dimensions of the Congress was tremendous. The Congress was really made great and powerful not by the Hindus but by the Muslims. After the Khilafat Resolution of 1920 the Muslims who were outside it trooped in the Congress... Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition*, *op.cit.*, p.147; also see Swami Shardhanand's statement in *Liberator*, 22 April 1926.

93 Gandhi stated in *Young India*, 1920.

94 At Chaura Chauri the reacted masses burnt the police station and killed four to five policemen. The Muslim leadership was in jail and Gandhi without taking a consent from any Muslim leader called off the movement, because it had violated the principle of nonviolence.

Irrespective of the fact whether Gandhi was justified in calling off the Khilafat movement or not, the important thing was that the Muslims lost trust in Gandhi's leadership, once and for all. The Muslims, who believed in the holy *jihad* for a righteous cause,⁹⁵ felt betrayed by the Hindu philosophy of *Satyagraha* or *ahimsa* that had spoiled all their efforts to save the holy Caliph.⁹⁶ It appeared to the Muslims that Gandhi had utilized or rather exploited their religion and utilized their physical power to strengthen his own prestige and power of Congress. Instead of pacifying differences it could only separate the Muslims from a national course, led by the Hindu-dominated Congress.⁹⁷ But by uplifting a pan-Islamic cause he more than anyone else, encouraged the Muslims for their separate religious nationhood which is antagonistic to Hinduism and resides outside India in the valleys of Turkey and Arabia. Nehru was right in praising the Khilafat euphoria as a 'compassable force', behind which flourished a 'distinguished Muslim nationalism', looking 'beyond the frontiers of India'.⁹⁸ And when this phase of religious extremism was abandoned by Gandhi, India found itself on the verge of civil war. Thanks to Mahatma who took the Indians away from the interest-based politics of political dialogue and pacts diplomacy to the dreadful path of communal-based politics only to inflaming their conflict. His prescription for the political anxieties and financial apprehensions of Muslim was to denounce their political existence and to ignore their financial concern by merely acknowledging their religious identity.⁹⁹ By organizing the bulk of

95 Abdul Hamid. *op.cit.*, p.59.

96 For Abdul Hamid, Gandhi stirred up the religious sentiments of the Muslims, but at the same time crushed them and in this way made them arch enemy of his non-violent political strategies. *Muslim Separatism, op.cit.*, p.47.

97 Mohamed Ali, the comrade of Gandhi and prominent Muslim leader of the Khilafat Committee after 1922, became a staunch opponent of Gandhi and asked the Muslims to remain aloof from the Congress because 'Mr. Gandhi is working under the influence of the communalist Hindu *Mahasabha*. He is fighting for the supremacy of Hinduism and the submergence of Muslims.' Mohamed Ali quoted in Khalid bin Sayeed, 1960, *op.cit.*, p.78.

98 Nehru, *Discovery of India, op.cit.*

99 'For me' stated Gandhi, 'the question of these classes is predominately moral and religious. The political impact important though it is, dwindles insignificant compared to the moral and religious issue' and he adds, 'I want to save themselves

Hindus and Muslims along religious and communal lines he brought them directly against each other. The mass mobilization along religious lines aggravated Hindu-Muslim antagonism, which hitherto existed only below the surface, now flamed up into open violence all over India.¹⁰⁰ One of the worse communal riots swept all over India, between 1923-27, and tore the banners of Hindu Muslim unity into pieces. An unprecedented tradition of attacking the mosques by the Hindus and disgracing the temples by the Muslims was observed between 1922-27.¹⁰¹ Though both the communities were responsible for this barbarianism, but quite interestingly the Hindus as well as the Muslims placed the entire responsibility on the shoulders of Mahatma Gandhi.¹⁰²

In the wake of communal politics the Hindu extremism revived — in the form of *Shudhi* and *Sanghtan* — whereas the Muslim extremism emerged in the form of *Tanzeem* and *Tableegh* only to widen the gulf between the two communities. Although the neutral sources observed that the Hindu Muslim antagonism — in the form of these extremist movements — was ‘naturally aggravated by militant Hindu nationalism which had an important element in the Congress party.’¹⁰³ But one could argue that since 1920, Congress ceased to be an independent and rational organization, and rather, it became a prisoner of Gandhism; who was the ‘permanent super President’ of the Congress and was not

against themselves.’ *Collective Works*, compiled and edited by Tendulkar, (Vol.2. 1920-1929), p.233.

100 Percival, *British Impact on India, op.cit.*, pp.159-160.

101 Between 1923-26, there were as many as 72 communal riots against 16 in the course of 22 years from 1900. See for reference, G. Minaret in *Nation Without a Nation, op.cit.*, p.149.

102 The Hindus blamed Gandhi for all the casualties and destruction they received from the Muslim fanatics: ‘you asked the Hindus to make common cause with the Muslims on the Khilafat question and now that the Khilafat is over, the awakened Muslims have proclaimed a kind of holy war against us Hindus.’ The Muslims justified their violence against the Hindus by saying ‘we simple-minded people have been unjustly treated. You, by your agitation, won over Ali Brothers to your side and you attacked the famous institution at Aligarh built with patient care by Sir Syed Ahmed. Your boycott of councils prevented our able men from going to the councils to the prejudice of the interest of your community.’ Tendulkar, ed., *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 2, p.130.

103 Percival, *op.cit.*

answerable to anyone 'except his inner voice'.¹⁰⁴ And throughout the period of communal rage Mahatma did not come forward with any constructive plan that could prevent the spread of communal poison engulfing the body politic of India.¹⁰⁵ It was the Muslim League that approached the Congress in 1924 with the six-points constitutional settlement based on the principles of Lucknow pact.¹⁰⁶ It was an irony that when it comes to the compromise with the party [Muslim League] who was to take the blame for the Muslim separatism in India, Gandhi-headed Congress rejected these constitutional safeguards and hence 'lost', as noted by Percival, the 'last practical chance of preserving the unity of India'.¹⁰⁷

As discussed earlier, in 1917 the Congress and the Muslim League agreed to settle the communal dispute on the basis of quid pro quo through the Lucknow Pact. A responsible leadership of the Congress could seek the rapprochement on the Lucknow Pact, by leaving aside the religious issues, and then on the basis of the Hindu-Muslim political entente could force the Government for fair and efficient devolution of power.¹⁰⁸ Gandhi, instead of extending the political implications of Lucknow Pact opted for the opposite track. He seemed to be completely unaware of the complexities involved in the use of religion for personal and political advantage of one community in the class-divided India. He tried to change the nature of Hindu Muslim relations from the realm of interest-based to religion-and-community-based politics. As a consequence of this policy the Hindu Muslim hatred reached its maximum zenith,¹⁰⁹ He did not seem to realize that the Muslims did not want religious or social unity with their Hindu brothers, but on the contrary they wanted security of jobs in administration,

104 Nehru, *Discovery of India*.

105 In all those days he invested much of his time in his ashrams and in his other constructive works such as hand spinning etc. For reference, see Robert Payne, *op.cit.*

106 S.K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi, op.cit.*, pp.211-212.

107 Percival, *op.cit.*, p.110.

108 Same was the desire of political realists, like Jayakar, Tilak, C.R. Dass, S.Bose, and Jinnah. See S.K. Majumdar, *op.cit.*

109 See, for instance, the fact that between 1923-26 there was as many as 72 communal riots against 16 in the course of 22 years from 1900. B.B. Misra, (1976).

fixation of representation in the legislatures through separate electorates, provision of equal opportunities in the fields of capital and finance, protection of their cultural and religious identity by constitutional safeguards and an independent and united India with full provincial autonomy to the Muslim and Hindu majority provinces. But Gandhi who emerged as a partial saint in politics, seemed to be reluctant to address all the above issues which came under the premises of political dialogue, compromises, negotiations and *quid pro quo* etc.¹¹⁰ He though wanted the power for the Congress yet unwilling to share it with others, remained unrealistic and rather indifferent to the grievances and demands of the Muslims. Gandhi's reluctance to acknowledge the political and constitutional rights of the Muslims and other minorities; his claim to represent entire India; his declaration that the Congress alone represented all the communities of India; his plea that it was with the Congress alone that the Britain should settle power; and that it was Congress alone that would take the delivery of power from British Raj, rendered him an autocrat. Thus he could hardly be in a position to apply the politics of realism and sharing of power with the Muslims and other minorities to live up to the communal challenge of India in order to save the country from the tragic consequences of Muslim separatism (1940-47). Instead of bringing the Muslims and Hindus on a joint economic-political platform, that could gradually bring harmony to their religious hatred he led them to the door of communal war.

Furthermore, ironically, when the depressed classes and the Muslims were painting Gandhi as a 'humbug' and 'caste Hindu' Mahatma Gandhi did not take a single politically rational step to rectify this image, perhaps in order to retain a hold on the millions of Hindus. Instead, he denied the formers, political existence by rejecting their constitutional safeguards (1931) and by avoiding the

110 Gokhle, the political mentor of Gandhi believed that "India does not trust him on occasions where delicate negotiations have to be on with care and caution and where restraint and tact will make for success, acting on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread.... fear that when the history of the negotiations.... written with impartial accuracy, it will be found that his actual achievements were not as meritorious as is popularly imagined." Gokhle quoted in M.R. Jayakar, *Story Of My Life*, Vol.1, p.317.

latter by declaring them the 'body of converts from Hinduism' and hence not entitled to any power-sharing alliance of parity.

In Gandhi's politics of unrelatedness towards Muslims and his strategic use of religion and caste ideology to preserve the traditional balance of power in favour of Congress, the Muslims saw the decline of their socio-political status from the first rate to the second rate community. Thus the Gandhian attitude to the Hindu-Muslim problem appeared to be communal. The more he propagated Hindu-Muslim unity the more reactionary and conscious became the communities of their differences and separate identities from each other. His efforts to emphasize religious and moral unity, with the ambition to monopolize power, appeared to the Muslims as an attempt to depoliticize them, and as a result they became increasingly hostile and antagonistic. This antagonism flourished and nurtured between the two communities, from 1920 to 1947 to such an extent that Ambedkar described the whole phase as civil war between the Hindus and Muslims interrupted by small intervals of peace.¹¹¹

Where Gandhi's nationalism identified itself with that of Hindus, Jinnah in 1940 came forward with the Muslim demand for Pakistan as an alternative to Gandhi's nationalism. From 1940 onwards Jinnah did not reject Gandhi's use of religious language, he rather appreciated the honesty of the latter in presenting Congress as a Hindu body and in this way justified the creation of Pakistan on the basis of the 'two-nation theory'.

111 Ambedkar, *Pakistan or Partition of India, op.cit.*, p.75.