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Communal Violence in Colonial India: An Analysis of Gandhi's Response

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ABSTRACT

Communal violence refers to conflicts and clashes among various religious or ethnic communities. In the context of colonial India, the main communities Hindus and Muslims, also there were other religious groups involved like Sikhs and Hindus. However, the Hindu- Muslim communal tensions were particularly pronounced and had a considerable impact on the political and social atmosphere. In colonial India, inter-communal violence had far-reaching effects including influencing the political discourse. The disputes between the communities and the subsequent separation of India and Pakistan. The socio-political dynamics of the area are still affected by the consequences of this violence, which is felt to date. Gandhi responded to communal strife in colonial India with a firm moral stance. Gandhi and a strong commitment to religious harmony, non-violence and the unity of all the communities. According to him, only through peaceful means and the settling of disputes, independence could be attained. Therefore, this paper tries to explore communalism and the nature of communal violence in the colonial period. This paper also analyses M. K. Gandhi as a political and popular leader, as well as his responses to inter-communal conflict and communal harmony.

Keywords: Communal violence, colonial India, Hindus, Muslims, Gandhi.

Introduction

Communal violence in colonial India is characterized by deep-rooted religious, ethnic and socio-political tensions. The period of British colonial rule, spanning from 18th to mid- 20th century, witnessed numerous instances of violent conflicts between different religious and communal gropus. These episodes of violence left an indelible mark on the social fabric of the subcontinent, shaping its trajectory for years to come. India with its diverse religious and cultural communities, was an ideal breeding ground for communal tensions during the colonial era. The British employed various strategies to exercise control, which inadvertently exacerbated divisions and heightened inter-communal hostilities. By exploiting religious differences and implementing policies that favoured certain gropus, the colonial administration inadvertently sowed the seeds of communal strife. The communal violence in colonial India can be attributed to a multitude of factors. First and foremost, the British employed a policy of 'divide and rule' i.e. deliberately pitting communities against one another to maintain their dominance. They exploited religious and cultural fault lines, fanning the flames of religious differences for political gains (Verghese, 2016)

Census and the Emergence of Religious Consciousness in Colonial India

Census enumeration in colonial India played a role to understands the discourse of the relationship between Hindus, and Muslims as well as other religions. The Census of 1871 was an attempt to delineate age, caste, religion occupation, education and infirmity. The population was delineated according to religion, caste, province and other classification. As per the 1871 census, the number of Hindus was 28,863,978 and Mahomedans was 1,857,857. There was also a particular division among Hindus based on caste and the Mahomedans were also divided into various types (Census Report of Madras, 1871).

Th census of India 1881 where in the whole population of Bengal the Hindus number was 45,452,806/ 65.36 per cent whereas the Mahomedans were 21,704,724/ 31.21 per cent. At the same time the Christians 128,153/ .18 per cent, the Buddhists 155,809/ .22 per cent. Also, there are other religions found in the schedules and professed by 2,095,369 followers. This can be said that out of 1000 people of all religions in these provinces 966 are either Hindu or Mahomedans (Census Report of Bengal, 1881).

Nearly 10 years after the first general census of India, which was conducted on February 17, 1881, the second one was conducted on February 26th 1891. According to the census report of 1891, there were 72 per cent of the population of India comes under Hinduism. And one-fifth of the total population has faith in Islam (Census Report of India 1891).

The Historicity of Communal Violence

During colonialism, the religious notion of community has dominated society to the point where it is now almost always used interchangeably with religious communalism. There are two different types of analysis: one approach from below and one from above. The analysis below that follows assumes that primal attachments continue to be significant among Indians at the grassroots level. These attachments based on identities such as language, religion, origin and kinship connections are supposed to flow more or less naturally into modern communalism. The other analysis starts from above. According to this, communalism and social self-identification are the results of cunning colonial practices of divide-and-rule or the deliberate exploitation of certain community symbols by the elite (Kooiman, 1995: 2123).

Conflicts between various religious, racial, or ethnic groups are referred to as communal violence, and it can happen in both directly governed provinces and princely states. During colonial India, certain provinces were directly administered by the British Raj while others were princely states that maintained some autonomy under British suzerainty. Violence among communities was not restricted to a single kind of organizational structure. Both princely states and directly ruled regions saw community strife.

The colonial census procedures, which began in the 1870s, strengthened already-existing societal divisions by establishing a countable Hindu majority and Muslim minority. The enumeration and classification served as the foundation for representative electoral systems. Later on, the gradual development of representative political institutions (religion-based organizations) began around the end of the 19th century. Of course, how access to these new institutions was organized was of utmost significance (Kooiman, 1995).

Separate Electorates in British India

The Council Acts of 1861 and 1892 established a small system of consultation, but these Acts did not provide any constitutional protection for minority concerns. Thus, political protections for minorities were initially outlined in the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. On the Other hand, Muslims became more worried as the formation of the Indian National Congress, pushed for popular elections and political representation. Especially because a property qualification for the right to vote would always place them in a minority position on account of their poverty. As a result, in October 1906, the Aga Khan led a delegation of Muslim "men of property and influence" to wait for Governor-General *Lord Minto* in Shimla and request that seats be reserved for Muslim electorates to vote separately (Kooiman, 1995, p. 2124).

In addition, the Government of India Act (1919), for the first time embraced the principle of direct election at all levels of political representation. However, both in the provinces and the centre, the communal electorate principle was used more broadly. Additionally, separate elections for Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, and Europeans were established.

According to Bipan Chandra, a nationalist historian, Separate electorates are "one of the poisonous trees that were to yield a bitter harvest in later years",who believes that colonial practices carry a unique responsibility for the emergence of communalism in India (Chandra, 1988, p.142). Supporting this statement, Rajni Kothari says that the adoption of communal representation ultimately gave rise to the "two-nation theory" (Kothari 1970).

The British are largely credited with taking three actions during the first phase of appeasing Hindus and suppressing Muslim aspiration; the first was the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, in which the British government banned the Persian language, and meanwhile the introduction of English as the official language. Landlordsim the Bengal province known as Zamindars were given proprietary and hereditary rights over the land, and the British government fixed their revenue obligations to them. Under this system, the massive land transfer from the Muslim landed gentry to the Hindu land-holding class. The Malabar Rebellion in 1921, the Titu Mir rebellion in 1830, the Faraizi movement in the 1830s and 1840s, and other significant Hindu-Muslim communal disturbances during the colonial era were essentially class struggles led by Muslim cultivators against Hindu landlords and the British (Chaudhuri, 2015). Therefore, the British-Muslim relationship deteriorated as a result of the 1857 Indian Sepoy Mutiny. Although both Muslims and Hindus took part in the uprising, a sizable portion of British society believed it to be Muslim-led (Kabir, 1969).

Therefore, the British started raising Muslim communalism as a counterweight to the emerging Hindu nationalism. According to many historians, this British policy manifested itself in many ways,the partition of Bengal in 1905, the Minto-Morley Reform of 1909, and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 (Chaudhuri, 2015). Bengal experienced static communalism. Hindu revivalism and Pan-Islamism alternated with manifestations of lower-class discontent, communal hostility and anti-imperialism (Das, 1990).

Hindu- Muslim Relationship

The relationship between Hindus and Muslims in colonial India was complex and multifaceted. British ideas of imperial requirements strategic and economic led directly to the process of aligning political India with geographical India. The British constructed an essentially unitary state structure in colonial India in contrast to the loosely woven network of supremacy claimed by pre-colonial empires. To achieve this, it was necessary to carefully manipulate two of the most important dialectics that have existed in the history of the subcontinent's internal conflict i.e. between the all-India nationalism and communalism. The lowest strata of Indian society were penetrated by a powerful administrative device that did not formally distinguish between bureaucracy and political administration. The British also entered into several treaty agreements with political rulers of princely states whose domain they have already deemed to gain political autonomy in internal affairs (Jalal, 1995).

The boundaries between Hindus and Muslims particularly in Northern India started to be set before the end of the nineteenth century. Hindus started to prefer the Hindi language written in Nagari script over the Urdu language and Muslims on the other hand preferred the Nastaliq script. Additionally, each of the two communities developed a version of their history as well as their position in India which reflected a sense of being in danger. For Hindus, it was summarized in the phrase 'the dying race' and for Muslims the word 'backwardness'. Communalism meant intensifying differences while forming identity (Thursby, 1975).

In modern India, there is a question regarding the nature of mediaeval Hindu- Muslim interactions. Before 200 years of British colonial rule, which ended in 1947, large areas of the Indian subcontinent were under Muslim governmental power during the Mughal rule. There was the demand that the state correct historical wrongs regarding India's dominant religion are a result of the rise of the Hindu nation. Hindus' beliefs were allegedly suppressed as well as their institutions were regularly violated from 1200 CE onwards while under Muslim authority. Hinduism's most recognisable emblem is the centre point and 3,000 mosques are alleged to have been constructed on the destruction of the 60,000 Hindu temples which were reportedly destroyed. The most famous temple location is in Ayodhya, India, known as the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. The alleged desecration of the movement's holy site, where a mosque was built over the remains of the Rama temple in the sixteen century, was the subject of most political controversy in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Talbot, 1995).

The interaction between Hindus and Muslims predates Islam itself. On both of South India's coasts, Arab traders had established their settlements long before even the Prophet was born. They had shown little interest in the major religious disputes which was raged throughout the subcontinents. However, after becoming Muslims their perspective has shifted. They undoubtedly made some contributions to the new religious ideas that were emerging in South India at that time. When the Arabs were converted to Islam South India's three major religions which is Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism were engaged in a constant war of control in the region. The Arab traders were welcomed by the Indians because they brought wealth from other nations even though they were no longer a seagoing people. During this time there were friendly and cordial relations between Indians and Arabs (Qureshi, 1955).

Antagonism between Hindu and Muslim

The disparity in Hindu and Muslim populations in Colonial India is one of the main problems. Almost every nation in the world experiences this problem to varied degrees and in different ways. The minority community is not centred in one area, unlike Protestants in Ireland who frequently reside in Ulster. Although it is mostly found in North-Western India and Eastern Bengal, its numbers are neither too small to be disregarded nor too large to be regarded as numerical superiority. These statistical statistics revealed various forms of conflict that these rival groups often produce depending on their rate of development or decline. Unfortunately, religious practices that merely serve to incite hatred between the two faiths have a tremendous negative impact on Indians. For Hindus, the cow held high respect and on the other hand, the yearly Muhammadan celebration known as BaqrTd includes ceremonial sacrifices of cows and other animals. The Muhammadans of the town may be attending worship in the nearby mosque when Hindu music is played through the street in connection with an idol procession or any wedding celebration. The music might cause an explosion of hostility and that led to a major argument (Report of Indian Statutory Commission, 1930).

Gandhi's return to India and Communal Upheaval

Gandhi returned from South Africa on January 9th 1915. His rise as a public figure in Indian politics was started then. The first thing he did was spent some time to understand the then political situation of British India as well as he observed the religious condition. Soon he captured a special attention by the masses through his political reputation.The political machinery which was available to Gandhi was the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress had been initiated in a moderate way to tackle the then Indian political situation (Bamford, 1925).

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 though he had some popularity in South Africa regarding his Satyagraha but he didn't get an entry to the highest Congress circles in India. The moderators of that time considered Satyagraha as unconstitutional on the other side the extremist could not accept the idea of non-violence. At that time Muslims were having a strong anti-British feeling because of the Anti- Turkish activities of British. The anti-British feelings of the Muslims further bothered after November 1918 because of the uncertainties regarding the future of Khilafat. Then the Muslims started joining the Satyagraha and they also helped Gandhi to lunch non-cooperation movement, which was lunched for the cause of Khilafat on 1st August 1920 which has full support of Central Khilafat Committee but there was no approval of Congress at that time but later in September 1920 it was accepted by Congress. Apparently the Gandhi- Muslims combination brought regarding the rise of Gandhi as an eminent role in Indian political scenario as well as the mass organization of the Congress (Dastagir, 2002).

Gandhi states, Khilafat cause as a sense of moral responsibilities for him to take up the issue. Simultaneously Khilafat movement was a important opportunity to promote several causes he added. Like the cause of Hindu- Muslim unity. That is the reason he started his friendship with Ali brothers and cooperate them with the Khilafat movement. In Gandhi's words, "I hope my alliance with Mahomedans to achieve a threefold and to obtain justice in the face of odds with the method of Satyagraha and to show its efficacy over all other methods, to secure Mahomedian friendship for the Hindus and there by internal peace also, and last but not least to transfer ill- will into affection for the British and their constitution which in spite of its imperfections has weathered many a storm" (Brown, 1972, p. 194).). So basically here Gandhi described his friendship with Mahomedans was important because he wanted Satyagraha as a success and then he wanted a Hindu Muslim friendship and also he wanted the transfer of ill-will which he suggested to Mahomedans into affection. He started Satyagraha with a main motto that resolving the conflict between Hindu- Muslim as the Hindu- Muslim unity is a prerequisite for India's future peace (Brown, 1972).

But Gandhi taking up the Khilafat issue has its own short coming in many sense. According to Dr. Ambedkar, "The Khilafat movement was started by the Mohammedans. It was taken up by Mr. Gandhi with tenacity and faith, which might have surprised many Mohammedans themselves. There were many people who doubted the ethical basis of the Khilafat movement and tried to dissuade Mr. Gandhi taking any part in the Movement the ethical basis of which was so questionable" (Ambedkar, 1945, pp. 146-147). At the same time one among the all who doubted the Gandhi's logic in Khilafat issue was Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar i.e. the very founder of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Once when he met Gandhi he asked Gandhi, "As a matter of fact, we have in Bharat people belonging to different faiths like Hindusim, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. So, instead of talking about the unity of all those peole, what is the rationale behind speaking only Hindu- Muslim unity? Gandhi stated, Through this, my idea is to create a love for this nation in the mind of Muslims here" (Palkar, 2020, p. 99). But Dr. Hedgewar was not satisfied by this answer. Because he gave Gandhi the example of the active Muslim participants who were actually working for the freedom struggle like jinnah, Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan etc. and he has the fear that this slogan will create disturbances in Muslim minds and regarding that Gandhi said that he does not have that fear.

There were two key areas where he and Gandhi diverged. One reason Jinnah was uneasy with the Congress's shift toward agitational politics was that he was a liberal constitutionalist of the old school, like his gurus Dadabhai Naoroji and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Second, he opposed Gandhi's use of terminology from Hindu and Muslim religions to inspire the population since he was a devout secularist. In addition to rejecting references to Hindu idioms like Ram Rajya, he also despised the Khilafat movement, which he derided as antiquated. He cautioned Gandhi that using religious idioms to rally the populace against British rule would cause Hindus and Muslims to continue to be divided and damage the the nation's cohesiveness. At the Nagpur session of the Congress in 1920, he was heckled for his refusal to address Muhammad Ali, the founder of the Khilafat movement, as "Maulana," and he stormed out in disgust. He immediately resigned from the Congress for this reason (Ayoob, 2020).

Furthermore, the growing involvement of the Mullahs disturbed Jinnah's secular mental makeup because even the most ardent leaders lacked appropriate data and, in his opinion, lacked a clear perspective on the subject. Jinnah was dissatisfied to fight for such a cause (Siddiqi, 2013). Jinnah's perception was completely pan- Indian nationalist. He didn't want to fall in any provincial source of support.

Again according to Jawaharlal Nehru, "Thus the Indian Muslims sought to drive some psychological satisfaction from the contemplation of Islam's great past, chiefly in other countries, especially in Turkey, practically the only power left" (Nehru, 1946: p 346). Therefore, these findings make it quite evident where and why Gandhi's hopes were disappointed. It is completely vivid that Gandhi had two vital obejectives when he was taking up the Khilafat issue which was a purly religious issue of Muslims by thinking that it as the best way to involve Muslims who were, for the most part, staying out of the freedom effort. But we must keep in our mind that Gandhi's decision to support Khilafat movement was in all reality, solely based on his own judgement and knowledge.

The discourse on Partition of Bengal: Shift from Nationalism to Communalism

The discourse of partition of Bengal happened two times. First when Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905 and second in 1947 follwoed by the horrific clashes between Hindus and Muslims. An organized protest calling for the vivisection of the region on the basis of religion came before the second and final partition of Bengal. The so-called bhadralok, or "respectable people," of Bengali society, who had controlled its nationalist politics ever before Bengal's first partition, led this effort. In fewer than 40 years, bhadralok politics has completed a full turn, shifting from nationalist goals to more local issues. Explaining these shifts in bhadralok politics and interpreting their seeming move from "nationalism" to "communalism" will be the main goals of this work (Chatterjee, 1994).

Again the relationship between Indian nationalsima nd communalism is bit complex both in the terms of ideology and political practice. Again many aspects of Indian nationalism was not secular in sense. Nationalist campaigns frequently used religious themes and iconography to gain support from the public The primary building block of Indian civilization, according to colonial opinion, was the community as outlined by religion. 'Sarvadharma sambhava', or the equality of all communities and the spirit of cooperation amongst them, was the'secular' nationalist ideal. However, the majority of nationalist theorists tended to link being an Indian with being a Hindu and to characterize national identity in terms of religion. Indian nationalism also lacked fully secular ideologies and philosophical foundations. The writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as the type of "extremist" nationalism they encouraged, were particularly egregious examples of this in Bengal (Chatterjee, 1994).

In case of Bengal, the very common assumptions were that, "The Muslims of Bengal were inherently communal and separatist, and their communal sentiments could be mobilised at will by 'elite' leaders for their own ends. There was a division of class and community. Other historians have drawn attention to the similarity between Bengal's "community" and "class" divisions, which meant that social conflicts, whether in urban centres or rural areas, could easily take on communal dimensions. But again the roots of the process of communalism have been seen to connect within Muslim society. Basically the Muslim peasants has been seen as a possession towards the 'peasant-communal ideology' which mobilised by various Muslim provincial leadership in thirties (Chatterjee, 1994).

Another argument claims that "the conflict between zamindar and jotedar in East Bengal" is where Bengal's communalism dynamic is to be found. But once more, it is thought that this conflict gave rise to a Muslim-specific communalism that "constantly fed the Muslim separatist movement in the province as a whole. While the specifics of agricultural organization and modalities of conflict are hotly debated, it is generally acknowledged that the struggle in rural Bengal was channelled into the campaign for Pakistan because of the "irrational strength of Muslim identity. Regardless of their merits, each of these arguments raises the possibility perhaps unintentionally that Bengali communalism was primarily a Muslim phenomenon. As a result, historians now believe that either no equivalent Hindu communalism developed or, if it did, that it was too small and insignificant to have made a substantial

contribution to the events that gave rise to Pakistan. This presumption in turn supports the dangerously false idea that Muslims are more inherently "communal" than other religious communities (Chatterjee, 1994).

The Bhadralok communalism has failed to have the attention of Historians for a reason. The assumption that communal identities must necessarily be built around certain religious (or "sacred") symbols, such as the question of music before mosques perform korbani (cow slaughter), or cow protection, has become too prevalent. Communal violence has been mostly light up by these issues.

Communal Violence and Gandhi's Response

Mahatma Gandhi heard that retaliation killings might take place on or after August 15, 1947, the communal riots that occurred in Calcutta on August 16, 1946, had not yet completely faded from the public's memory. The Hindus and Muslims shared an atmosphere of fear and mistrust, which heightened the sense that violence could break out at any moment. Gandhiji decided to travel to Calcutta in order to stop the recurrence of the previous year's events. The Mahatma chose to stay in Calcutta and handle the sectarian issue alone on August 15, 1947, as the rest of India celebrated India's declaration of independence. Gandhiji's request to Suhrawardy was a momentous one that to live with him under the same roof and work for peace and harm reduction. By the eyar of 1947 there was a growth of communal feelings among Hindus and Muslims and the impact of communal riots was more broad and had even reach to the rural ares of Bengal. The development of group communal identities, which facilitated community identification and sharpened. By 1947, the Congress had also made the decision to live in a Hindu state on their own rather than endure more suffering under a Muslim State. This decision followed the partition of Bengal. They started to flee in the direction of the west when large-scale migration got under way. Despite the fact that the middle classes were unsure of the outcome of such a significant decision, the partition was brought about by the widespread mobilization of communal feelings (Pachauri, 2000-2001).

Gandhiji had first chosen to travel to Calcutta before continuing on to Noakhali to continue his peace campaign from there. He then decided to travel to Bihar. On August 9, 1947, he arrived in Calcutta and saw that Muslims there were "living in terror". On August 10, Gandhiji was waited on by the secretary of the Calcutta District Muslim League, who asked him to remain in Calcutta for at least two more days. Gandhiji consented provided they ensured Noakhali's tranquillity. In addition, he threatened to starve them to death if things went bad on August 15 there. Initially apprehensive, the Muslims who eventually caved and assured him that Noakhai would remain peaceful. Suhrawardy was thought to be responsible for the killings on August 16, 1946, hence the Hindus were feeling hostile (Pachauri, 2000-2001).

Gandhiji tried to talk with the leaders that, "I have come here to serve not only Muslims but Hindus, Muslims and all alike. I am going to put myself under the protection. You are welcome to turn against me" (Pachauri, 2000-2001: p. 771-772). And their reply was, "We do not want your sermons on ahimsa. You go away from here" (Pachauri, 2000-2001: p 772). But Gandhi hold on, "You can obstruct my work, even kill me. I won't invoke the help of the police. What is the use of your dubbing me an enemy of Hindus? How can I, who is a Hindu by birth, a Hindu of creed and a Hindu of Hindus in my way of living, be an enemy of Hindus?" (Pachauri, 2000-2001: p 772).

Fasting as a tool of Satyagraha for Gandhi

There was a sudden turn for the Calcutta city happened in 31st August 1947. From 1st September there was a beginning of anti- Muslim riots started in Central Calcutta. At that time Gandhi suggested for evacuation if things get worsen. At the same time a truck carrying passengers of some thirty people, while passing by a graveyard throw grenades towards the graveyard and instantly two young Muslim people has been killed. By the time Gandhi reached there they were killed and suddenly Gandhi decided to keep a fast for the return of sanity among the people of Calcutta.

Meanwhile C. Rajagopalchari, the Governor to visit Gandhi and discussed with him regarding the fast and Rajaji asked him,

Was this fast is about the success of his 14th and 15th August that he had become so anxious so see peace resorted in Calcutta through fast? What would he have done if he had been away at Noakhali as planned already? He should allow the Government of the state some time to bring peace. In reply Gandhi states, his fast was not the result of any subtle pride on his own command over the people of Calcutta. The Government were surly to pursue their own course of action for the restoration of peace. But should he remained idle for even twenty four hours and do nothing in the meanwhile? His obvious duty was to go to every citizen of Calcutta and argue with him until he was convinced that any attack upon the Muslim community, as such, was wrong. But that was physically not possible so he had decided upon the other alternative of a fast. Then people's heart might be touched and perhaps his reason would appeal to them more readily (Bose, 1953, p. 274).

At the same time public agitated in Punjab was also happening. Regarding that Gandhi states, "I have adverted above an urgent call for me to go to Punjab. But now the Calcutta bubbles seems to have burst, with what face can I go Punjab? The weapon which has hitherto proved infallible for me is fasting" (Bose, 1953, p. 278). Again regarding the fast Gandhi was having he states, "To put an appearance before an yelling crowd does not always work. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta. I therefore, begin fasting from 8-15 tonight to end only if and when sanity returns to Calcutta" (Bose, 1953, p. 278).

While evil was not self-existent, good was. It resembled a parasite that was on and around healthy. If the support that good provided was taken away, it would perish of itself. It would enough if the antisocial components felt that the more peaceful aspects of society were making an effort to assert themselves, regardless of whether their hearts were transformed (Bose, 1953).

Gandhi' views on Cow Slaughter and Music before Mosque

In 1927 the Congress was holding a session on Hindu- Muslim unity. They made a draft regarding it and they wanted to have Gandhi's approval. But when Gandhi came to know about it he had the view that, "I am prepared to agree to anything, to any conditions, that will bring about a settlement between Hindus and Muslims. Where is the need to show me" (Kalelkar, 1950, p. 124). The day after early morning Gandhi was worried about the draft and he stated that, "I have committed a grave error. I didn't read the draft properly last evening. I just said without due consideration, that it was all right. But in the night I suddenly remembered that the draft gave a general permission to the Mussalmans to slaughter cows, and the question of cow protection was conveniently ignored! How can I bear this? If they slaughter cows, we cannot stop them by force, it is true but we can at least win their trust by loving service and explain our point of view to them, can't we? A for me, not even to win Swaraj will I renounce my principle of cow-protection! Go and tell those people at once that I do not accept that settlement! No matter what the consequences, I will not be a party to cow-slaughter!" (Kalelkar, 1950, p. 124- 125).

Again regarding the cow protection during the Khilafat time on 10th of November 1919, Gandhi has sent a letter to the week to the Navajivan where he highlighted there were two points which were not dealt with details. And there he stated, "Mr. Asafali, the Secretary of the conference, has intimated in the papers circulated by him that the Goraksha problem and the Punjab matter will also be considered. I submit that the Hindus may not open the Goraksha question here. The test of friendship is assistance in adversity, and that too unconditional assistance. Co-operation that needs consideration is a commercial contract and not friendship. Conditional co-operation is like adulterated cement which does not bind. It is the duty of Hindus, if they see the justice of Mahomedans cause, to render co-operation. If the Mahomedans feels themselves bound in honour to spare the Hindu's feeling and stop cow-killing, they may do so, no matter whether the Hindus co-operate with them or no. Though therefore I yield to no Hindu in my worship of the cow, I do not want to make the stopping of cow-killing a condition precedent to co-operation. Unconditional co-operation means the protection of cow" (Gandhi, 1924. P.141).

It is true that Gandhi never supported a ban on cow slaughter. He said in july 25th 1947, "In India no law can be made to ban on cow-slaughter. I don not doubt that Hindus are forbidden the slaughters of cows. I have been long pledged to serve the cows but how can my religion also be the religion of the rest of Indians? It will mean coercion against those Indians who are not Hindus. We have been slaughtering from the house – tops there will be no coercion in the matter of religion. We have been reciting verses from the Koran at the prayer. But if anyone were to force me to recite these verses I would not like it. How can I force anyone not to slaughter cows unless he is himself so disposed" (Gandhi, 1947). Also Gandhi have the feelings that the protection of cows should be the primary dyty of every Indian. And by saying this Gandhi does not challenge the category of the legitimate food challenge. That means, Gandhi could have questioned if we ever wanted to refer to eating fish or being a vegetarian as "plant-slaughter" or "fish-slaughter"! What, then, qualifies eating beef as "cow-slaughter" or "gau-hatya"? In this way Gandhi gave an impression that cow- slaughter is a very deep violation of fundamental rights in society. Millions of Indians' eating habits were given the morally abhorrent aspect of a "slaughter," rendering them morally repugnant in the eyes of Hindus. Again, he presents cow protection as the only way to take the defense of human life seriously! His justification is that if you can't even defend the cow, how can you defend the person? Protecting cows is now a measure of humanity! Being a Hindu who defends cows seems to be the only way to be fully human in this dangerous position (Giri, 2022).

Ambedkar is the one who shreds this by bringing out the obvious fact that Hindus have always consumed cow. We now see that Gandhi was merely supporting an especially cruel strain of contemporary Hinduism that supported the caste system's ossification. Gandhi's call for cow protection as a fundamental Hindu principle would be completely undermined by Ambedkar's attitude. He could challenge the idea that eating beef is equivalent to "slaughter" or "hatya". Gandhi stands out for the right of Muslims to butcher cows and for religious diversity. However, it is done in a way that internally fosters religious hostility and morally denigrates people who eat beef. Gandhi is essentially pleading with Hindus to uphold a morally repugnant behavior. This presents an opportunity for a Hindu zealot to give it a twist, leading to intolerance centered on the cow. Basically Gandhi has gave an impression that cow-slaughter is a deep-violation of something fundamental to the Indian society (Giri, 2022).

Gandhi believes that we shouldn't elevate every trivial affair to a position of profound religious significance. A Hindu might not insist on playing music as they pass a mosque because of this. For the sake of playing music, he may not even cite examples from his own country or from somewhere else. Playing music while he passes a mosque is not something that is of the utmost significance to him. One can easily understand the Muslim custom of maintaining a solemn quiet for the entire twenty-four hours close to a mosque. As a Hindu, I would unquestionably advise Hindus to consider their Muslim neighbor's perspective and, whenever possible, make accommodations for him. I've heard that in some regions, Hindus purposefully do arati when the Musalman prayers start in an effort to irritate the Musalmans. This is a rude and insensitive act. The highest level of consideration for a friend's feelings is necessary for friendship. It is never anything to think about (Gandhi, 1994).

Gandhi did his best to reduce the hostility between Hindus and Muslims. Although his talks and publications were extensively discussed, few people appeared to have benefited from them. Immediately following a wave of unrest that swept the nation, the desecration of Muslims attacked Hindu temples at Arnethi, Sambhal, and Gulbarga, which was followed by violent unrest. On top of that, there were dreadful riots in Kohat in September 1924, which resulted in 36 fatalities, 145 injuries, and the destruction of property worth nine lakh rupees. The whole Hindu community left Kohat. The publication of a slanderous biography of the Prophet, Rangila Rasul, whose Hindu author was ultimately assassinated, was the direct source of the unrest. Gandhi was upset about the incident that happened and on the 18th of September 1924, he holds a fast for twenty-one days. Also, he issued a statement:

The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress that one cannot remove, one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my own dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am, therefore, imposing on myself a fast of twenty-one days commencing today and ending on Wednesday, October 6. I

reserve the liberty to drink water with or without salt. It is both a penance and prayer. As a penance I need not have taken the public into my confidence, but I publish the fast as, let me hope, an effective prayer both to Hindus and to Musalmans, who have hitherto worked in unison, not to commit suicide. I respectfully invite the heads of all the communities, including Englishmen, to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and to humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us reinstate Him in our hearts (Tendulkar, 1951, p. 203).

While addressing a public meeting in Madras, on 22nd March of 1925 Gandhi when he was dealing with Hindu- Muslim questions he said:

If Hindus and Muslims do not unite reasonably, they will unite forcibly, because one party cannot lead this country; and so long as there are some Hindus and Mussalman with whom the unity of all the races is an article of faith. I have every hope that we shall unite and unite whole- heartedly (Gandhi, 1925, p. 17).

Gandhi tried to follow an approach to establishing unity in India and to cover up the differences among Indians especially between Hindus and Muslims. He created something called a real Indian nation which stands for the sentiments of all. And he regarded the union between Hindus and Muslims where he stated:

I never realise any distinction between a Hindu and a Muslim. Both are sons of mother India. I know that Hindus are a numerical majority and that they are believed to be more advanced in their knowledge and education. Accordingly, they should be glad to communicate some of their knowledge to their Muslim brethren. When the Hindus and Muslims act towards each other like blood brothers, then alone can there be true unity, and then only can the dawn of freedom break for India (Tendulkar, 1951, p. 13).

Communal unity is essential for every society as well as the progress of the nation. However, not everyone is aware that unity does not necessarily imply political unity that may be imposed. It denotes an unbreakable heart-to-heart bond. Gandhi stated,

The first thing essential for achieving such unity is for every Congressman, whatever his religion may be, to represent in his person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc., shortly every Hindu and non- Hindu. He has to feel his identity with every one of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realize this, every Congressman will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own. He should have the same regard for the other faiths as he has for his own (Gandhi, 1941, p. 230).

Gandhi again added, "In such happy state of things there would be no disgraceful cry at the stations such as "Hindu water" and "Muslim water" or "Hindu tea" or "Muslim tea". There would be no separate rooms or pots for Hindus and Non- Hindus in schools and colleges, no communal schools, colleges or hospitals. The beginning of such a revolution has to be made by Congressmen without any political motive behind the correct conduct. Political unity will be its natural fruit" (Gandhi, 1968, p. 230).

Conclusion

An analysis of Gandhi's response to communal violence in colonial India reveals several key insights. Gandhi's approach was characterized by nonviolent resistance, empathy, and a deep commitment to promoting communal harmony. While his efforts were not always successful to prevent or resolve outbreaks of violence his principles and strategies had a lasting impact on India's struggle for independence and its subsequent approach to communal relations. Gandhi firmly believed that violence only create more space for violence and sought to break the cycle through nonviolent means. He advocated peaceful dialogues, understanding and reconciliation between different religions and ethnic communities. His philosophy of Ahimsa (non-violence) had the motto to awaken the moral conscience of both oppressors and the victims and encourage them to find common ground and work towards peaceful coexistence.

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