

**GANDHIAN APPROACH TO COMMUNALISM
IN
CONTEMPORARY INDIA**

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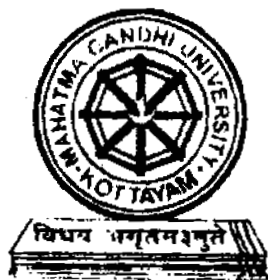
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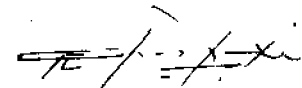
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PREFACE

India is the *Bhāratha-Śakti*, the living energy of a great spiritual conception and fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. Swami Vivekananda describes India as “the blessed *Punya-bhūmi*” and as the land from where came the founders of religions from the ancient times deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Spiritual life is the true genius of India.

Gandhi was a protagonist of the concept of common good of all. As a religious man Gandhi believed in the spiritual unity and equality of mankind.

Gandhi says, everybody has agreed about the necessity of this (communal) unity. But everybody does not know that unity does not mean political unity, which may be imposed. It means an unbreakable heart unity. Religious bitterness is a sign of lack of non-violent atmosphere. The last sixteen months of his life were devoted to the eradication of communal violence, which broke out in India as a result of the decision to divide the country. At the end of his life, Gandhi refused to accept the “Two Nation Theory” and was absolutely unreconciled to the “Vivisection of India”. His pilgrimage to Noa Khali will remain one of the brightest chapters in his life. He proved that no disaster could shake his implicit faith in the fundamental goodness of man and in the efficacy of non-violence.

Gandhi’s last fast and his martyrdom for Hindu-Muslim unity for which he worked, all his life showed how he stood unflinchingly for his

principles undaunted by the consequences. In short, Gandhi upheld communal Harmony for he believed in *Sarvadharmā Sama-bhava*.

In India, communalism seems far more dangerous than in any other country, because here the majority community (Hindus) form about 83% of the total population, and any growth of communalism among them naturally gets associated with chauvinistic nationalism. Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India is the crucial part of this study.

In the first chapter, an attempt has been made, how the interpretations of Orientalists and Utilitarians, influenced majority religion (Hinduism) and minority religions (Christianity and Islam) for promoting communal clashes in the Indian sub-continent.

In the second chapter an attempt is made to analyse Hindu responses to religious pluralism.

In the third chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the Christian response to Religious pluralism.

In the fourth chapter an attempt is made to analyse the Islamic approach to Religious pluralism.

In the fifth chapter an attempt has been made to analyse Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India.

In the concluding chapter the researcher makes a review of various aspects of the subjects raised discussed and analysed in the previous chapters. The contemporary communalism gives rise to a culture and

climate of anti-minoritism resulting in increasing intolerance. To counter these subversive forces it is necessary to understand and revive the pluralistic interpretation of religious scriptures as Gandhi did when he interpreted *Advaita* and *Anekāntavāda* concepts. Thus a new hermeneutic is necessary to transcend conflicting issues by providing the new categories of non-difference, non-identity and non-duality with a view to have a reconciliation, Peace and Harmony among religions and in the society. Mahatma Gandhi died for this cause. Gandhi's Ashram lifestyle is a model for this trans-religious spirituality and culture.

There remains for me a pleasant duty of acknowledgements. My sincere thanks are due to my Supervisor and Guide Dr. M. Maharajan whose advice and guidance in writing my thesis for Ph.D., degree has been invaluable. I desire to express my profound gratitude to Dr. M. Maharajan who kindly read the entire manuscripts of my thesis and corrected it wherever necessary at the time of my submission for the degree.

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P.L. JOHN PANICKER

A Note on Transliteration

The transliteration of Sanskrit terms is in accordance with the Standard System followed internationally. It follows for example, that of Monier William's Sanskrit-English Dictionary with a few exceptions, the letter r̄ replaces ri, ṣ his sh and ś his s.

However, the pattern followed in quotations remains unaltered.

ABBREVIATIONS

AV	-	Atharva Veda
BG	-	Bhagavat Gita
BJP	-	Bharatiya Janatha Party
Brih Up	-	Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad
Ch Up	-	Chandogya Upanisad
IVC	-	Indus Valley Civilization
Isa Up	-	Isavasya Upanisad
RV	-	Rig Veda
RSS	-	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
SBG	-	Sankarabhasya on the Gita
Up	-	Upanisads
Vedarth	-	Vedārtha Samgraha
VHP	-	Vishwa Hindu Parishad
VP	-	Vishnu Purana

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of The Problem

Indian society has been widely known for its religious plurality. India has given birth to religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. At the same time, it has also been hospitable to many other religions like Zoroastrian, Christian and Islam, which took their origin elsewhere. But today Indian society is severely subjected to ethnic rivalries and communal riots. The democratic and secular foundation of our country is being challenged and threatened by the growing canker of communalism all over India. Though there is communalism related to casteism, regionalism, linguism etc., communalism in the sphere of religion seems not only rampant but also aggressive.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation soon after Indian Independence, the more recent demolition of the *Babri Mazjid* at Ayodhya, with a demand to build a *Rāma* temple by the *Sangh Parivar* and the horrendous killings of the Christian missionary and leprosy healer, Stains Graham and his two sons in Orissa, have been described by the President K.R. Narayanan as the most tragic and black deeds in the history of Independent India. The *Sangh Parivar* strongly contempt the excessive missionary policy of vilification of the native religions. Their attitude of conversion has affected most in the pluralistic context of contemporary India. The present Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has called for national debates on the issue of conversion and *Bābri Mazjid* disputes shows the intensity of the communal problems in India.¹

Many scholars and national leaders thought of the whole communal problem as something created by British rulers and hence it was assumed that once they have left everything would be settled. But on the eve of their departure itself India was divided on the basis of religion, accompanied by the killing of thousands – both Hindus and Muslims. Recent studies has shown that there were nine thousand riots in the late Eighties with around eight thousand deaths after independence.² Along with enormous destruction of property and immense suffering, the seeds of suspicion, hatred and revenge sown in the hearts of people have long time consequences. In India communalism seems far more dangerous than in any other country, because here the majority community (Hindus) form 83% of the total population, and any growth of communalism among them naturally gets associated with chauvinistic nationalism. Hence, B.G. Varghese has correctly said, “All communalism is bad, minority communalism can lead to isolationism and separatism, Majority communalism spells fascism.”³

The writings of Oriental historians identified the *Vedic* culture with an idealized culture of Indian antiquity, immensely influenced the Indian religious and social reformers and they laid stress on the Vedic culture as an ideal one.⁴ Whereas the Utilitarian historians interpreted the coming of British rule in India was a god-sent event. James Mill was severely critical of Hindu culture as backward and inimical to progress.⁵ It seems James Mill’s History of British India is in a sense laid the foundation of communal interpretation of Indian History. *Sangh Parivar* and its allies are against Mill’s interpretation and they inclined to comply with Oriental’s. *Sangh Parivar’s* interpretation of *Hindutva* and their demand for a *Hindu rāshtra* seems typically a fascist combination of religio-

cultural exclusivism with nationalism. This ultimately promotes communalism. This has created suspicion, ill will and insecurity among minority communities like Islam and Christianity.

The minority community has taken seriously the Utilitarian interpretation and they began to inculcate and perpetuate their culture and religion in India. It seems their policy of conversion has become a serious threat in the eyes of the Hindu revivalists. Further, there emerge a tendency for each religion to establish its own identity through an aggressive assertion of its ideals by building fundamentalist organizations. Those organizations gave momentum to religious rivalries and conflicts.

Communal Consequences In India

Communalism has given rise to the growth of forces of disintegration and barbarianism in the Indian Subcontinent. For those who regard the growth and value of humanism, secularism and democracy these disintegrating forces will be priority items to be taken into account.

Firstly, communalism has become a hindrance to the task of nation building. Communal riots inflamed by religions have always been an unfortunate feature of multi-religious societies.

Secondly, in a multi-religious society, communalism is a threat to the secular, democratic character of the Indian State for the development of the nation.

Thirdly, it has global consequences. Indian people are not confined to India alone. There are Hindu Communities and their missions in other countries. The conflict between Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and

Christians in India may naturally intensify the tensions among such nations and internal conflicts within them.

Fourthly, since the conflict is between an overwhelming huge majority (Hindus) and the minorities (Christians and Muslims), it is an extremely delicate and sensitive one.

These compelling factors necessitate a new urgency manifested in genuine concern for the study of this grave problem and in the conscientization of the masses with an emphasis on a democratic, socialistic and humanistic ideology.

Hypothesis

The roots of communalism are partly as a result of religious fundamentalism, which is a conservative attitude of religious leaders who interpreted their religious scriptures tended to be a combination of religio-cultural exclusivism with nationalism without consideration of the demands of the people of the present time and milieu. Among the possible effects of fundamentalism and cultural exclusivism are pseudo religious revivalism and fundamentalism. The writer suggests that contemporary communalism in India is a manifestation of religious fundamentalism coupled with cultural nationalism and blended with politics. It seems Gandhian Hermeneutical approach may be a viable solution to the communalism in contemporary India.

The Ultimate Goal Of The Study

Religions are meant to establish Peace on earth. The Hindu prayers often conclude with "*Om Shānti.*" The Christian greets his brother "Peace be with you" and the very word Islam means 'Peace' and hence a Muslim greets his

brother with “As-Salamalaikum” means “Peace be on you.” It is paradoxical indeed that they cannot co-exist in peace. Yet their goal is the establishment of peace. It seems in India religions have always been a disintegrating factor having in them the very seeds of disharmony. Gandhi dealt with this problem in detail and in depth.

According to Gandhi, the problem is not with religions, but with their votaries and with their exclusive interpretations of scriptures. According to his understanding of religion, the differences will not divide mankind but will enrich it. Hence if we are to hope religion will play a role in bringing about unity and harmony it appears that we have to take Gandhi seriously and try to understand religion as he explicitly expressed through his interpretations with a view to have a trans – religious spirituality.

The present study attempts:

1. to examine the Hindu responses to religious pluralism and to analyse to what extent the religious scriptures exhibit the religious roots of communalism
2. to assess the modern Hindu responses to other religions i.e., (of Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar)
3. to examine the Christian response to religious pluralism
4. to assess conversion and its implications
5. to examine the Islamic response to religious pluralism
6. to evaluate the relevance of modern Islamic Hermeneutical approach to religious pluralism

7. to examine the Gandhian approach to contemporary communalism in India
8. to evaluate Gandhian hermeneutics of *Advaita* and *Anekāntavāda* for moulding a synthetic culture in India
9. to examine to what extent Gandhian interpretation has helped religions to retain their identity, while maintaining fellowship, complementarity and travelling as fellow pilgrims towards perfection.

Scope And Content

Though the present study is basically concentrated to the Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India, the study has tried to examine perspectives of different responses of each religion to religious pluralism especially among Hinduism, Christianity and Islam and analyze to what extent they are responsible for the communal problems in India. Since the contemporary communalism is centred among these three religions, the study is limited only to these religions.

Covering the whole scriptures of these religions is an unwieldy task. Hence the present research is restricted to, *Rigveda*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purānas* from Hindu scriptures. From the modern Hindu responses it seems Dayananda Saraswati the founder of the *Ārya Samāj*, is the pioneer, for aiming militant organization, hence his original writings are considered. The writings of Swami Vivekananda, V.D. Savarkar and Golwalkar are discussed. It also studied the *Qurān* and the *Bible*.

Interpretation of scriptures is one of the thorny issues of inter-religious relations. Christians and Muslims take their Holy scriptures as the very backbone of their religion. They fall back on the Bible and the Quran for

finding source and support for their beliefs, practices, values and attitudes. Since the Hindu religious tradition is a conglomeration of many religions, faiths, cultures and traditions with its large and enormous variety of literature, they have a variety of interpretations. But most of the interpretations are done by elite groups with a view to serve their interest. Therefore, these interpretations have exclusive connotations. It seems these exclusive interpretations give rise to communalism.

Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India is the crucial part of this study. Gandhi had approached the problem philosophically and pragmatically. Many have written on pragmatic approach of Gandhi to this problem. Therefore, the present writer is not looking into it. Though the research aims at studying the Gandhian philosophical approach for religious harmony, the study is limited only to Gandhian interpretation of *Advaita* of *āstika* religion and *anekāntavāda* of *nāstika* religion. Hence writings of *Gandhi* and *Jaina Philosophy* are considered with a view to revive the basic values for understanding and respect for religions. Hence the researcher is preparing Gandhian hermeneutics as an alternative paradigm to revive religious values for moulding a synthetic culture promoting Peace and Harmony.

In the second chapter, the researcher has made an attempt to analyze Hindu responses to religious pluralism. This chapter tries to answer some pertinent questions such as:

What do the Hindu scriptures say about the relationship between various religious traditions? How did *Vedic Brāhmanism* respond to various *non-vedic* religions and cultural traditions in its evolution to classical Hinduism? How did Hinduism react to *heterodox (nāstika)* religions like *Jainism and Buddhism*. How

did the philosophical schools and *Sampradāyas* within Hinduism view each other? What is its attitude towards non-indigenous religions like Christianity and Islam? Since this research is mainly concentrated on the contemporary communalism in India, it is necessary to pay attention in the modern Hindu responses to other religions. But the modern responses are in a sense re-statements or re-interpretations of the past Hindu responses to similar situations, it tries to look into the past Hindu responses from the scriptures, especially *Veda*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Purānas* etc.

Among the modern Hindu reformers and religious thinkers only four are selected in this work. They are Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar. They are selected as representatives of certain different models or tendencies in modern Hinduism with regards to its attitude towards other faiths. Dayananda Saraswati and his *Ārya Samāj* are taken because he was the man who seriously relied on the Orientals' interpretation of Indian History suggesting its importance to *Vedic* culture. Further he was the first man, who propounded the theory of *Śuddhi and Sanghathan* which in response to other religions.

Swami Vivekananda became the symbol of religious awakening of India, since the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. He made Hinduism to a missionary religion and presented *Advaita* as the only universal religion, in Europe, America and else where in the world.

V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar have been taken because they played a very significant role in the process of re-vitalization and self-conscientization of Hindu society. V.D. Sarvarkar's concept of '*Hindutva*' and Golwalkar's books, 'Bunch of Thoughts' and 'We or Our Nationhood Defined' immensely

influenced the Hindu organizations such as *R.S.S.*, *V.H.P.*, *Bajrang Dal* etc., to counter other religions with a spirit of militancy and cultural exclusivism.

Hence the present study seeks to investigate the response of the above exponents of Modern Hinduism and the implications of their positions for inter-religious relationship in the contemporary India.

In the Third Chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the Christian response to Religious Pluralism in three sections. The first part concentrates on the absolutistic standpoint of Christianity, with its exclusive and inclusive attitudes, which creates suspicion, ill feeling and hatred from other religions. This is one of the causes of communalism. The present turmoil in the Indian subcontinent is mainly centred, on the issue of conversion and Christian missions. This has been vehemently criticized by Hindu organizations. The present Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has called for a national debate to discuss the religious conversion issue and he reiterated to missionaries to abandon the policy of conversion. Hence the second section is concentrated on Christianity and Conversion. The third section deals with the pluralistic standpoint of Christianity and its way to open a synoptic view of things to foster healthy relations among religions. It seeks to build bridges between religions by accepting the truth claims of each religion as valid response to the 'Ultimate Concern'. Pluralistic standpoint holds all great religious traditions on an equal footing. This approach does not renounce uniqueness of Christ but makes it relative. Hence this approach ponders the viability for inter-religious dialogue.

In the Fourth Chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the Islamic approach to Religious Pluralism. Through the advent of Islam in India, there

emerged two types of social groups with specific cultural interests and with definite cultural boundary. They are polemical in their worldviews.

Since culture is the collective memory of the people and collective heritage handed down through generations, cultural uprooting or assimilation by a dominant or powerful culture will always create tension and turmoil. When politics entered in the area of religion it transformed religious cleavages into political cleavages. The nexus between religion and politics with a view to have hegemony over other religions promoted cultural exclusivism. Cultural exclusivism is a threat to religious pluralism. This section discusses how the cultural exclusivism of Islamic vision responds to religious pluralism. It demands us to search for the theological, cultural and emotional standpoints in moulding the Islamic community and its response to other religions.

The absolutistic and inclusivistic interpretation of the Quran, Islamic concept of Holy war (*Jihād*) and the policy of *Islāmization* have been discussed in this chapter and have come to the conclusion that, while emphasizing ‘Theodemocracy’, these were undermining the secular democracy of the country. Hence the co-existence of religions may not be possible. This also introduces theological injustice to God’s creation. However, in the midst of this propagation of cultural exclusivism, a group of Islamic thinkers especially from *Sūfism*, interpreted Quran and its tradition with a view to promote a composite culture in the Indian subcontinent, by combining Indian *Bhakti* tradition (love), *Vedānta* (renunciation) and *Sūfī* mysticism. Thus *Sūfism* provided the key, necessary for opening the door to a true encounter with other religions. They considered the adherents of other faiths are spiritual neighbours. It emphasizes the inner spirit in all religions is the same, though

there may be variations outwardly. Therefore, the writer is inclined to say that the *Sūfism's* approach to the Reality and its consideration on the various view points of Reality seems very near to the Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda*.

In the Fifth Chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section is an over-view of communal landscape of Gandhian era. When Gandhi entered in the national scene he had to face four kinds of defiant forces based on socio-political cultural nationalism, fleeing one another in the national movement. They are:- (a) Indian National Movement (b) Hindu National Movement, (c) Muslim National Movement (d) Subaltern Movement.

Moderates and Extremists have different views on proper end and means of the national movement. While the moderates envisioned a modernization of India with the western liberal ideas, the Extremists glorified the *Vedic* culture and they were against modernization. Thus they reflected a *Kshatriya* worldview and presented Indian culture as exclusively Hindu culture and encouraged the growth of militant nationalism in India. The British policy also widened the breach between Muslims and Hindus. Thus the Muslim league was formed in 1906. As a result of the intensification of Hindu Muslim tensions, a new influential militant organization, R.S.S. was established in 1925 by Hedgewar. Savarkar's treatise of '*Hindutva*' influenced to promote one culture, one nation with one race. The demand for the maintenance of racial unity the Hindus argued that the non-Hindus should merge fully into an original national race. This created an atmosphere to demand for a Muslim nation.

The Subaltern leaders were against the upper caste Hindus, for their notion of Hindu national culture as the extension of *Vedic* culture. They provided a vision for an alternative culture and identity of the people based on *non-Āryan* and low caste perspectives. The Subaltern leaders were critical not only of the oppressiveness of the dominant Hindu Caste society but also of its claim to antiquity. Hence subaltern movement was a revival of the values of the *non-Āryan* religion and culture, which has been encrusted by the crude interpretation of upper caste Hindus.

Gandhi found the above ideologies linked with oppressive structures and exclusive interpretations were a real hindrance to social change and development in the country.

He observed that the concept of nationalism, national identity and national loyalty has turned into group egoism, sectarian religious identity, and religious loyalty consecutively. Religion has become a divisive force through its exclusive dogmatic interpretation rather than a spiritual force for synthesis of various cultures and faiths. Since religion is the matrix of culture, by providing values, it gives impetus to cultural change and subsequently dispenses room for a social revolution. Hence Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India is for a cultural transformation by providing religious base in the real sense of the term 'religion'. In order to counter communalism Gandhi preached the doctrine of equality of religions.

The second part of this section is the core part of this research. This is an attempt to analyse how Gandhi as a synthesizer of *Āstika*, *Nāstika* and *Semitic* religions, promotes an inclusive culture for peaceful living. Gandhi found cultural exclusivism and subsequent cultural nationalism based on exclusive

interpretation of theology and philosophy as the root cause of communalism in India. In order to counter this Communalism, Gandhi was in favour of having a new hermeneutics of Scripture and Philosophies.

Gandhi observed that there are ample religious literature both in *Āstika* and *Nastika* religions supporting for a pluralistic approach to religious and cultural diversity. This section is an attempt to discuss and analyse on such two concepts, '*Advaita*' of *Āstika* religion and *Anekāntavāda* of *Nāstika* religion, Gandhi has taken and interpreted for an integral approach to religious pluralism.

In a couple of significant statements Gandhi affirms his faith in *Advaita Vedanta*. He says "I believe in the *Advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives."⁶

Again Gandhi affirms, "I am an *anekāntavādi*. This is the most important thing that I have learnt from *Jain philosophy*. It is implicit in *Vedanta philosophy*."⁷

Gandhi interpreted *Advaita* as a universal religion (*dharma*) not as a customary religion but that religion which brings us face to face with our maker. Gandhi even went to the extent of calling himself a *Sanātana Hindu*. He comes to the conclusion that whether his theory is correct or not untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity and love, which are the divine attributes of God. And as we are the children of God, we should love and treat one and all equally. Gandhi says that, "I believe in the rock bottom doctrine of *Advaita* and my interpretation of *Advaita*

excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage what so ever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal.”⁸

In *Advaita*, Gandhi could see a universal religion, i.e., (*Dharma*), all comprehensive, all embracing and all-inclusive rather than exclusive. It could accommodate and assimilate *Āstika*, *Nāstika* and *Semitic* religions. Hence Gandhi preached universal brotherhood and fatherhood on the basis of *Advaitic* principle. It can accommodate not only the religions proposed by Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda and Savarkar, Hedgewar, and Golwalkar, but the religions of antiquity of the subaltern leaders like Phule / Periyar / Ambedkar / Narayana Guru etc.

Gandhi believes that the above worldview, value system, and community relationship would bring a new culture and civilization. It is a synthesis of different cultures that have come to stay in India and influenced Indian life and the spirit of the soil has themselves influenced that, in their turn. Hence Ram Jethmalani has rightly says, that this is the '*Hindutva*' culture, not the '*Hindutva*' of *Sangh Parivar*. This synthetic culture shall be a powerful shield, which protects our minorities.

The last part of this section has been dealt with the Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda*. It is an analysis and evaluation, pointing to its relevance for an alternative paradigm to counter the contemporary communalism in India.

The researcher has also attempted a thorough discussion on the non-Absolutistic standpoint of *Anekāntavāda* and its respects for all opinions. Gandhi believes that the theory of *Anekāntavāda* may offer a paradigmatic

significance by providing an axiom that truth is many sided and relative. Hence, Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* is a methodology to counter exclusivism or absolutism propounded by many religious interpretations. Since *Anekāntavāda* affirms any perception on reality and knowledge can only be partial and relative, it has the capability to synthesis different perceptions on reality. In Gandhi's view Indian civilization was essentially dominated by the spirit of "Synthesis." This spirit is absorption, assimilation, co-existence and synthesis. This energetising spirit of accommodation and adaptability Gandhi finds in the concept of *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda*, which directly promote a mingling of cultures represented by the different faiths. The doctrine of manyness of reality (*Anekāntavāda*) also vividly expresses an integral organism of spatio-temporal process. This view envisages a relational convergence of religions.

Anekāntavāda interpretation also maintains that the reality can be seen from number of perspectives, and any religious claim from one perspective is erroneous. Hence, proselytizing activities certainly violate the right of a person to follow the truth, as he understands it. Therefore, proselytization is against the doctrine of manyness of reality, *Satya* and *Ahimsa*.

Anekāntavāda Epistemology also offers a synoptic and many-sided outlook and acknowledges that truth can only be gathered by *Samvāda* or dialogue. It offers the possibility of not only gathers the truth, it also de-absolutises and relativises truth. Therefore, Gandhi affirms that religious resources are common property of the whole humanity on an equal footing because the essence of religion is the same. Gandhi firmly believes in the importance of dialogical relationship for a peaceful living. Therefore, he

emphasizes learning from other religious scriptures, will enable people to keep their religion pure and rid it of blemishes. The *Anekāntavāda* interpretation also emphasizes the spiritual progress of humanity depends on the capacity to assimilate or synthesis the spiritual values from other religions and cultures. This will ultimately perpetuate lasting peace. *Anekāntavāda* provides a new paradigm to mould a synthetic culture in India.

In the concluding chapter researcher makes a review of various aspects of the subjects raised, discussed and analysed in the previous chapters. The contemporary communalism gives rise to a culture and climate of antiminoritism resulting in increasing intolerance. To counter these subversive forces it is necessary to understand and revive the pluralistic interpretation of religious scriptures as Gandhi did when he interpreted *Advaita*, and *Anekāntavāda* concepts. Thus a new hermeneutic is necessary to transcend conflicting issues by providing the new categories of non-difference, non-identity and non-duality with a view to have a reconciliation, Peace and Harmony among religions and in the society. Mahatma Gandhi died for this cause.

Methodology

The method is neither historical nor sociological. It is a conceptual analysis of religious controversies. Hence descriptive/ analytic method has been followed in general. This descriptive method is followed mainly because the subject demands the study of the various religious texts and to relate that to modern organizations and analyze their influence in the contemporary communalism.

When dealing with the writings of Gandhi, there arose some problems. One of the reasons is the voluminous nature of his writings on almost every topic. Another is that his writings are mostly fragmentary, scattered, and contextual. However, Gandhi's writings are logical and coherent. Hence all his 'statements' on the concepts "*Advaita*" and "*Anekāntavāda*", often repeated by Gandhi himself or by others are taken for consideration. Mostly anthologies and compilations of Gandhi's writings have been used for collecting his views on the topic. Whenever required, his articles published in *Young India* and *Harijan* are referred to.

Owing to the contemporaneous nature of the subject of the thesis, the writer visited the disputed place of *Rāma-Jañma Bhūmi – Bābri-Mazjid* site in Ayodhya and acquired primary source materials. He also visited Faizabad and Delhi and interviewed a few prominent persons who are directly, or through their writings involved in the Hindu-Muslim controversy.

Definition And Clarification Of Terms

According to the Chambers Dictionary the word "communal" means any thing pertaining to a commune or a community or shared between members of a group or community. According to Oxford Universal Dictionary, it means concern for the welfare of the community instead of individual self interest. The word "communal" therefore means belonging to a community. But the word communalism has acquired a special meaning in Indian usage, and is associated with religious communities.⁹

Geertz views communalism in India as 'religious contrasts.'¹⁰ According to D.E. Smith, communalism in India is the functioning of religious

communities or organizations which claim to represent them in a way which is considered detrimental to the interests of other groups or the nation as a whole.¹¹ So communalism in Indian context has come to mean hostility or animosity towards persons belonging to another religious group.

However, communalism is not synonymous with fundamentalism. V.M. Tarkunde defines "Fundamentalism as a strict maintenance of traditional orthodox religious beliefs and practices."¹² A fundamentalist may not have any hostility towards persons belonging to another religion. The fundamentalism of an individual is not anti-social by itself, but it has a communal potential. It becomes anti-social when it is accompanied by an element of co-ercion or force, which seeks to extend itself into secular domains (economic, political and cultural). Fundamentalism becomes harmful when the orthodox belief and practices of one community are imposed on another religious community with a co-ercive power for securing "secular" interests. Then there arises communal violence. Hence, communalism as an ideology emerges from a specific historical context and is inherent in the fundamental belief of a religious group (community) are made to believe that their interests and beliefs are not only different from those of other religious communities but are also antagonistic to one another.¹³

For the purpose of this study communalism is taken to mean interpretations of scriptures on different truth claims or towards an ideology that has emerged from a specific historical context, from any one of the religious belief of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam with a clearly defined identity and cultural interest, which inflicts its interest upon other religious sects with the intention of either exterminating them or assimilating or

accommodating them as subservient peoples and thereby establishing its own supreme identity. Different truth claims which often contradict and exclude each other, so that it is difficult to create a common worldview with common structures and values acceptable to all. Hence, competing and even contradictory religious worldviews with their absolute, mutually exclusive claims to truth are a genuine source of profound tensions and conflicts, which can lead to violence and war.

Religious Pluralism

Pluralism is a part of God's design and purpose for humanity. Due to the unprecedented development of science and technology, information media has developed to utmost level, and the whole world has become like a global village. Today religious diversity is far more greater and much more noticed by humankind. Religious pluralism is certainly an inconvertible fact in the contemporary India. Indian society has been religiously and culturally pluralistic for more centuries than any other country in the world. Besides being a fact of social life, pluralism also describes a specific theological approach towards the plurality of religions in the world, arising from the premise that each of the major faith represents a culturally conditioned human response to a single ultimate reality.

The term 'religious pluralism' is generally used in two senses. Firstly, it signifies a state of religious diversity within a society, a situation in which various religions exist and develop side by side. Secondly, it refers to a particular kind of attitude or response of a believer of one religion towards other religions. In this sense it signifies the view that recognizes, while holding one's own religion as true and valid, other great religions also, in some way or other, true and valid paths to

the Supreme and hence effective ways for salvation. Thus it differs from exclusivism, which maintains that only one's own religion is true and all other religions are false. In this perspective there is no room for mutual enrichment between religions. It also differs from inclusivism, which recognizes elements of truth in other religions, but they are partial and imperfect. The truth in other religions are included and fulfilled in one's own religion. This affirms the salvific presence of God in other religions. But it rejects other faiths as not being sufficient for salvation.

The pluralist perspective maintains that other religions are equally salvific paths to the one God. It accepts the religious resources as the Common Property of Humanity. This also offers a relational convergence of religions, hence an adherent of a faith has to consider as a pilgrim in quest of Truth.

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CHAPTER – II

**HINDU APPROACH
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This Chapter is an attempt to analyse Hindu response to 'Religious Pluralism'. The term 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' requires a few words of explanation for the sake of precision and clarity. The term religious pluralism has already been defined. Now let us see how the word 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' has emerged and understood.

'Hinduism' is a word very loosely used and extremely difficult to define. 'Hinduism' primarily is not a religious concept but one of geographical origin, derived from Sanskrit, a variant of the term 'Hindu' was used by an ancient Persians, Greeks and Arabs to describe the way of life characteristic of the people of 'Sindhu' or dwellers in the land of a river Indus.¹

The term 'Hindu' was first used under the foreign domination of the Muhammadan to mean unconverted native Indians.² The term 'Hinduism' has been adopted by the English in the early nineteenth century and was traditionally not used by Indians to describe their religious beliefs and practices and introduced into English in 1829.³ Louis Renou, S.R. Roy, Y. Masih etc., think that classical Hinduism is a matter of later growth which has incorporated into it many elements that are opposed to *Vedism*.⁴ In this context the great Hindu Philosopher Dr. S. Radhakrishnan writes that 'Hinduism' has taken:

So much from the social life of the Dravidians and other native inhabitants of India that is very difficult to disentangle the original Aryan elements from others. The interpenetration has been complex, subtle and continuous with the result... that Hindu civilization neither Aryan nor Dravidian nor aboriginal.⁵

For Radhakrishnan Hinduism is more a civilization than a culture.⁶

According to T.M.P. Mahadevan:

Therefore Hinduism is not to be considered as a single creed or cult but as a league of religions, a fellowship of faiths.⁷

According to Jawaharlal Nehru:

Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it or indeed to say precisely whether it is a religion or not in the usual sense of the word. In its present form as well as in the past it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed to or contradicting each other. Its essential spirit seems to be to live and let live.⁸

According to Gandhi:

It is the search for Truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God, and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after Truth. It is the religion of Truth. Truth is God. Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known.⁹

Hence Hinduism comprises with in it a number of religious beliefs, practices, *Āryan, non-Āryan* often mutually contradicting, vague and amorphous. It does not have a monolithic structure nor does it have a theological unity. Thus within Hinduism, there is a sort of pluralism of beliefs and practices. Its essential spirit is to live and let live.

Within Hinduism there are different schools of Philosophies and *Sampradāyas* (sects).¹⁰ As against *Brāhmanism*, which stresses *Karma* or the performance of sacrificial rituals ordained in the *Vedic Samhitas* and *Brahmanas*, there arose *advaitic* emphasis or *Jñāna*, i.e., the ultimate goal of human life is attained by *jñāna* or knowledge of the identity of *jīva* with Brahman. But both the *Brahmanic* sacrificial ritual and the *advaitic* philosophy of *nirguna Brahman* with its emphasis on *jñāna* were beyond the reach of the

common mass. As a result there arose the theistic Hinduism with its emphasis on *bhakti* or belief in and trust on a loving personal God.

Within the theistic Hinduism there arose different traditions or *sampradayas* or sects. Apart from these *sampradayas* Hinduism hardly had any independent entity. The most important *Sampradayas* are *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Śaivism* and *Śaktism*.¹¹

Hinduism undergo remarkable transformation from 19th century onwards due to its contact with Christianity and western ideas of liberalism and rationality, which challenged many of its traditional beliefs and practices. Many renaissance movements arose to defend Hinduism and its culture. Some of them expressed a tendency towards the preservation of the beliefs and practices of Hinduism, while rejecting some social evils. This was vitalized by the different interpretations of Historians.

The Orientalists or Indologists by and large saw the ancient Indians as a people with an idyllic society. They evolved the theory of Indo-European homeland and of the common ancestry of the Greek and *Sanskritic* cultures. They identified with an idealized culture of Indian antiquity.¹² The writings of such Orientalists influenced not only Indian circles in as much as many of the religious and social reform movements of the 19th century laid stress on *Vedic* culture as the root of the Indian tradition and made it the Ideal. *Āryasamāj* is an example.

Where as the Utilitarians convinced that the coming of the British to India was a god-sent event as British administration would bring political awareness to the Indian people and it would end the backwardness of India.¹³ Among

Utilitarians James Mill's History of British India was that in a sense it laid the foundation for a communal interpretation of Indian History.¹⁴ Mill's history was severely critical of Hindu culture as backward and inimical to progress.

This led to Orientalists and later to Indian historians, having to defend 'Hindu civilization'. The Indian historians' writings were influenced by the national movement and they relied more heavily on the work of the Orientalists. They glorified the ancient culture of India and frequently referred to as Hindu India. Now they began to re-state, re-define and re-interpret the fundamentals of Hinduism in the newly arisen complex situation of the world. The Ramakrishna mission and its founder Swami Vivekananda represent this tendency in an organized way. This renaissance re-interpreted Hinduism of modern times which extends roughly from Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) to Radhakrishnan (1908-1975) may be termed as Neo-Hinduism¹⁵

'Hindu response to Religious pluralism' is to be considered many things: What do the Hindu scriptures say about the relationship between various religious traditions? How did *Vedic Brāhmanism* respond to various *non-Vedic* religions and cultural traditions in its evolution to Classical Hinduism? How did Hinduism react to heterodox (*nāstika*) religions like Jainism and Buddhism? How did the Philosophical schools and *sampradāyas* within Hinduism view each other? What is its attitude towards non-indigenous religions like Christianity and Islam? Each of these questions deserves careful and detailed study. Since this research is mainly concentrated on the contemporary communalism in India, it is necessary to pay attention in the modern Hindu responses to other religions. But the modern responses are in a sense re-statements or re-interpretations of the past Hindu responses to similar

situations, it gives urgency to look into the past Hindu responses in such contexts.

Since the *Vedic* scriptures enjoy supreme authority in Hinduisim, the modern Hindu thinkers seek, ideas from the scriptures to support their respective views. Since the Hindu religious tradition is a conglomeration of many religions, faiths, cultures and traditions with its large and enormous variety of literatures, it is relatively difficult to study all the texts and make definitive statements. But the *Rigveda* and *Bhagavad Gītā* are considered as examples, because the *Rigveda* being the earliest and most important of the *Vedas*, *Bhagavad Gītā* enjoys immense popularity. Vivekananda says, "It is the crown jewel of all Indian literature."¹⁶ The *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas* and some other religious texts are made use to understand how different religious traditions within Hinduism responded to each other and how Hinduism reacted in the past to *non-Vedic* indigenous religions especially to Buddhism.

There are many reformers and thinkers in modern Hinduism, who have been responded to religious pluralism. Of those reformers and thinkers only four are selected in this work, viz., Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, V.D. Savarkar and Golwalkar. They are selected as representatives of certain different Models or tendencies in modern Hindus with regard to its attitude towards other faiths. Dayananda Saraswati and Aryasamaj were taken because he was the man who seriously relied as the Orientalist interpretation of Indian History and its importance to *Vedic* culture. More over he was the first man, who propounded the theory of *Śuddhi* and *Sanghatan*, which in response to other religions.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) convened a meeting at Pune in January 1994, where Arun Shouri, a renowned Journalist, was invited to speak as the Hindu perception of the work of Christian missionaries in India.¹⁷ Where he quotes continuously from two stalwarts of Indian nationhood, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. Swami Vivekananda because the symbol of the religious awakening of India since the Parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893. Vivekananda took Hinduism in America, Europe, and presented *Advaita* as the only universal religion. Hence, Swami Vivekananda's approach to other religions discussed in this Chapter.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Nation is another important figure of contemporary Hinduism, and his approach to contemporary communalism is the crucial part of this study, will be discussed separately. V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar have taken because they played a very significant role in the process of revitalization and self-conscientization of Hindu society. The contemporary Hindu organizations of Sanghh Parivar viz., R.S.S. V.H.P, Bajrang Dal etc., are greatly influenced by the teachings of these leaders. V.D. Savarkar's concept of '*Hindutva*' and Golwalkar's books, '*Bunch of Thoughts, and we or our Nationhood Defined*', immensely influenced these organizations to counter other religions with a spirit of militancy. Hence present study seeks to investigate the response of each of these exponents of Modern Hinduism and the implications of their positions for inter religious relationship in the contemporary India.

A. HINDU SACRED TEXTS AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

This section is not an exhaustive study of the extensive religious literature of Hindus. The purpose is only to trace in brief outline the variant responses to religious diversity as reflected in some of the most important sacred texts.

1. THE RIGVEDA

Towards the middle of the second millennium BC., the nomadic hardy Aryan tribes emerged into the plains of the Indus, defeated the dark skinned, flat nosed towns people, and occupied the country.¹⁸ The *Rigveda* provides much information regarding the religion and culture of the Indo-Aryans. They called the natives of India, *Dāsyus* or *Dasas*.¹⁹ The hymns of the *Rigveda* reveal their attitude to *non-Āryan* people. In several hymns of the *Rigveda* the theme is the struggle between the *Āryans* and the *Dāsas*. The relationship seems primarily antagonistic in nature. The *non-Āryans* are called *Pisācas* and *rākaṣas*.²⁰ They consider the *non-Āryans* as enemies (*amitrah* or *śatruh*) (10:84:7; 3:30:16)

Thus we read in (10:22:8)

Against us is the riteless senseless *Dāsyu*
 In human, keeping alien laws;
 Do thou, O slayer of the foe,
 This *Dāsyu*'s weapon circumvent.

The hymns clearly depict the *Dasyus* as godless, riteless, senseless, inhuman people, keeping some unknown, alien laws. One must not infer from this that the *non-Āryan* people were irreligious. They had their own gods, rituals and laws, though to the Aryans they appeared "alien laws" (10:22:8). John Marshall has described the *non-Āryan* god in the following words:

The God, who is three faced, is seated on a low Indian throne in a typical attitude of yoga, with legs bent double beneath him, heel to heel, and toes turned downwards. His hands with thumbs to front, resting on his knees.... The lower limbs are base and the phallus (*ūrdhvamedra*) seemingly exposed... crowning his head is a pair of horns meeting in a tall head-dress. To either side of the God are four animals, an elephant and tiger on his proper right, a rhinoceros and buffalo on his left...²¹

But the *Rigveda* describes them as abused and disgraced as *Śisna-devah*, which may be interpreted as 'whose god is Phallus', that is, Phallus worshippers. Thus we read in (7:21:5).

No Phallus worshippers (*sisna-devah*) come near our offering.

In (10:99:3) it says that Indra has slain (*Śisna-devah*) . All these passages clearly show that the *Āryans* were hostile to *Dāsyus* on religious grounds.

The *Rigveda* indicates that *Āryans* were antagonistic towards the *non-Āryan* natives of the land. There were conflicts not only between the *Aryans* and the *non-Āryan Dāsyus* but also among *Āryan* tribes themselves. Thus one reads in *Rigveda* (6:33:3)

Both these our foes, Our *Dasa* and our *Ārya* enemies, hast
thou, heroic *Indra* destroyed.

In the *Rigveda* (4:42) we see the competing claims of *Varuṇa* and *Indra* to a position of supremacy.

Varuṇa speaks:

I am king, mine is Lordship. All the gods are subject to me...

Then *Indra* claims:

I am the mighty one who stirs up the fight and whirls up the dust, in my
overwhelming strength.

In *Rigveda* (6:69:8) we see the rivalry between *Indra* and *Viṣṇu*.

Again in (6:69:8) we read of Indra and *Viṣṇu*:

Both of them enter into rivalry with each other but none has been the victor over the other. Indra and *Viṣṇu* were rivals to each other, and out of their conflict were produced the three thousand.

Rigveda clearly suggests that during these fights, many gods lost their power, position and vitality and receded to the background. At first *Indra* is honoured as the highest of the gods, but slowly *Viṣṇu* takes precedence over him.²²

The quarrel among the gods clearly reflects the conflict of religious cultures among various clans. Elevating the predominance of one God reflects either the subordination of other gods or negation or absorption of other gods in the supreme one.²³

The plurality of gods fighting with each other annoyed the rational minds of the *Vedic* sages. So they ask “To what god shall we offer our oblation” (*Rigveda* 10:21). Which is the real god? Then there emerged the concept of one supreme god, who created the heaven and earth (*Rigveda* 10:81,82). Many places that god is called *Prajāpati* (the Lord of creatures).²⁴ He is also called *Viśwakarman* or *Hiranyagarbha* (*Rigveda* 10:121). But the *Vedic* seers did not negate other gods. Here we use see one of the significant characteristics of *Vedic* religion, i.e. One supreme being with all other subordinate gods. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan affirms:

The gods were ruling in their own respective spheres under the suzerainty of the supreme. Their powers were delegated and their lordship was only a *vicerealty*, but not sovereignty.²⁵

This we see in the role of *Viṣṇu*, who received supreme position in the later Hinduism occupies only an unimportant position in the early *Rigveda*. But

later period *Viṣṇu* becomes the most excellent of gods, victorious and pervades the whole universe.²⁶ Thus we see in the *Rigveda* itself a tendency of ‘supercilious inclusion’, where *Viṣṇu* as the Supreme God and all other gods were only subordinates, partial and imperfect.²⁷

Another aspect is they tried to identify the gods with one another and with the One Supreme.²⁸ for example, the poet addressing *Agni*.

Thou art the birth, O Agni, art Varuṇa;
When kindled thou becomest Mitra;
In thee, O Son of Night, all gods are centred;
Thou art Indra to the worshipper (5:3:1)

In 2:1 *Agni* is identified with *Indra*, *Viṣṇu*, *Brahmanspati*, *Varuṇa*, *Mitra*, *Āryaman*, *Amsā Tvastri*, *Rudhra*, *Maruts*, *Puṣan*, *Savitri*, *Bhaga*, *Ṛbhu*, *Aditi*, *Sarasvati*, *Ādityas* etc. (See also 2:7: 1-77). *Varuṇa* is identified with *Indra* (4:42:3) and *Prajāpati* with *Viśvakarman* (10:81:82) and with *Hiranyagarbha* (10:121).

By subordinating all the deities to the Supreme Being, the gods lost their power and positions. They were made inferior to the One supreme whose will they carry out. This is one type of response one can have towards other faiths. i.e., One’s own faith is perfect and superior. Other faiths are regarded as inferior and partial. This view tolerates the other, but does not consider it as equally valid. It tries to subdue and dominate the other. It can accommodate any god of any people but only as a servant or assistant of one’s own who alone is Supreme.

But in the second case i.e., by identifying the gods with one another and with one Supreme, all gods are accepted as different manifestations or forms of

the One and the same Divine Being. This idea is clearly and distinctly stated in (RV 1:164:46)

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni
And he is the Divine, fine-winged Garutmat;
The truth is one, the wise call it by many names;
They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan

The same idea is also expressed in (10:114:5)

According to this principle different gods are but the different names of one Reality (*Sat*). Since all gods are manifestations of the One and the same divinity “any one of them could be identified with any other or all the rest.”²⁹

Here the attitude of one religion to another is not simply an attitude of toleration or acceptance of another’s god, “but acceptance of all gods imagined by all other sages as identical with one’s own, the One Deity without a second.”³⁰ This absorption or assimilation into one religion of other faiths proves a threat to the identity of other faiths. Hence this self-centred “inclusivism” is one of the note worthy features of *Vedic* religion. Hiriyanna, observes, “this has been a note worthy feature of Hinduism viz., its absorption of other creeds into itself by explaining the gods worshipped in them as but manifestations of the One Supreme Being.”³¹ Lal Mani Joshi comments, this secret of everlasting persistence and vitality of the *Vedic* religion lies in its strong tendency to assimilate doctrinal and practical elements from all other races, cultures and religions.³² This fact is also acknowledged and stressed by the stalwarts of Neo-Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda says:

“...our religion is one of inclusion of every one, exclusion of none.”³³

The above passages cited from *Rigveda* denote some of the features of *Vedic* religion, which is already rooted in its culture and attitude towards other faiths:

- i. Animosity leading to self centred exclusivism, which maintains that only one's own religion is true and all others are false.
- ii. Fight for superiority and the tendency to make others subordinate to it and to tolerate them as long as they accept its superiority.
- iii. Conflicts in the *Vedic* religion is for the acquisition of power in the society.
- iv. The absorption or assimilation principle, i.e., the policy of inclusivism.

Any religion, which constitute the above features in its nature and has a majority in the number of adherents, may not co-exist and co-operate with other faiths, which are a minority. Hence, it creates tension and conflict in the society.

The above values and worldviews precipitated in the *Vedic* period simultaneously run through the history of Hinduism and transform the face of the Indian subcontinent. One should not think that those attitudes solely represent the attitude of all Hindus.

2. THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

In the relentless movement of *Kālapravāham* many beautiful works of art, architecture and literature have suffered erosion. The Bhagavad Gita however has managed to survive the ravages of time and has won a unique place in the hearts of millions in the *Puṇya Bhārata Kṣetre*. The Gītā systematically analysed different currents of thought prevalent at the time of its composition, competing with each other and tried to synthesis the positive

elements of these teachings. Thus we see in it the ritualistic Brahmanism (*Pūrva Mimamsa*) views that by fulfilling the *Vedic* injunctions we attain perfection, the *Sāṃkhya* doctrine that liberation can be obtained by the distinctive knowledge of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti*; the Yoga system of discipline and meditation as a method by which the goal of life can be gained; the *Advaitic* thought based on *Upaniṣads*, which held that *Jiva*, the individual self is non different from Brahman, the Absolute Reality which is impersonal, by the knowledge of which *Mokṣa* can be obtained. Jainism with its *Sramanic* virtues, Buddhism with its sramanic virtues and monastic movements, and the *Bhāgavata theism*, which declares Bhagavan or Isvara, identified with *Kṛiṣṇa* as the Ultimate Supreme goal.³⁴

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan points out, the Gita attempts “to synthesis the heterogeneous elements and fuse them into a single whole.”³⁵ He goes on to say that the *Gītākāra* refines and reconciles the different currents of thought... He draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unit. He adopts the method, not of denial but of penetration and shows how these different lines of thought converge towards the same end³⁶

To illustrate this point, the *Gītākāra* takes the concept of *Karma*, which was prevalent in the religio-philosophical landscape. The *Vedic Karma* involved sacrifice (*Yajna*) to the *devas*, for the attainment of *Svarga* and the preservation of the cosmic *ṛim*. The *Upaniṣadic* concept of *Karma* on the other hand is no longer concerned with sacrifice, but emphasizes that one’s own birth is decided by desire and past *Karma*. Here we see the link between *Karma* and the *Punarjanma*. Jaina concept of *Karma* includes actions of mind, and it is a kind of atomic dyestuff infiltrated into *Jiva*. Thus infecting it with *Kārmic*

body, (*Karmanā kāya*) it conditions its birth and liberations. In Buddhism *triṣṇā* is the basic factor out of which arises *Karma*, eventually *dukkabhāva* and *punarjanma*. The knowledge leads to *nivṛti*, the relinquishing of activity. The Buddhists favoured retirement from society and contemplative inactivity.

The concept of above *karma* analysis so far can be termed horizontal as no vertical element is seen in this concept.

In the age of *Gītākāra*, India witnessed deep tensions and conflicts between *Brāhmanic* way of rituals and *Srāmanic* virtues promulgated by Jainism and Buddhism through their doctrines of *ahimsa*, nonviolence, *Sannyasa* and *naiskarmya* (actionless). So the conflict between *Sanatana dharma* and *Srāmanic dharmas* created utter confusion and confusion in society.³⁷

Hence Gita 4:16 says,

Kim karma kim akarma iti

*Kāvyo 'py, atra mōhitah*³⁸

What is action? What is actionless? In this matter even the sages are perplexed.

By the composition of Gita, the *Gītākāra* brings about a synthesis of these conflicts. The genius of the *Gītākāra* takes *Kriṣṇa*-monotheism as the archetype and paradigm of all actions. In the *pramāna* of God's *karma* found the reconciliation of *karma* and *akarma*. So the Gita says human beings must initiate and follow the *karma* of God. The three core passages express the essence of divine activity.³⁹

According to the paradigm of God's work human beings must act, and work should be regarded as essentially a sacrifice. But in the Gita 18:3 says

Some learned men declare that action should be given up as evil. While others say that acts of sacrifice (*yajña*), gift (*dāna*) and austerity (*tapas*) should not be given up.

Also in the Gita 18:5 we read

Yajña, dāna, tapas are obligatory works never to be
Abandoned, that purifies the wise.

But these works "ought to be performed giving up attachment and desire for fruits" (18:6). In (16:21) *kāma, krōdha, lōbha* are the triple gates of hell. So the Gita advocates renunciation to kill the desire for the fruits of deeds. "Gita teaches not renunciation of action but renunciation in action"⁴⁰ In (2:20) the famous *yōga* of *niskāma-karma*, the activity devoid of desire (*kāma*) for the fruits of works is formulated, which is the original discovery of the *Gītākāra*. It writes *karma* and *akarma* (3:4) and (2:47). And in 3:25 says:

... detached perform bring about the welfare of the world.

And in 3:19 says:

By doing duty without attachment men verily obtain the supreme.

The *Gītākāra's* new theory of *niṣkāmakarma* combined both the ideals of *Pravṛiti* of *Vedic* and *nivṛiti* of *Sramaṇa* dharmas. Now the question is how to get rid of *Kama* in *Karma*. Here the Gita advocates paying attention to the Supreme (*Param*). At this point the doctrine of *niskāma-karma* is further synthesized with that of *bhakti* or devotion to God. The Gita (8: 5-22) describes the idea of *bhakti* fixing the mind and self upon the *Bhagavān* and this is basically through love. For that we have to practice *Karmāsu kausalam* (wisdom in actions 2:55).

Thus we read (11:55)

Do works for me, make me your highest goal, be loyal in love to me, cut off all (other) attachments, have no hatred for any being at all: For all who do thus shall come to me.

This is how the Gītā synthesizes the antinomic teachings and diverse religious trends of its paths of liberation, viz., *Karmayōga*, *Jñānayōga*, *Bhaktiyōga* and *Dhyānayoga*. Gita does not reject any of these paths as ineffective or useless. Any one can follow any of these paths to attain Supreme. (13: 24-25; 4: 36; 18: 62, 66; 9:33; 12: 7-8). But Gita tries to combine each one without the other as a means. The *Dhyānayoga* is seen as means to attain *Jñāna* (6:8) and *Dhyāna* is to be practiced with *Bhakti* (6: 14-15), *Karma* and *Jñāna* are not different (5:4), *Karma* and *Bhakti* should be practiced together for attaining the goal (18: 56). But there is only one path Catholic, comprehensive and easy that anybody can follow. It is the way of devotion (*Bhakti*). The Gītā is certain on this point. So in (9: 30-32) it is said:

Even if a man of the most sinful conduct worships Me with undeviating devotion... soon he becomes a man of righteousness and obtains lasting peace. O, Kaunteya, know for certain that my devotee never perishes. For these who take refuge in me, though they be of inferior birth-woman, *Vaiśyan*, and *Sūdras* – even they attain the supreme god.

So in conclusion the Gita advocates only to worship *Kriṣṇa* (18: 62)

Seek refuge in Him alone with all your being, O, Bharata, by His grace (*tat prasādād*) you will attain supreme peace and Eternal Abode.

In 18:66 continues

Give up all things of low, turn to Me your only refuge I will deliver you from all evils.

Here '*Mamēkam Śaraṇam vrija*' shows a tone of exclusivism.

Thus the attitude of *Gitā* to divergent faith is not intolerant, but exclusive, accommodative and synthesizing. It has adopted a path to show that other paths are inadequate, incomplete and narrow, since those faiths are centred around the horizontal realm. But *Gitākāra* reverses the centre to the vertical realm. In De Smet's words "a Copernican reversal has taken place in the *Karma* theory and claimed the Gita's teachings supreme and superior to other faiths."⁴¹

The Gita presented almost a new and perfect God (*Puruṣottama*) Kriṣṇa, by integrating all the extent traditions in the Indian quest for God all of which were seen as imperfect and partial.⁴² In (7: 23-25) says:

Finite is the reward of men of little knowledge

.... but my worshippers come to Me.

The *Gitākāra* also tries to present Krisna who is better than and Superior to Buddha and his teachings.⁴³

Thus the author presents Kriṣṇa not as one among the many *Avatārs* but as the one and only *avatar* of the Supreme God.⁴⁴ Thus the Gitakara tries to achieve his aim of establishing Kriṣṇa as a superior God, by integrating all the traditional quests for God. *Gitākāra* does not reject other gods, but they are all subsumed in him and emanate from him. Thus those who worship and offer sacrifices to other gods with devotion and faith are in fact considered to be worshipping Krisna, though they do not know him as he really is (9: 23-24). This attitude is same as the Christian attitude of fulfilment theory, where Christ is presented as the Crown of all gods, and Christ fulfilled all other revelations. A.L. Basham comments on the attitude of *Gitākāra*:

This is typical of the general inclusive attitude of later Hinduism, where every minor god every where has some validity, as an aspect of one divinity filling all space and time.⁴⁵

In the Gita, the One reality is related to Many, but it is a supercilious mystico-relationalism.⁴⁶ This attitude does recognize the identity, integrity and wholeness of other faiths. In a sense it is a methodology of assimilating other religions in its monotheistic universal canopy – *Kriṣṇa*. In this perspective the attitude of Gita is a kind of supercilious inclusivism.⁴⁷

The Gita (9:22, 10:7-11) emphasise that “the highest blessings fall only those who recognize *Kriṣṇa* directly.” The supercilious inclusive attitude criticises those who disagree with it and the Gita uses words like (*mudhah*) fools, (*dushkritan*), (*naradhama*), the lowest of men to those who do not take refuge in *Kriṣṇa* (7:155; 3:32). This tone of the Gita also expressed an element of intolerance in the religious diversity. But this element of intolerance is negligible when we consider the general atmosphere of the Gita, which is tolerant, accommodative and sympathetic of religious diversity, especially within Hindu tradition.

3. EPICS AND PURANAS

Brahmanical learning centred on the *Vedas* dominated Indian intellectual and literary life at least until the time of the Buddha. After *Mauryan* Period the situation changed considerably. Buddhists and Jains began to reject *Vedas*, *Brāhmanical* writings and *Varnāśrama dharma* system. New forms of writings had emerged from Buddhism and Jainism particularly suited to the mass. After the third century B.C two great epic poems were composed by the Brahmanas as a challenge to the Buddhist and Jain writings. Those poems were the

Mahabharata and Ramayana. Both poems are centred around the *avatāra* or incarnation of *Viṣṇu*.

Of the two, Mahabharata contains the oldest material. After the completion of Mahabharata and Ramayana, a new theistic writing centering on Siva and Visnu was well developed. The most important record of this theistic development is a class of writings called Puranas. These writings became the principal scriptures of theistic Hinduism. This section is a brief overview of some of the passages from Puranas and some of the writings about epic regarding the attitude of Brahmanism towards the indigenous non-Hindu religions especially to Buddhism.

(i) Āstika – Nāstika Rivalry

(a) Conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism.

The struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism was very strong right from the period of the Buddha till the disappearance of Buddhism. Pali texts express the hostile attitude of the Brahmanas towards Buddha and his followers.⁴⁸

The *Samyutta Nikāya* records that the Buddha was not given even a meal in a village of Brahmanas.⁴⁹ The *Digha Nikāya* tells of a noted Brahmana who hesitated to pay homage to the Buddha in the presence of other Brahmanas lest his community would excommunicate him.⁵⁰ The Brahmanas used words like *Vasālaka* (out caste), *Mundaka* (shaven-headed) etc. abusing Buddhists.⁵¹

L.M. Joshi observes that the present form of Mahabharata with its ethics and philosophy would have been impossible without Buddhism.⁵² In spite of the fact that the Mahabharata was compiled during the period when Buddhism

flourished the most in India (i.e., 400 B.C and 400 A.D) it carefully avoided the name of Buddha.⁵³ *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra* denounced Buddha as *asura* (demon) and advocated that “the wise should not honour his name”.⁵⁴ *Kumarila Bhatta* accused Buddha as one who “transgressed dharma laid down for *Kṣatriyas* and he took himself to the profession of a religious teacher”, one who “deceives himself” and act contrary to the *Vedas*.⁵⁵

Coming to the sacred texts of the Hindus, in the Ayodhya Kanda of Ramayana, the Buddha is reviled as a thief (*cōrah*) and an atheist (*nāstika*)⁵⁶

The Laws of Manu ordain that the *Pāṣandins haitukas* and such should never be honoured “even by greeting” (4:30)

The *puranas* and other works branded Jains and Buddhists with contemptuous names such as *Paṣāndins* (heretics), *nagnas* (naked), *atipāpih* (wretched sinners) *durācārah* (those who do forbidden acts) etc. The story of King Sadhanus in Viṣṇu Purāṇa (3:18) reveals the Brahmanic hatred towards them. *Satādhanus* a true worshipper of Viṣṇu, moved by courtesy said a few words to a heretic on one sacred moment. As a result he was born successively as a dog, a jackal, a wolf, a vulture, a cow and a peacock, until the devotion of his wife *Saivyā* succeeded in securing his rebirth into his royal rank. Having narrated this story the Viṣṇu Purana continues:

Such ...is the sin of conversing with heretic Let therefore a man carefully avoid the discourse or contract of an unbeliever (*Pāṣandibhih*) especially at seasons of devotion and when engaged in the performance of religious rites.... Let not a person treat with even the civility of speech, heretics those who do forbidden acts (*durācārah*)... intercourse with such iniquitous wretches (*atipāpibhih*) even at a distance, all association with schismatics, defiles. Let a man therefore carefully avoid them..... These are the persons

called naked (*nagnas*) ... these are the unrighteous heretics to whom a must not give shelter.⁵⁷

The *Brahannārādiya Purāṇa*⁵⁸ (17:20), also warns people against talking to (17:20), looking at, or having any kind of contact with the Buddhists:

One who enters the house of a Boudha, even in great distress has no escape (from sin) even by (Practising) hundreds of Penances... A twice-born man, if he has nay regard for the *Vedas*, must not look at them. (One acquires sin), in case one enters the house of a Boudha knowing or unknowing. There is no escape (from sin if he does so) knowingly. This is the decision of the *Śāstras* (14:69-71)

*Nārada Purāṇa*⁵⁹ forbids *Brāhmaṇas* from entering Buddhist sanctuaries:

A Brahmin who enters the Buddhist temple even in great calamity cannot get rid of the sin by hundreds of expiations since the Buddhists are heretics (*Pāṣāṇḍins*) and critics of *Veda* (1:15. 50-52)

Vayu Purana: (11:17, 24-25) says, “By touching...a dog, a *candāla*, a *nagna* like a *digambara* Jaina and similar people...one gets polluted. He must take bath along with his clothes and smear clay twelve times on himself. Then he becomes pure.” *Yajñavalkya Smrithi*, cited from *Brahmānda Purāṇa*, where Buddhists and Jains are considered together with Kapalikas and Sattavatas, prescribes that “on touching Bouddhas, pasupattas, Jainas... a man should (in order to purify himself) bathe with clothes on.”⁶⁰

In accepting the *Brāhmanical* traditional attitude to Budhists, Swami Vivekananda rightly said that, the Hindus, strongly attached to their *Brāhmanical* tradition, do not acknowledge their debt to *Budhist* ideas and ideals...that is the Orthodox Hindus, because to them the Budhists are heretics.⁶¹

What we have said so far is sufficient to show how the *nāstika* religions and its followers were hated and condemned by the exponents of *Brahmanic Hinduism*. However, a gradual change in the attitude towards the Buddha can be noted. In spite of the struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanic Hinduism, an attempt was made among the *Purāṇic* authors to assimilate and accommodate the Buddha within the Hindu pantheon.

(b) Brahmanical Assimilation of Buddhism

The Puranic authors stretch out the doctrine to include the heretics also. This helped the development of *Vaiṣṇavism*. Vivekananda's observation on the evolution of *Vaiṣṇavism* is as follows:

Buddhism and *Vaiṣṇavism* are not two different things. During the decline of Buddhism in India, Hinduism took from her a few cardinal tenets of conduct and made them her own, and these have now come to be known as *Vaiṣṇavism*.⁶²

Brāhmanical Hinduism adopted the same methodology, which was used to bring about the synthesis seen in the Gita, i.e., the "Supercilious inclusivism technique, to assimilate and accommodate the Buddha within the Hindu Pantheon.⁶³ They sought scriptural sanction for this from the Gita:

When there is a decay of *dharma* and rise of *adharmā* ... for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of *dharma* I (*Viṣṇu-Kriṣṇa*) am incarnated age after age.⁶⁴

The absorption of Buddha into the *Vaiṣṇava* creed, in fact was a long process. In the *Sānti-Parva* (339: 103-104) of *Mahābhārata* and in many of the *Purāṇas*, The Buddha is not included in the ten *avatārās*.⁶⁵ The *Vṛddhaharita Smṛiti* (10: 145-146) mentions ten *avatārās*, but includes Hayagriva instead of the Buddha and prohibits the worship of the Buddha.

But finally he was accepted as an *avatāra*. Thus, in one passage of the *Matsya Purāna* (285: 6-7) the name of the Buddha is included.⁶⁶ The *Narasimha Purāna* (Ch. 36), *Agni Purāna* (Chs. 2-16, and 16: 12-13; 49:8) and *Varāha Purāna* (4:2) also include Buddha among the ten *avatāras*.

The *Dasāvatāra carita* of *Kṣemendra* (C.1066 AD) and the *Gitagovinda* (1:9) of *Jayadeva* (C 1180-1200 AD) speak of the Buddha as an *avatara* of *Visnu*.⁶⁷

By the tenth century A.D., Buddha was completely absorbed in the puranic *Visnu* avatar.⁶⁸ Even though the *Brāhmanical Hinduism* accepted Buddha as an *avatar*, they did not accept Buddha-dharma and Buddhists. Later Brahmanism accepted many of the Buddhist doctrines and assimilated a considerable body of the philosophical, moral ideas of Buddhism.⁶⁹ The assimilation of Buddhism by Brahmanism has been interpreted as a major cause for the decline of Buddhism in its home land.

Joshi says:

Brahmanism killed Buddhism by a fraternal embrace.⁷⁰

Swami Vivekananda observes:

Hinduism threw away Buddhism after taking its saps.⁷¹

Thus we find a strange and paradoxical attitude in Brahmanism towards Buddhism. At first Brahmanism had a deep-rooted opposition towards Buddhism. Later slowly included Buddha inside its tradition as one among the *avatars* of *Viṣṇu*. "One" reality related to "Many". Finally Brahmanism, applied its methodology of 'supercilious inclusivism' and assimilated Buddha and Buddhists in its *Purānic* garb. Both Radhakrishnan and D.D. Kosambi agreed this methodology as a strategy of Brahmanism adopted all through its

history, calculated to bring under its own control the people who followed different religions.⁷² R.C. Mujumdar, the historian, looks at this phenomenon and comments on the policy of Brahmanism:

This well conceived and bold stroke of policy cut the ground from under the feet of Buddhism which was already steadily losing ground and the ultimate result was the complete effacement of Buddhism from India as a separate sect.⁷³

The 'Supercilious inclusivism' technique destroyed the boundary of Buddhism and disrupted its integrity and thereby its identity and then absorbed it into its Pantheon. Arnold Toynbee has observed the modus operandi adopted by Brahmanical Hinduism as that:

Hinduism despoiled a senile Buddhist Philosophy in order to acquire for itself the weapons with which it drove its philosophical rival out of their common homeland in the Indic world.⁷⁴

The modus operandi adopted by the Brahmanical Hinduism succeeded, in part, due to the decline of Buddhism, the later part due to the crusades of Kumarila and Sankara in the second half of the first millennium of the Christian era.⁷⁵ Thus the Hindu religious tradition has become a composite culture of *non-Vedic*, *Vedic* and *Srāmanic* cultures. Now quoted from Swami Vivekananda, S.W. Bahkle refers to the Hindu religious tradition in India:

As a composite product in which the impersonal absolutism of Sankara the Bhakti-Mārga of Ramanuja and the humanism of the Buddhists had blended into each other.⁷⁶

Hence T.M.P Mahadevan says:

Hinduism is not a single creed or cult but a league of religions or fellowship of faiths.⁷⁷

From the above textual overview and the analysis of the writers of the texts, the present writer is inclined to say that the 'supercilious inclusivism'

technique of the Puranic Hinduism has achieved to absorb and assimilate Buddhism (*non-Vedic*) into the Hindu religious tradition. It has also succeeded in claiming that the *Vedic dharma*, alone is true. Thus it upholds the spirit of 'exclusivism' and 'inclusivism', which is against pluralism.

4. EVALUATION

In the hymns of *Rigveda*, we have noted that the antagonistic attitude of *Āryans* towards the *non-Āryan* people in India. In the process of Aryanisation in Vedic period, many gods were amalgamated or absorbed in a Supreme god, and it seems that different gods are only manifestations of One supreme deity Visnu and all gods are subordinate, partial and imperfect. The *Āryans* called the *non-Āryan* people *pisacas* and *rāksasas* and *non-Āryan* gods as demons (*asuras*).

The Gita synthesises divergent views and paths and brings all under *Bhakti* (devotion) to *Kriṣṇa*, who alone is true and worthy of worship (9:22; 7:14). Those who do not take refuge in *Kriṣṇa* are fools (7:15). The attitude of Gita towards diverse faiths, we have noted is a kind of 'supercilious inclusion'. The Brahmanic Hinduism in *Purāṇas* assimilated Buddha as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu and denounced Buddhists and Jains as *Cōrah* (thief) and *Paṣandins* (*heretics*). The *Purāṇic* Hinduism aims to teach that the *Vedic dharma* alone is true and effective and those who abandon the *Vedas* are destined to perish.

The spirit of exclusivism, and supercilious, inclusivism were prevalent among *Rigveda*. The *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Epics* and *Purāṇas*. This attitude flares up as religious rivalry and animosity. The re-instatement of the Vedic religion and discarding of other religions are main response of Hindu religious traditions. If this tendency is resisted the Hinduism becomes intolerant.

As long as others accept its supremacy then it is tolerant and accommodative. These characteristics of early Hinduism we see in the Modern Hindu militant organizations such as *Āryasamāj*, *Hindu Mahāsabha*, *Rāṣhtriya Swayam Sevak Saṅgh* and *Viswa Hindu Parishad* etc. This will be discussed in the next section.

B. MODERN HINDU RESPONSES TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

In the textual study we have noted that the ‘Supercilious inclusion’ tactics of Hinduism, accommodates, tolerates and assimilates the religious faiths of Indian origin inside its developing tradition. As long as others accept its supremacy it is tolerant and accommodative. If any religious tradition does not accept it or resists its authority or uniqueness then Hinduism becomes intolerant, which is more a Universal phenomenon to other religions also. However with the coming of Christianity, especially the Christian missionary movement and Islam, the supremacy and ultimacy of Hinduism has been questioned and resisted. On the contrary they began to admit many Hindus to their own fold through conversions.

The Orientalist’s interpretation that the ancient Indian culture as ideal, and Sanskritic, *Vedic* culture as the root of the Indian tradition influenced the Hindu religious leaders of the 19th and 20th centuries. The Christian policy of conversion, western ideas of liberalism, and rationality and the Orientalist’s interpretation of Indian history created a new religious consciousness among the Hindus and thus the resisting face of Hinduism began to emerge.

The last decade of the 19th century is of prime significance in the emergence of modern Hindu organizations. The 20th century has witnessed to a

great extent two powerful feeling – love for one’s own nation and love for one’s own religion. This has resulted in the interdependent growth of excessive nationalism and religious fundamentalism. This kind of conscious interlocking between religion and territory promoted the idea that India is Hindustan, the land of Hindus.⁷⁸ J.N. Farquhar calls this consciousness “religious nationalism”.⁷⁹ G.R. Ram of Lucknow University refers to it as “Hindu nationalism”⁸⁰ and K.W. Jones calls it “politicized Hinduism.”⁸¹ The nexus between nationalism and Religion in Pre-Independent India directly contributes to the defence and promotion of Hinduism. The seed of religious nationalism was sown in Punjab by the Āryasamāj, in Bengal it was watered by Bankin Chandra Chetterjee, Swami Vivekananda and others. It grew as a mighty tree in Maharashtra by Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Vir Savarkar and his Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. K.B. Hedgewar and Golwalkar and Rāshtiya Swayam Sevak Sangh and Sangh Parivar have been primarily responsible for the defence and promotion of Hinduism. Among these reformers only four are taken as examples to study their responses to religious pluralism.

1. Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) was a giant figure of his time. His influence over the lives of thousands of people continues to this day through the Arya Samaj movement, which he founded in 1875, and was one of the pioneer movements.

Dayananda was born in 1824 in an orthodox Saiva Brahmin family. He studied under the Punjabi Vedic Scholar Dandi Swami Virjananda Mathura and this made him a missionary of Vedic dharma and a crusader against non-Vedic religions. He was influenced by Rajnarayan Bose’s lecture entitled

“the Superiority of Hinduism” which argued that all other religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism were finite and faulty. Dayananda’s magnum opus, *Satyārth Prakāsh* was first published in 1875. A revised edition (1884) contained three new chapters, one on Christianity and the other on Islam. One chapter deals with the religions of India (Carvaka, Buddhism & Jainism). This book contains the basic teachings of Dayananda and thus of the Aryasamaj. This book also contains Dayananda’s bitter criticisms of the major *non-Vedic* religions of Indian Origin. This work is accepted as the authorized edition by the Arya Samaj.⁸²

a. **Vedic Religion as the Only True Religion**

The Āryasamāj teaches that the *Vedic* religion is the only true religion revealed by God for all.⁸³ Those who do not believe in the Vedas are atheists and they are “sunk in ignorance and misery”.⁸⁴

Those who do not understand and scoff at the Vedas and the teachings of the *Vedic* religion are “Scoundrels”.⁸⁵ Thus for Dayananda and the Āryasamāj the *Vedic* religion is exclusively true and is to be followed by all. Dayananda is also against the view that “all religions are good hence it is not good to criticize any one of them”.⁸⁶ In maintaining that the *Vedic dharma* alone is true, Dayananda stresses that all other religions are false.⁸⁷ Dayananda uses very strong terms to characterize such religious preachers who do not advocate the *Vedic* faith. They are ‘hypocrites’, ‘rascals’, ‘rogues’, ‘scoundrels’, ‘imposters’, ‘quacks’, ‘defrauders’, and ‘tricksters’.⁸⁸ Dayananda looked for a world in which all the existing religions would vanish and the *Vedic* religion would reign supreme.

Dayananda Saraswati's attitude to other religions as displayed in *Satyārth Prakāsh* is strongly condemnatory, predominantly negative and positively intolerant and aggressive. Jordens observes, "there is quite a lot of sarcastic bitterness" in the criticism of other religions.⁸⁹ Dayananda called Jainism a "most dreadful religion" the founders and followers of which are "in dense ignorance". Their '*tīrthankarās* were ignorant'.⁹⁰ Dayananda condemned Christianity as a hollow religion, a "barbarous religion and a 'false religion' believed only by fools and by the people of in a state of barbarism." Jesus was one who "talked.... nonsense like a savage", "...not a seer, not even an enlightened man".⁹¹ For Dayananda Islam is a "false religion" that "does nothing but harm" and is to be utterly discarded. The Quran is full of terror written by "some ignorant man" and believed only "by savages and not by enlightened man". Muhammad was not a "Pious man or Prophet". But immoral and lascivious.⁹² The militant *Āryas* followed the path of Dayananda and rejected any suggestions to soften Dayananda's criticism of other faiths or to change in any way the word of their *rsi*.⁹³

b. The *Ārya Samajists* are the 'Nazis' of Hindusthan.

The Guardian observes the elevated position of Dayananda and *Arya Samaj* in the following words:

The *Arya Samajists* are the Nazis of Hindustan, they anticipated Hitler by almost a century. This striking statement was made by Shri. Shankaracharya of Karvir pith (Dr. Kurtakoti) while opening 61st anniversary celebration meeting of the *Arya Samaj* at Bombay recently (in 1936). 'The *Aryasamaj* he continued has become today a name that means the vanguard of Hindu society.... It was the genius of Shri. Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of

Ārya Samāj discovered the almost forgotten name (Āryans) of the people of 'Āryavarta'.⁹⁴

This clearly reveals the militant attitude and programme of *Ārya Samāj* toward the faith of other people in India.

C. India is the Land of Āryans: Āryavarta

In *Satyārth Prakāsh*, Chapter XI one finds the appreciation and admiration of Āryavarta. According to Dayananda Saraswati:

This country is called *Āryavarta*, because it has been the abode of *Āryas* from the very dawn of creation. It is bounded on the north by the Himalayas, on the south by the Vindhayachala mountains, on the west by the Attok (Indus) and on the east by the Brahmaputra. The land included with these limits is *Āryavarta* and those that have been living in it from time immemorial are also called *Āryans*.⁹⁵

The rest of the world, including South India for him is *mlecchadesa*, the land of *desyus*, *the rouges and the wicked*. *Āryavarta* is unique and incomparable. *Aryans* were the sovereign rulers of the entire world and all other nations were subject to the suzerainty⁹⁶ of the *Āryavarta*. After the Mahabharata war *Aryavarta* lost its political integrity and political control of the whole world.⁹⁷ So the mission of the *Ārya Samāj* is *Kriṇavanto Visvamāryam*. "Let the whole world be made *Āryan*." Rigveda (9: 63:5).⁹⁸ In order to establish *Aryan* religion in the world, the Truth must be defended and disseminated while falsehood must be checked, shunned and rejected. Therefore, the *Āryans* are obliged to defend their religion in the face of opposition and attack from falsehood and dangerous teachings of other religions. This position of Dayananda was a call to the Hindus to acknowledge the essential need of apologetic and polemics as well and to resort to necessary

and appropriate actions. So *Ārya Samāj* reform was to revive, *rejuvenate* and restore the pure religion of the land. He effected a marriage between religion and politics, which resulted in a politicization of religion and a sacralization of politics.⁹⁹ This paved way for the development and interpretation of Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism. So loyalty to Hindu religion and culture.¹⁰⁰ All non-Hindu aspects were regarded as contaminating influences.¹⁰¹ Even though this resulted in wide spread communal riots, it introduced a new sense of elevated identity among the Hindus which successively resulted in the emergence of a spirit of militancy. D.S. Sarma calls this as the “Church Militant” in Hinduism.¹⁰²

The apologetic and polemic writings of the *Ārya Samāj* have been intended to enhance the prospect of Hinduism and curb that of the *non-Vedic* and non-Indian religions.

d. The Śuddhi and Sanghathan Movements

The *Śuddhi and Sanghathan* Movements had specific role in causing a communal resurgence in British India. According to D.S. Sarma, *Śuddhi* is a means to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism, it is also a means to reclaim or re-convert Hindus now in Islam or Christianity.¹⁰³ Dayananda’s attack on other religions like Christianity and Islam was vigorous. J.F. Seunarine observes that the *Śuddhi* activity made the Muslim-Arya antagonism its high watermark in the twenties.¹⁰⁴

Swami Sharaddhananda played a decisive role in the formation of *Sanghathan*.¹⁰⁵ *Hindu Sanghathan* stands for the consolidation of the Hindu community, whereby Hinduism can attain strength. Its main objective is to

re-convert the former Hindus and convert the non-Hindus to Hinduism, thereby absorbing the whole populace into the main stream of Hindu life. The *Ārya Samāj* advocated even violence as a legitimate means to defend and promote the cause of Hinduism. In short, the *Ārya Samāj* wanted to establish a Hindu nation by establishing a common religion and culture in India. Again D.S. Sarma describes the *Sanghathan* in the following lines:

The word *Sanghathan* means union. Therefore, it implies the programme of the *Ārya Samāj* the organization of the Hindus for self defence... The Hindus should cultivate a militant spirit and go and meet the enemy and attack him in his stronghold... This militant spirit of the *Samāj* has introduced into Hindu society a tone of manliness and a sense of self-respect, which it lost during the centuries of Muslim rule.¹⁰⁶

The *Sanghathan* movement advocates a definite strategy to defend the Hindu community. The *Śuddhi* movement has a clear recruitment strategy.

The conversions and re-conversions have become a sensitive issue in the contemporary India. The *Ārya Samaj* policy of *śuddhi* and *Sanghathan* had immensely influenced the *Sangh Parivar* organizations (B.J.P., V.H.P., *Bajrangdal* and R.S.S.), and they have been pursuing an agenda of reconverting more and more tribals and Hindus, who had embraced Christianity. Mr. Dilip Singh Judeo, two time BJP Rajya Sabha member has formed the *Akhil Bhāratīya Vanwāsi Kalyān Āshram* which is engaged full time in the re-conversion exercise in Madhya Pradesh.¹⁰⁷ It is reported that it is Judeo's "gharvapsi" operation. This has been described by the Madhya Pradesh Christian Association as a "highly co-ercieve and unconstitutional exercise."¹⁰⁸ Sumit Sarkar says, "the VHP never acknowledge this as conversion, but described by terms like *Śuddhi*, re-conversion or *Parivartan*, turning back."¹⁰⁹

It has been noted that any religion which claims that it is the only true, supreme absolute and ultimate and condemning other religions as false by using aggressive and vulgar words will generate communal tension. The reasons that Mr. Madanlal Khurana's exist from the Union Cabinet and National Executive of BJP Government is reported that the *Bajrangdal—VHP* members are engaged in destroying the nation's pluralist and democratic traditions by inciting communal passions.¹¹⁰ It seems that *Sangh Parivar* is perpetuating the policy of Arya Samaj, i.e., "triumph of one religion and destruction of others."¹¹¹ This policy never brings forth unity and peace. The only way to unity is peaceful co-existence.

2. Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was the first missionary and the apostle of Modern Hinduism. He took the message of Hinduism to Europe and America. He not only defended the cause of Hinduism, but also initiated and inspired the attempt to universalize its message. The character and nature of contemporary Hinduism can hardly be grasped without reference to the interpretation of Swami Vivekananda. K.M. Panikkar says that he may rightly be called the 'new Sankaracharya', who unified the Hindu ideology through his interpretation of *Vedanta*.¹¹²

Vivekananda's approach to religious pluralism seems very complex.¹¹³ It is conglomeration of friendly, patronizing, hostile and dogmatic attitude.

i. Harmony of Religions

(a) Religion and Religions

Vivekananda was one of the foremost of modern thinkers who recognized the fact of religious pluralism. After studying the major religions of the world, he repeatedly treated this issue in his writings and speeches.

Though there are differences between religions in doctrines, rituals and myths, which may appear as conflicting and contradicting, Vivekananda finds a unity and harmony underlying all of them. According to Vivekananda, to recognize the eternal harmony that runs in and through all the various religions is “crying necessity of the day.”¹¹⁴ How does, then, Vivekananda explain the unity and harmony of various religions? How do various religions related to each other? Why should there be so many religions?

In answering these questions Vivekananda makes distinction between the One Eternal Religion – the *Sanātana Dharma* – and particular historical religions. Religion for Vivekananda means realization.¹¹⁵ Vivekananda defines realization in different terms: as “realizing of God in the Soul,” as re-union with God, or ... with divinity which is every man’s true nature,” as realization of “truth within” which is “oneness”¹¹⁶ Therefore, for Vivekananda Religion means Truth itself and the Truth to be realized.¹¹⁷

This religion is One and Eternal. “There never existed many religions, there is only the One. One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist...”¹¹⁸ This is the Universal Religion.¹¹⁹

Then what about the particular historical religions? How do they relate to this one *Sanātana dharma*? He holds that the different existent religions are

“the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness.”¹²⁰ They are further described as different “adaptations”, “manifestations”, “various phases” of the Eternal Religion.¹²¹ The particular religions are also understood as “the different visions of the same truth from different standpoints”¹²² and so many forms only of one underlying Eternal Religion.”¹²³ Thus Vivekananda contents that all religions are related to the Religion, i.e., the source of all religions are one and the same. They therefore need not be considered as contradictory, but supplementary and complementary.¹²⁴

(b) All Religions are One in Essence

Since all religions point beyond themselves to the Religion, to the Truth, to God, Vivekananda argues, “the same fundamental principles are taught in all religions.”¹²⁵

While the underlying principle is eternal and infinite, the different expressions or visions of it in various religions are necessarily finite and partial. This means that there is no truth in its totality in any one of the religions. Yet it is the same truth, the same God, the same Religion that all religions express or manifest. This Reality/Truth is the “essence” or “substance” of all religions. It is only that the same truth is expressed in different names and forms in various religions. Therefore, Vivekananda maintains all religions are “One in essence” or “in essentials.”¹²⁶

To say that all religions are one in essence is not to deny the differences among religions. But the differences are “One of expressions and not of substance.”¹²⁷ The differences are only in ‘externals’ and ‘secondary details’, but in essence they are all one and the same.¹²⁸ Vivekananda was here what

his master Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had taught. Here are the words of Ramakrishna:

Truth is one; only it is called by different names. All people are seeking the same Truth... A lake has so many ghats from one ghat the Hindus take water in jars and call it *jala* from another ghat the Musalmans take water in leather bags and call it *pāni*. From a third, the Christians take the same thing and call it 'water'. Suppose some one says that the thing is not '*jala*' but '*pāni*' or that it is not *pani* but 'water' or that it is not 'water' but *jala*. It would indeed be ridiculous.¹²⁹

Vivekananda also says that it is God himself who is manifested as Christ, Kriṣṇa, Buddha and "all the great teachers."¹³⁰ We are also told that Siva, Viṣṇu, Buddha and Jina, Jehova, Allah and Brahma are the same.¹³⁰ Thus Vivekananda argues that all religions are really one, different only in the form of worship.¹³²

(c) All Religions are One in Their Goal

It has been indicated that religions being various expressions point beyond themselves to God whom they express. Religions are, then pointers to God who is the centre and the goal of all religions. Thus Vivekananda arrives at the conclusion that "the aim and the end of all religions is but one." This goal of all religions is "to realize God" and this realization is what he called Religion distinct from religions.¹³³ As the different rivers, though they are different in names and forms, all run to the same ocean, the various religions aim at the same goal.

(d) Religions as Means or Paths

All religions with their various scriptures, forms of worship and rituals, having the same aim or pointing towards the same goal of realizing God, can do nothing but only “to help us to find the goal.” Or “They are all helping men towards the real religion.”¹³⁴ This means, for Vivekananda that they function as helps or ‘aids’ or ‘methods’ for the realization of the goal. Hence Vivekananda argues, “all religions from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, are many attempts of the human soul” to grasp and realize the same goal.¹³⁵ Therefore, he says:

Religion means realization, nothing else. It does not matter whether one approaches the destination in a carriage with four horses, in an electric car or rolling on the ground. The goal is the same.¹³⁶

Vivekananda emphasizes, that one can reach the goal through any of the paths that is religion. Vivekananda seems to suggest that all religions are equal in their efficacy and effectiveness.

(e) All Religions are True.

In his first address at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 he declared, “We accept all religions are true.”¹³⁷ As expressions of Truth and as different perceptions of God, “there is a germ of truth in all religions”, and therefore, “all the various views of religion are true.”¹³⁸ Vivekananda further attempts to prove that “holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any Church of the world and every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.”¹³⁹ This means that each one of the religions has the same saving power as others and each is capable of transforming and elevating the lives of its adherents, if not all.¹⁴⁰ Vivekananda

also argues that the fact that all the great religions continue to flourish and grow shows that there is truth in all of them and they are all needed for mankind.¹⁴¹

(f) The Need for Many Religions.

If all religions are one in their essence, if it is the same God they all express, if they are all true, and if their goal is one, why should there be so many religions? Will not one religion be sufficient for the whole world?

Since people are different in their nature, tendencies, temperaments and inclinations and each individual has a special nature, particular to himself, all people are distinct from one another, each person sees God/Truth, in his own way according to his own nature and inclinations, results inevitably in various visions or views of God, provide space for different religions.¹⁴² The diversity of human nature also implies that no single form of expression of truth is sufficient enough to satisfy the needs and aspirations of all people. It becomes meaningful only when it is expressed and adapted according to the different nature of people. The infinite variety of human nature requires different methods or paths in attaining to the ultimate goal of realizing God. Different religions are such different methods and paths. "One religion cannot suit all."¹⁴³

Therefore, Vivekananda concludes that "no one religion will do for all" and no single religion is fitted to be the religion of the entire human race.¹⁴⁴ He also points out, that any attempt to bring all humankind under one religion has been and is doomed to failure.¹⁴⁵

The implications of such an understanding of the harmony of religions is of great significance in the context of religious pluralism. He denounced religious exclusivism, which asserts that “only this way” is true and only this way “leads to Salvation, all others are wrong.”¹⁴⁶ Referring to Christianity, for example, he said:

...When you speak of Incarnation, of the Trinity, of Salvation through Jesus Christ, I am with you. I say, “very good, that I also hold true.” But when you go on to say, “There is no other true religion, there is no other revelation of God,” then I say, “Stop, I cannot go with you when you shut out, when you deny.”¹⁴⁷

Vivekananda believed that such exclusivism is the root cause of religious hostility and intolerance.¹⁴⁸

He also condemned religious fanaticism. He said this disease is “the most dangerous of all diseases.”¹⁴⁹ Vivekananda believed in acceptance of religions rather than mere tolerance. In the Parliament of Religions he said “Hinduism has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.”¹⁵⁰

An important point that can be derived from Vivekananda’s concept of the unity and harmony of religions as expounded here is the equality of all religions. He did not say explicitly that all religions are equal, as Mahatma Gandhi has done. But his whole arguments suggest that he regarded all religions are of equal value and efficacy to their respective followers. They all have the “same saving power” but not for the same people, as noted earlier, but for the different people. More over he accepted and advocated that the hereditary religion is the one that is best suited to everybody. It rules out religious conversion in the sense of changing a religion for another one as

unnecessary. Vivekananda argues that each person must attain perfection in his own religion. Therefore Vivekananda says:

The Christian is not to become a Hindu or Buddhist, not a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.¹⁵¹

He clarified his view in his final address in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago on Sept. 27. 1893.

...If any body dreams of exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: "Help and no fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."¹⁵²

In the harmony and unity of religions, Vivekananda rejects both the exclusive truth claim of any religion and the claim of the superiority of any religion over the others. But when we studied his speeches and writings one can find a dominant second view, which is incompatible with the idea of equality of all religions. This view is the Absoluteness of *Vedanta*.

ii. The Absoluteness of Vedanta

(a) Advaita the Fulfilment of All Religions

According to the second view of Vivekananda all religions are not considered equally true. Vivekananda places various religions in different grades, according to their growth in spirituality. At the top he places *Vedantic* Hinduism in its *Advaita* form. *Advaita* he considers is the final and absolute religion, and no religion can go beyond it. It is not one religion among other religions, but "religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance,"¹⁵³

Hence Vivekananda approached religions from the standpoint of an *advaitin*.
 What does Vivekananda mean by the *Advaita*?

The word '*advaita*' means non-dualism. Vivekananda follows the *advaita* tradition of Shankaracharya and says Truth is one, called *Brahman*. This Truth or Reality is undifferentiated, indivisible, distinctionless and impersonal. It is non different from *Ātman*, the self, the reality within each individual. The plurality and diversity that is noticed in the world and between persons are, therefore, not ultimately true. It is the non-dual *Brahman-Ātman* that appears as many characterized by names and forms, *nama-rupa*. It is the same Reality that exists in and behind all multiplicity. Every thing is only an appearance – *Vivarta* – of Brahman, the Absolute. Vivekananda says, "This world is nothing. It is at best only a hideous caricature, a shadow of Reality." It is "fictitious" and "mere self-hypnotism." It is the "Projection" or "the reflection of that One Eternal Being, the *Ātman*."¹⁵⁴ What is real in the individual and in the Universe is the *Ātman*. This is the Reality which is "the Divinity within" each individual. Therefore, all life is One, the One Reality."¹⁵⁵

For Vivekananda, this *advaitic* idea is the Absolute Truth. The goal of humanity, according to him, is to know and realize this Oneness of all beings. This is what he means that religion is realization, that is "realizing God in the Soul" or re-union with God... which is every man's true nature or realization of truth within which is Oneness.¹⁵⁶ *Advaita* is the One Eternal Religion in which this truth is realized and it is the goal of all particular religions towards which they all point. It is this religion that is expressed and manifested in every

existent religion. It is “the kernel of all religions.”¹⁵⁷ Whatever truth is there in any religion it is the truth of *Advaita*.

Since all religions are related to this One Religion, the *advaita*, one can find harmony among religions. But Daniel says even when Vivekananda interpreted this harmony in terms of equality, it is most important to note that the religions that are equal are differentiated from the Eternal Religion identified with *Vedanta* which is perfect and Absolute. No religion possesses that perfection of the Absolute Religion and no religion is equal to it.¹⁵⁸ Vivekananda means all religions are equal among themselves except the Advaita Religion which is the goal of all religions.¹⁵⁹ Moreover Vivekananda grades those particular religions in an hierarchical order, according to their closeness to Advaita. He also accepts a gradual and progressive developments in the religions from lower religious ideas to higher and higher ones.¹⁶⁰

Dvaita (dualism), *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified non-dualism) and *advaita* (non-dualism) are the three main stages in the branches of Vedanta. According to Vivekananda, these three branches of Vedanta represent the three stages in spiritual evolution successively and any religion can be included in one or the other of these three.¹⁶¹ He includes not only the Vedanta of Madhava but Christianity and Islam also in the Stage of *Dvaita*.¹⁶²

Dvaita is the first stage in religious evolution. It is a stage when man sees himself and God eternally separate. When God is a separate entity by Himself and nature is a separate entity by itself... This is the dualism between man and God.¹⁶³

Vivekananda argues that both dualism (*dvaita*) and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified dualism) are inadequate to answer many problems, especially the

problem of evil. Hence both these are inadequate and insufficient in the spiritual growth of any man. Vivekananda rejected the existence of any personal God maintained by *Dvaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. He contends that in *Advaita* man realizes the Oneness and solidarity of all beings and realizes that the diversity and variety are only an appearance of the Reality the *Brahman-Ātman*, which is indivisible, distinctionless and impersonal. *Advaita* “is the last word of religion and thought” and nothing can go beyond it.¹⁶⁴

It is Vivekananda’s contention that Hinduism alone recognizes this truth of gradual and progressive spiritual development of humanity through these three stages and that is one reason why Hinduism is truer than or superior to all other religions, because Hinduism contains, *Dvaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and the last stage *Advaita*. He also says, “The *Vedas* or the *Upaniṣads* begins with dualism, goes through a qualified monism and ends in perfect monism.¹⁶⁵ Vivekananda accepts every religion as a necessary step for man to reach the Truth.

(b) Advaita the Exclusively True Religion

It has been shown that while in maintaining the finality and absoluteness of *Advaita* Vivekananda does not reject other religions as totally false or unnecessary. He admits them as preparation for *Advaita*. Now a third kind of attitude can be discerned from Swami Vivekananda. He does not regard other religions other than *Advaita* as having any use. He totally rejects them as false, unnecessary and useless.¹⁶⁶ He asserts *Advaita* as the only exclusive Truth.

As Nalini Devadas observes, Vivekananda’s arguments shows ‘a clear break from and a negation of lower truths when the highest Truth is

realized.¹⁶⁷ Though Vivekananda argues that when one realizes the highest Truth of *Advaita*, one “looks back” to “the preceding steps” that led to it and “knows that they were true”, he admits that these lower steps are “wrongly perceived... wrongly stated and distorted truth¹⁶⁸

According to Vivekananda, Hinduism is the most satisfactory religion in the world, and *Advaita* is “the crest-jewel of all spiritual thought.”¹⁶⁹ Various reasons Vivekananda gives for the absoluteness of *Vedanta* and superiority of Hinduism may be examined briefly.

(c) Advaita alone is Rational and Compatible with Science

He contents:

“If a man want to be rational and religious at the same time, *Advaita* is the one system in the world for him.”¹⁷⁰

He also says:

“*Vedanta* is the only scientific religion”, incorporating within its teaching the law of evolution and the law of conservation of energy and “it is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people.”¹⁷¹

(d) Advaita alone Provides Foundation for Morality and Ethics

Advaita alone gives the metaphysical explanations for the ethical precept. It says that “man must love others because those others are himself. There is but one.” In other words the real ‘I’ – the self or *Ātman* is non different from Self of all. This awareness of the oneness and solidarity of all beings can be the only basis of all ethics and all practical efforts of loving service. Therefore “in injuring his neighbour, the individual actually injures himself.”¹⁷²

(e) Vedanta Alone is Based on Eternal Principles, Not on Persons

All religions “except our religion”, Vivekananda contends depend upon the life or lives of some personal founder or founders. “Our religion is not based upon persons but on principles” and “it teaches principles and not persons.”¹⁷³ However, *Vedanta* accepts a number of persons, *avatars*, *gurus*, *rishis* etc., for the guidance of man. But their authority is based on their realization of the eternal principles taught in the *Vedas*. Vivekananda says, for example:

The glory of *Kriṣṇa* is not that he was *Kriṣṇa*, but that he was the great teacher of *Vedanta*. If he had not been so, his name would have died out... Persons are but the embodiments, illustrations of the principles.¹⁷⁴

(f) Vedanta alone Inculcates Strength

The belief in a personal God, other than one’s own self, according to Vivekananda, is ignorance and superstition. On the other hand, *Vedanta* is the religion of the strength and it is knowledge (*Jñāna*).¹⁷⁵ It tells everybody that he himself is God, non-different from the Absolute Reality - *Brahman*. This knowledge makes him not to depend on anyone else. This knowledge will inculcate him strength. This truth will free him from all fear and weakness. The fear and weakness come from the notion of separateness that man is different from the Infinite, from all others.¹⁷⁶

(g) Vedanta is All Inclusive and Tolerant, and therefore, Fit to be the only Universal Religion

Vedanta harmonises in itself all other religious aspirations. “All of religion is contained in the *Vedanta*, that is the three stages of *Vedanta* Philosophy”. Therefore, it is non-destructive and tolerant of all religions.¹⁷⁷

Vivekananda claims that India is the only country where there never has been a religious persecution. It is the glorious land of religious toleration.¹⁷⁸

Vivekananda argues:

Our religion is truer than any other religion because it never conquered, because it never shed blood.... It is here and here alone the ideals of toleration was preached.¹⁷⁹

The comprehensive and all-inclusive nature of *Vedanta*, makes it the only universal religion. Only that religion is fitted to be the universal religion which be “broad and large enough to supply food for all,” the people of different temperament. It should thus equally satisfy the philosopher, the mystic, the active and the emotional man.¹⁸⁰ *Vedanta* alone can be universal religion because it alone based on universal principles.

(h) Hinduism is The Mother and Source of All Religions.

Vivekananda says that in religious matters “the Hindus are everythings” and Hindu religion “contains all the ideas in their perfection”.¹⁸¹ *Advaita* is the crest-jewel of all spiritual thought.¹⁸² All religious thought in every part of the world are derived from the *Vedas* which is the true source of Hinduism, the true religion.¹⁸³ According to Vivekananda Christianity is nothing but “a collection of Indian thought” and “a very patchy imitation” or an “offshoot” of “our religion”. Buddhism also is “a rebel child of Hinduism.”¹⁸⁴ The argument is that the element of truth in other religions are borrowed from Hinduism. Thus for Vivekananda, Hinduism as “the mother of religions.”¹⁸⁵

(i) Vedas, the Source of Hinduism, is the Norm of Truth and the Only True Scripture

In this regard Vivekananda was one with Dayananda Saraswati. Like Dayananda, Vivekananda says, "All that is called knowledge is in the *Vedas*. Every word is sacred and eternal... without beginning and without end."¹⁸⁶ It is in the *Vedas* the spiritual knowledge is presented in its fullness. All that is needed for man's perfection is in the *Vedas*.¹⁸⁷ Hinduism based on the *Vedas* is the only true religion.¹⁸⁸ Other religions are true only in so far as they conform to the *Vedas* and the religion of the *Vedas* that is Hinduism.

Thus Vivekananda says:

You may even believe the most peculiar ideas about the Godhead, but if you deny the authority of the *Vedas*, you are a *nāstika*. Therein lies the difference between the scriptures of the Christians or the Buddhists and ours, theirs are all *Purānas*¹⁸⁹ and not scriptures.... So far as the Bible and the scriptures of other nations agree with the *Vedas*, they are perfectly good, but when they do not agree, they are no more to be accepted. So with the Koran.¹⁹⁰

One cannot expect such words from one who believes that all religions are true and therefore, all religions should be equally respected. In this regard he was closer to Dayananda Saraswati. What Vivekananda was saying is: *Vedantic* Hinduism based on the *Vedas* is the norm and touchstone of truth. Here Vivekananda was not only trying to establish the superiority and absoluteness of *Advaita* but also *Vedanta* or Hinduism as a whole. "I found Hinduism" he concludes, "to the most perfectly satisfying religion in the world."¹⁹¹

Evaluation

From the above analysis it has been shown that Vivekananda's response to religious pluralism was not always uniform, constant and consistent. It is very complex and bewildering. His different views and approach to other religions are found in his speech delivered at the Parliament of Religions between eleventh September and twentyseventh, 1893.

In the first view Vivekananda argued for Harmony of religions when he rejects both exclusive and superiority claim of truth in any religion, but one in essence and goal. According to Vivekananda his central teachings were the echo of the ideas and teachings of his Master Sri. Ramakrishna.¹⁹² If God is the centre, religions represent the different radii converging to the same centre.¹⁹³ He says Hinduism recognizes the right of each to their on *Ista* or chosen way.¹⁹⁴ If one religion is true, all others must be true and each religion has the same saving power as the other.¹⁹⁵ He also said that for achieving harmony, different religions will have to make concession. The more the sacrifice the religion undertakes for the sake of harmony, the more it advances in truth.¹⁹⁶ He also said exclusivism is the root cause of religious hostility and intolerance.¹⁹⁷ He criticizes the sectarian creedal view as the 'frog-in-the-well' attitude of exclusivism.¹⁹⁸ All the sectarian religious quarrels, in the view of the Swami Vivekananda, are like the quarrels between the blind persons regarding the shape of an elephant.¹⁹⁹

While we analyse the teachings of Swami Vivekananda it was further noted that there is a second view. According to this view all religions are not considered equally true. From the year 1895 onwards, he started projecting '*Advaita Vedanta*' as the harmoniser of all religions.²⁰⁰ He places different

religions in different grades, where he placed '*Advaita*' at the top and claims it is final and absolute, which is the last word of religion. Here he does not reject other religions. It gives them a subordinate position and admits their value as preparation for '*Advaita*', which is the fulfilment of all religions. According to this theory the truth in other religions are partial and not sufficient for salvation. One's own religion is complete and sufficient. This generates clash among religions. According to Vivekananda, the different *vedantic* schools of *Dvaita*, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* are incomplete. They are only stepping-stone to the final goal to '*Advaita*'.²⁰¹ There are people by analyzing the above contentions of Vivekananda, considered him as an Inclusivist rather than a Pluralist.²⁰²

From the above analysis further we have noticed a third kind of attitude, where he does not regard other religions other than '*Advaita*' as having any use. It totally rejects them as false, unnecessary and useless.²⁰³ He sees these religions are positive obstacles in the path of man to realize the truth. Daniel says this is 'sort of dogmatic exclusivism and militancy, totally rejecting any value in other religions,'²⁰⁴ except *Advaita*.

How to explain this ambivalent nature in his view? Why did he was inconsistent and complex in his preaching? Why did he make extraordinary claims for Hinduism?

Vivekananda's extraordinary claims for Hinduism, incompatible with his own teachings on the harmony of religions, can be understood, when one considers the historical context in which Vivekananda worked. Being a younger contemporary of Swami Dayananda, Vivekananda also had to face a real threat from the missionaries of both Christian and Muslim.²⁰⁵ Many Christian missionaries firmly believed and earnestly worked to convert the

whole of India into Christianity.²⁰⁶ They presented Christianity as the only true religion, universally valid, perfectly rational and scientific and absolutely moral. They also criticized and condemned Hinduism as an error and was responsible for the pathetic and degrading conditions of India. At this context, more important is to understand Vivekananda as a defender of Hinduism. His apologetic and exclusive statements have to be evaluated on this situation he was facing in India from the Christian missionaries. If we analyse his statement it will reveal that spirit.

“If all India stands up” Swami Vivekananda told the Christians in America about this propaganda²⁰⁷ “and takes up all the mud that is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing any infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us.”²⁰⁸ He also accused both Christians and Islam for forcible conversions. Thus he challenged the American Christians:

Where has your Christianity succeeded without the Sword? Show me one place in the world. One, I say, throughout the history of the Christian religion—one, I do not want two. I know how your forefathers were converted. They had to be converted or killed, that was all. The spread of Islam was made in the same way.²⁰⁹

It seems that his approach was to defend Hinduism from the attacks of other religions and to rouse the self-respect of the Hindus. Thus he wrote:

I am the one man who dared defend his country and I have given them such ideas, as they never expect from a Hindu.²¹⁰

Almost all the claims he made for Hinduism and India were clearly the claims the missionaries made for Christianity.²¹¹ He also criticized the degrading elements in Hinduism. However, at the bottom of his heart, Vivekananda was a

man of Religious Pluralism and his standpoint is harmony of religions. He said "I pity a Hindu who does not see the beauty in Jesus Christ's character. I pity the Christian who does not reverence the Hindu Christ."²¹² It seems Vivekananda envisages a synthesis of Islam, *Vedanta*, Christianity and Buddhism. To this point he said:

We must show the spirituality of Hindus, the mercifulness of Buddhists, the activity of Christians, the brotherhood of the Muhammadans, by our practical lives."²¹³

We have seen that, though he often lapsed into exclusivism, generally he appreciated the values of all religions and stands for Religious Harmony, which he maintained even while he was convinced of the superiority of *Vedanta*.²¹⁴ As he said, "we have no quarrel with any religion in the world, whether it teaches man to worship Christ, Buddha or Muhammad or any other prophet."²¹⁵ This attitude is considered K.P. Aleyaz as Pluralistic Inclusivism.²¹⁶ Hence K.P. Aleyaz says:

"In each religion there is a universal principle with the help of which one could perceive other religions in positive light through a dynamic growth to relational convergence in terms of Pluralistic Inclusivism. eg., *Advaita* in Hinduism, *Syādvāda* in Jainism and Jesus in Christianity. These universal principles can never support Exclusivism or Inclusivism, they can support only Pluralism or Pluralistic Inclusivism."²¹⁷

3. V.D. Savarkar

This part is intended to discuss Savarkar's concept of *Hindutva* and its modern interpretation. It seems it has promoted a cultural nationalism in the contemporary Indian scene. V.D. Savarkar played a very significant role in the process of revitalization and self-conscientization of Hindu society for promoting a cultural exclusivism in Indian subcontinent. V.D. Savarkar, born

in 1883 in a Brahmin family at Nasik in Maharashtra, became the president of Hindu Mahasabha in 1937 until 1943. He defensively tried to unite all Hindus in order to safeguard their interest, culture and religion. It seems the Hindu Mahasabha was the enlarged edition of the Aryasamaj. Regarding the link between the *Āryasamāj* and *Hindu Mahasabha*, Bhai Parmanand wrote:

The Hindu Mahāsabha itself is infact but an enlarged and more comprehensive edition of the Āryasamāj.... It is no wonder therefore to find that the Aryasamaj and the Hindu Mahasabha today are almost identified with each other in their activities and more often than not the same set of leaders and missionaries are leading, directing and working the Hindu Sabhas as well as the Aryasamaj's many local and provincial centers.²¹⁸

(i) Hindutva

Savarkar was not quite happy with the term 'Hinduism' used to denote the religion of Hindus as a system. 'Hinduism' he believed is a word of alien origin and is not comprehensive enough to embrace all that is 'Hindu'. He therefore made a clear distinction between 'Hinduism' and *Hindutva*, through his book, '*Hindutva*': who is a Hindu? (1923) 'Hinduism' for Savarkar meant the various theologies or systems of religion Hindus follow, while *Hindutva* means 'Hinduness' and "embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of our Hindu race."²¹⁹

Etymologically '*Hinduta*' is best translated as 'Hinduness' or possibly "Hinduhood."²²⁰ *Hindutva* is perfectly regular construction formed by the application of a well-known grammatical rule in Sanskrit. According to the rule taught by the magisterial grammarian Panini (5th BCE)? The suffix '*tva*' is added to the stem to form a neuter, abstract noun (Rule 5.1.119) of the *Aṣṭadhyaya*. The purpose of the construction is by and large to attribute a

property in the form of a universal²²¹ i.e., existing in a certain way, as determined by a certain property. Therefore '*Hindutva*' is to say, properly, that they exist in a particular way. Hence '*Hindutva*', a mode of being of the possessor of the property "Hinduness" without simultaneously carrying ontological implications about the property itself. '*Hindutva*' includes religious, cultural, linguistic, social and political aspects of the life of the Hindus. Savarkar also used another term '*Hindudom*' in his attempt to explain all that is Hindu. By '*Hindudom*' he means the Hindu people taken collectively as '*Christendom*.'²²²

(ii) Hindus Alone are the True Sons of the Soil.

Savarkar claimed that the Indian nation has to be necessarily a Hindu nation and the Hindus alone are the true sons of the soil.²²³ He considered the majority, that is the Hindus, as the only nation, and the minorities totally different race.²²⁴

In Savarkar's definition a 'Hindu' is a person who regards the land of *Bhāratavarsha* from Indus to seas as his *father-land* as well as a Holy land – that is the cradle of his religion.²²⁵ He made "*Pithrubhūmi – Punyabhūmi*" (father land- holy land) equation and thinks that only those who accept the *Bhāratavarsha* (India) as *Punyabhoomi* are the real Hindu or Indian. For Bipin Chandra this is cultural or racial definition. Because the diversity in Hinduism, he tried to define Hindu dharma, *Hindutva* and Hindu nation in cultural terms.²²⁶ D.N.B. Pandit comments on the '*Pithrubhūmi – Punyabhūmi*' concept and says :

This theory is exclusive, for it excludes Christians, Muslims, Jews and Parsees, for Hindustan is not their *Punyabhūmi* even though it may be their

Pitrubhūmi, the intention of Savarkar behind this definition was his excessive patriotism of his motherland. So he made the love of land the first criterion and not residence in the land.²²⁷

In short, a person who has loyalty both to the land, and its religion is called a Hindu. Savarkar concluded the definition of Hindu, by drawing on world history and said that:

As Germans in Germany are a nation and the Jews there in are a race; as Turks in Turkey are a nation and the Arabs there are a race, so Hindus in India are a nation, while Muslims, Christians, Jews are races in India.²²⁸

This type of definition on nationhood could only exclude the non-Hindus from the Indian Nationality. Even though in Savarkar's definition of nationality there are some elements of territorial nationalism in the concept on '*Pitrubhūmi*', he soon shifted to Hindu sentiments and culture by arguing that only for Hindus could have '*Pitrubhūmi*' and '*Punyabhūmi*' identical.²²⁹

Christophe Jeffrelot argues that Savarkar rejects any form of nation state based on abstract social contract, in contrast he emphasizes the ethnic and racial substance of the nation.²³⁰ It seems the worldview, the system of values, and the type of community relationship, Savarkar envisaged in his teachings are typical Brahmanical Hinduism, in which the tribals, the dalits, and other ethnic groups have no place.

The Hindu Mahasabha is working for a common nation, a common race, and a common culture. According to Savarkar *Hindutva* is a bond of common territory, common blood and common civilization.²³¹ One of the objectives of Hindu Mahasabha is to promote a martial spirit among Hindus through military schools. They also adopt *Sanghathan* and *Śuddhi* to convert former Hindus and

non-Hindus.²³² The Hindu Mahasabha has encouraged militarization of the Hindu youth through akharas and gymnasiums. Savarkar's slogan was:

To Hinduise all politics and militarize Hindudom.²³²

He pleaded with the Hindus:

"...the crying need of our times is not men of letters, but soldiers... you should abandon your pen in favour of guns..."²³⁴

Vir Savarkar's ideology of '*Hindutva*' and the definition of 'Hindu' divided the people as Hindus and non-Hindus. This in the context of the freedom struggle thus initiated to generate two nationalisms Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism. This helped to promote the communalization of politics in India, which attempted to encourage an inflated identity consciousness to the Hindus and place the non-Hindus under a disturbing cloud of suspicion, hatred and hostility. The spirit which Savarkar had injected to the Hindus 'that they alone are the true sons of the soil' enabled the Hindus to unite themselves as one community and to defend their religion, to establish a Hindu *rāṣṭra*.²³⁵ In the development of modern politicized Hinduism or Hinduized politics, the Hindu Mahasabha also played a great role. The linkage between religion and politics is clearly evident. Savarkar emphatically declares that:

'every political question in India is either religious or cultural and every religious or cultural question is political.'²³⁶

Thus the nexus between religion, and politics has become dominant in Indian politics after the emergence of Savarkar's ideology of *Hindutva*, which re-energizes contemporary Hindu Organizations for a cultural nationalism, which is exclusive with other religions.

4. M.S. Golwalkar

After the death of K.B. Hedgewar the founder of the *Rāshtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* in 1940, M.S. Golwalkar (Guruji) became the leader and under his able and dynamic leadership the *Sangh* took rapid strides towards expansion.

Golwalkar may be called the father of cultural nationalism in India.²³⁷ Golwalkar's theoretical writings clearly take V.D. Savarkar's '*Hindutva*' as the starting point. But he elaborates the idea into a full-fledged conception of what he liked to call 'cultural nationalism.'²³⁸ He rejected the elements of territorial nationalism from Savarkar and present a very clear cultural nationalism.

Golwalkar asserts, "That the foremost duty laid upon every Hindu is to build up such a holy benevolent and unconquerable might of our Hindu People in support of the age old truth of our Hindu Nationhood."²³⁹ The preamble of the R.S.S. constitution,²⁴⁰ states five reasons for the foundation of the *Sangh*:

- a) to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from diversities of sect, faith, caste and creed and from political, economic, linguistic and provincial differences amongst Hindus;
- b) to make them realize the greatness of their past;
- c) to inculcate in them a spirit of service, sacrifice and selfless devotion to the Hindu *Samāj*, as a whole;
- d) to build up an organized and well disciplined corporate life; and
- e) to bring about an all-round regeneration of the Hindu *Samāj*.

The article 3 states the aims and objects of the *Sangh* :

The Aims and objects of the *Sangh* are to weld together the diverse groups within the Hindu *Samaj* and to re-vitalise and rejuvenate the same on the basis of its *Dharma* and *Sanskrit*, that it may achieve all sided development of the *Bhāratavarsha*.²⁴¹

Article 4 declares that 'the *Sangh* as such has no politics and is devoted to purely cultural work.

But the R.S.S. has supported the Bharatiya Janata Party since the general elections held at the end of 1989.²⁴² Now R.S.S., (Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh), V.H.P., (Vishwa Hindu Parishad), A.B.V.P. (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), B.M.S. (Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh), Bajrang Dal, Siv Sena and B.J.P. (Bharatiya Janatha Party), have become a matrix. A.G. Noorani asserts that the B.J.P.'s linkage with these organizations is both ideological and historical and all based on the inspiration from the R.S.S.²⁴³

K.R. Malkani the former Vice-President of B.J.P. claims that the R.S.S. V.H.P-B.J.P. linkage never deviated from the path shown by the Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand, Bankin Chandra etc.²⁴⁴ The ideology of the *Sangh* is derived from the ideology of Savarkar and Golwalkar which is the main ideology of B.J.P. and its allies *Sangh Parivar*.

(i) **Hindus : The Enlightened Āryans**

According to Golwalkar the Hindus were the enlightened Aryas. He claims:

We the Hindus were the good, the enlightened people, ... we built a great civilization, a great culture and an unique social order... Then the rest of humanity were just bipeds... Sometimes, in trying to distinguish our people from others, we were called the enlightened- the Aryans and the rest *Mlechas*...²⁴⁵

For him the *non-Āryans* are *mlechas* and Hindus are identifiable people with three distinctive traits viz., adherence to *Varna*²⁴⁶ to (caste) duty, *āśrama*²⁴⁷ (the four stages in human life) dharma, and the doctrine of *Karma-Samsāra*.²⁴⁸ Golwalkar contends that Hindus are Hindus even before they emerge from their mother's womb; others are born as simple unnamed human beings and later on, through circumcision or baptism they become either Muslims or Christians.²⁴⁹ A Hindu is therefore unique, noble and superior to all others.

According to Golwalkar Muslims, Christians and Communists are not true sons of the soil. They are dangerous to *Hindu rāṣṭra*, because they convert the sons of the soil and make them turn their back on all that is indigenous.²⁵⁰ He calls them “guests”, “traitors”, “invaders”, “aggressors”, “threat”, “enemies” and ‘potential fifth column’ and ‘hostiles.’²⁵¹

Golwalkar included all Indian born sects and subsects like *Śaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śakta*, *Vaidika*, *Buddha*, *Jain*, *Sikh*, *Lingāyat*, *Ārya Samāj* etc. within the elastic frame of *Hindu dharma*. The supercilious inclusivism is clearly evident here. Golwalkar does not allow other faiths to maintain their identities or establish any boundary to its tradition. The *Swayamsevaks* also claim that the best seen in other traditions and other cultures is only an echo of the sublime thoughts in the Hindu tradition. So they pledge themselves to safeguard and propagate the noble *dharma* of the Hindus.

(ii) The Hindu Samaj: The Living Form of God

Golwalkar says, “The Hindu people is the ‘*Virāt Puruṣa*’, the Almighty manifesting himself. The *Hindu Samāj* is the Chosen Deity, the living form of

God.”²⁵² K.K. Gangadharan an Indian Sociologist says, Golwalkar “makes a deity of Hindus.”²⁵³ Therefore, devotion to the Hindu community is indeed devotion to the ultimate Reality. Service to the Hindu people is service to God.

(iii) Hindu Culture is Superior to All Other Cultures

To Golwalkar Hindu culture means *Hindu Sanskriti*.²⁵⁴ It covers every aspect of life in its totality – the sentiments, ideals, aspirations and activities of Hindus in their political, economic, social and religious life. The ultimate aim of the *Sangh* is to mould society to its religious, Social and Political concepts, so that the entire Indian Society must virtually become the *Sangh* itself. Hindu culture is superior to all other cultures. Golwalkar says that the Hindu culture “despite the degenerating contact with the debased ‘civilizations’ of the Musalman and the Europeans, for the last ten centuries, is still noblest in the world.”²⁵⁵ So the Swayamsevaks think that to check and erase the degenerating in-roads made by non-Hindu cultures in the life of the Hindus are their duty.

(iv) Hindustan is for Hindus

Golwalkar says that “Hindustan is for Hindus”. Our concept of Hindu Nation is not a mere bundle of political and economic rights. It is essentially cultural, says Golwalkar.²⁵⁶ Again Golwalkar declares:

Hindustan is...the land of Hindus, their home, country, hereditary territory, a definite geographical unity... Living in this country since pre-historic times is the ancient Race- the Hindu Race, united together by common tradition... evolving a common culture, common mother language, common customs, common aspirations. This great Hindu Race professes its illustrious Hindu Religion, the only Religion in the world worthy of being so denominated.... Guided by this Religion in all walks of life, individual, Social, Political, The

Race evolved a culture, which despite the generating contact with the debased “civilizations” of the *Musalman*s and the Europeans for the last ten centuries is still the noblest in the world.²⁵⁷

Golwalkar says, the non-Hindus must respect and revere all that is Hindu and should not entertain any idea but those of its glorification. If they are not willing to be assimilated into the Hindu race, they must be wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing and observing no privileges or preferential treatment or even citizens’ rights.²⁵⁸ Hindus should deal with non-Hindus as Nazis did in Germany. The options before non-Hindus are to get assimilated into the Hindu race by losing their own identity or to live wholly subordinated to the Hindu race with no rights or face a ‘holocaust’ - total annihilation.²⁵⁹ Golwalkar even advocated a *dharma yuddha* for the complete independence and unification of the ancient Hindu *rāstra*.²⁶⁰ The ideal is *Kṛṇavañtao Viśvamāryam* (let us make the whole world Aryan – noble or enlightened.)²⁶¹ It is not surprising therefore that the *Sangh* has been able to weld together India and Hinduism to some extent. It has spiritualized patriotism.

It seems the non-Hindus in India cannot claim the status of true sons of the soil. For, it is alleged; they have extra territorial and ideological loyalties. Golwalkar claims that the present secular constitution of independent India has unfortunately equated the sons of the soil with the enemies of the nation. So he wants a re-examination and re-drafting of the present constitution of India.²⁶² The debate on re-examination and re-drafting of constitution is very lively in the contemporary India also.

For Golwalkar, the conversion of Hindus to non-Hindu religions is an anti-national activity. Hence he observes that these anti-national activities of the 'aliens' and 'hostiles' should be "put down with a strong hand by all possible means" and that the general law is sufficient to deal with cases of perversity or hostility.²⁶³

(v) The Doctrine of Non-Violence and Satyagraha is Erroneous.

Golwalkar says that strength is virtuous and weakness is sin. For physical survival, strength is the only basis. The doctrine of Non-Violence and Satyagraha is Erroneous because it looks down upon strength as violence and glorifies weakness, non-violence is imbecility.²⁶⁴ The *avatāra(s)* clearly convey the message of war and victory. A *dharmā yuddha* (holy war) is right and necessary for the sake of re-establishing *dharmā* in its pristine form.²⁶⁵ Killing for the sake of an ideal or *dharmā* is not sinful. Golwalkar in his attempt to bring home this argument refers to the story of Sri Ram, one of the greatest Indian ideals of strength and victory. So the clarion call of the *Sangh* is to consolidate Hindu power and turn this nation into a powerful Hindu nation using any means available or necessary.²⁶⁶

The ideology of Golwalkar, which is in a sense the elaboration of the ideology of Savarkar played a dominant role in Hindu nationalism. Ninan Koshy observes that 'the ideology of BJP has its origin in the writings of Savarkar and Golwalkar'.²⁶⁷ Thus *Hindutva* or cultural nationalism is the basic ideology of the Hindu nationalist today, and are visualizing the concepts into reality. It seems, it achieved a great hegemony over the society by asserting that Hindus alone constitute the Indian nation. The present practices of

Hindutva are aggressive and are terrorizing all depressed sections of the society.

5. Evaluation.

From the above analysis it has seen that the ideological strands of both Dayananda Saraswathy and Vivekananda could generate a religio-cultural renaissance in the Indian subcontinent. The *Āryasamāj* became one of the first crucibles of Hindu Nationalism. According to Jeffrelot this is the touch-stone of first ethnic nationalism in India.²⁶⁸ Dayananda equated Indian culture with Hinduism and Hindu culture; all non-Hindu aspects were regarded as contaminating influences (SP p.729). On the basis of its scriptural interpretation J.E. Llewellyn called *Āryasamāj* as a fundamentalist organization, because religious fundamentalism is an ideology used by the powerful to manipulate and affirm aggressively....It is re-sacralization of the secularized world and politicization of religion.²⁶⁹ It has also seen that Swami Vivekananda combined religion and patriotism and identified Mother India with supreme God. He believed that India alone had a spiritual message. He also equated Mother India with '*Punyabhūmi*'. As a result, since Vivekananda, there emerged a national consciousness. Thus there are two predominant nationalism in India: Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism. Indian nationalism is built on the basis of western ideas originating in the 'Ages' of Reason, Enlightenment and Liberalism. Hindu nationalism wanted the reconstruction to take place on the foundation of ancient Hindu traditions. Thus Hindu nationalism developed as a reaction against Indian nationalism.

The writings and speeches of Savarkar and Golwalkar also gave impetus to the policy of Hinduising the Indian statehood. Though the original meaning of 'Hindutva', was "*Hinduness*" which embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole being of the Indian race, it seems the modern interpreters of 'Hindutva', tried to hijack its original meaning and interpreted it to suit their own political interests. Thus *Hindutva* has become a political ideology since the 1980s. Now the tone of the rhetoric has become a fascist tone for a monolithic culture imposed on all Indians. It seems the Hindu nationalists fail to realize that the unity they wish to ensure is most threatened when it is pressed on others in provocative manner.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, a contemporary of Vivekananda was regarded by most scholars as a crucial force in the making of both a nationalist imagination and a Hindu revivalist polemic. His '*Bandemātaram*' (Salutation to the Mother) became the most patriotic slogan in the 20th century mass nationalist struggles, as well as the Hindu rallying cry at moments of Hindu-Muslim violence after 1926.²⁷⁰ For *Sangh Parivar*, "*Bandemātaram*" is the authentic national anthem, not the "*Janagana mana*", the official national anthem for the republic of India. When BJP came into power in Delhi during 1993 state elections, it made '*Bandemātaram*' compulsory in Delhi State Schools. Many criticized their policy and alleged that by the use of '*Bandemātaram*' they equated Indian nationalism with Hindu chauvinistic communalism.

'*Bandemātaram*' is part of the novel of *Ānandamath*, which tries to convey the message that "the Hindu community from the very moment of its inception is a people at war, unified by violence against a shared enemy. In the

novel, the mob begins to articulate an agenda that goes beyond simple loot.” Unless we throw these dirty bastards (that is, the Muslims), Hindus will be ruined... when shall we race down to the ground and erect Radhmadhav’s temples in their places?²⁷¹ The Hindu nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, V.D. Savarkar, Hedgewar, Golwalkar affirm that patriotism ought to be communal and not merely geographical. Golwalkar makes it crystal clear that India is a Hindu nation. Others like Muslims and Christians, though born in this country, do not feel they are the children of this land, ever since they changed their faith.

Golwalkar reiterates that secularism is not his path for national integration; it should come through Hinduization. According to him, non-Hindus should be wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation. The present promoters of ‘*Hindutva*’ by BJP and *Sangh Parivar* seek their roots in the traditions of the nineteenth century Hindu nationalism, based on the assumption that India has a glorious Hindu past. The goal of Hindu nationalism is to reconstruct India with the past culture. To justify this they quoted from Swami Vivekananda. “It is out of past that the future is moulded, it is the past that become the future” (BJP Election Manifesto 1996). Hence, Hindu nationalists demand ‘a nation with one people and one culture’. The Hindu nationalists or the Cultural nationalists demanded the non-Hindus have to accept the Indian (Hindu) culture. First, they would accept the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* as their epics and reject the *Arabic* and *Persian* classics. Second, they would have to regard Ramachandra, Shivaji, and Hindu gods Rama and *Krishna* as their heroes and condemn various Muslim historical figures as foreign invaders or traitors.²⁷² Bipan Chandra and K.N. Panikkar were against this kind of

assumption of the Hindu community that Indian culture is Hindu culture and Indian nationalism is Hindu Nationalism and they asserted that glorious past of India is the creation of European Historians and has no historical validity.²⁷³ The *Hindutva* hijackers have rejected the composite or synthetic culture and deny the concept of cultural diversity. They are skillfully working for a cultural exclusivism within the confines of their religion. Thus the cultural nationalism in India is communal in nature and against the pluralistic context of India. *Hindutva* force achieved a great hegemony over the society of asserting that Hindu alone constitutes the Indian nation. Their policy of re-interpreting the History on the line of Orientalist thinking, changing the present education system in Hindu way, using Modern Media to create Hindu cultural consciousness through the propagation of their *Hindutva* ideology, rejected the secular principles in the parliamentary democracy by mailing that the present secularism as Pseudo-secularism on the basis of minority rights, created suspicion, ill will and antagonistic feeling among the minority communities. Thus the great crisis to secularism is cultural nationalism and cultural exclusivism. This is the crucial problem India facing today.

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8. A.C. Bouquet, *Hinduism* (London: Hutchinson University Press, 1948), pp. 9-14, cited from the *Discovery of India* by J. Nehru.
9. Radhakrishnan & Muirhead, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, (London: George Allen & Unwin 1936) p.21
10. There are six Orthodox Hindu Philosophies (six *darsanas*), They are *Nyaya-Vaisesika*, *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* & *Pūrva mimāṃsa* and *Uttara mimāṃsa*. Among these, *Samkhya* and *Purva mimamsa* do not have God concept.
11. In *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Viṣṇu* is worshiped as the supreme God, where as *Siva* is supreme God for *Saivas*, *Devi* or *Sakti* or Power is the Supreme Reality of the *Saktism*.
12. Romila Thapar, "Communalism and the writings of Ancient Indian History", in *Communalism and the writings of Indian History*, (eds.), Romila Thaper, Harbons Mukhia, Bipan Chandra (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1987), p.3
13. *Ibid.*, p.5
14. *Ibid.*, p.4, James Mill divided the Indian History into three periods which he called Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization & British civilization
15. P.S. Daniel, *Hindu Response to Religious Pluralism* (Delhi: Kant Publications, 2000), p.18

16. *The Complete works of Swami Vivekanda*, Vol. viii (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), p.8. Hereafter CWSV
17. At present Arun Shourie is a Cabinet Minister of India. The lecture and the subsequent discussion in the CBCI meeting has come out as a book. *Missionaries in India – Continuities, Charges, Dilemmas* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 1997)
18. John B. Chettimattam, *Patterns of Indian Thought* (New York: Orbis Books, 1971), p.19
19. Y. Masih, *The Hindu Religious Thought* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), p. 339
20. See R.V. 1:133:4; 10:22:10; 1:51:8; 4:16:9; 8:70:11; 10:84:7; 3:30:16. They used illegal words such as *non-Aryans* were riteless, godless, lawless, without devotion,
21. Y. Masih, op.cit.,p.3
22. John B. Chettimattom. op.cit., p.24., also see RV (10:124)
23. See for details, P.L. John Panicker, *Communalism in India: Religious Roots and its Implications* (Kottayam: 1995) pp. 9-16; and P.S. Daniel, op.cit., pp. 22-27
24. Herman Oldenberg, *The Religion of the Veda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p.43
25. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1977), p. 92
26. D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), p. 5
27. P.L. John Panicker, op.cit., p. 13
28. R.P. Chandra and D.D. Kosambi refer the conflicts among the Aryan Clans. R.P.Chandra, Memoir No.41, Archeological Survey of India, D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture of civilization of Ancient India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1976), p. 73
29. A.C. Bose, *The Call of the Vedas*. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), p.35
30. Ibid., p. 36

31. M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), p. 36
32. Lal Mani Joshi, *Discerning the Buddha* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1983), p. 208
33. CWSV. Vol. III, p. 325
34. A.L. Basham, *The Origins and Developments of Classical Hinduism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 89-91.
35. S. Radhakrishnan, op.cit., p. 529
36. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagad Gita*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948), pp. 13-14
37. R.V. De Smet, "A Copernican Reversal: The Gitakara Reformulation of Karma", *Philosophy East and West*, 27, No. (Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 1977 January), pp. 53-56
38. The Quotations from the *Bhagavad Gita* Confirm with the translation established by R.C. Zahner.
39. The Gita (i) 3:21-24, (ii) 4:13-14, (iii) 9:9
 - (i) "... If I were not to do My work these world would fall to ruin.
 - (ii)... I have no yearning for fruits of work (*Karma phalla*)
 - (iii) These works neither bind nor limit Me, as one indifferent I sit among these works detached.
40. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London: Geroge Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 121
41. R.V. De Smet, op.cit., p. 63
42. *The Gītākāra integrates* (i) The non-literal quest for God (10: 19-31) (ii) Aryan Folklore, (10: 21-42), (iii) *Kriṣṇa identifies himself* with the sacrificial Brahmanism, (8:4); (iv) (9:16-17), (v) 9:24; (vi) (17: 23-26). (vii) Upanisadic *Sāṃkhya* with Supreme *Puruṣa*, & *Prakṛti* as "My own creative Energy". (14: 3-4) & (4:6). Here *Kriṣṇa* transforms dualistic *Sāṃkhya* into monotheism. *Prakṛiti* is here the one God's almighty power. (viii) In 8:3 an "*akṣara Puruṣa*" is the highest Brahman

43. R.V. De Smet "The Integrative Doctrine of God of the Bhagavad Gita, Prayer and Contemplation" (ed.), C. Vadakkekara (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1980), pp. (12-13)
44. P.S. Mathai, *A Christian Approach to the Bhagavat Gita* (Calcutta: YMCA publishing House, 1956), p. 2
45. A.L. Basham, op.cit., p. 93
46. 'Supercilious Mystico-relationalism, means the "One *Kṛiṣṇa*' is superior and absolute to "all gods' and there is a mystic relationship between *Kṛiṣṇa* and 'many gods'. See the Gita (14: 3,4); (4:6) and (7:25), "I am not revealed to all; this world deluded knows Me not."
47. Ishanand Vempeny, *Kṛiṣṇa and Christ* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1988), p.346. There is no statement in the Gita which makes *Kṛiṣṇaism* the One and only path in the totally exclusive sense. However a sort of inclusivism is upheld that the genuine worshippers of other gods, implicitly, anonymously worship Lord *Kṛiṣṇa* himself. (9:23)
- According to (7:22) the benefits derived from such devotion to other gods are in accordance with the decree of Lord *Kṛiṣṇa*. However (7:23 & 9:25) speak of the relativity of these benefits. The worshippers of these gods are assimilated into then gradually, but they not being the ultimate, these worshippers will not obtain final liberation through these gods. Worship of them certainly lead to Lord *Kṛiṣṇa* eventually.
48. Max Mullar (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. X (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), p. 20
49. Samyutta Nikaya, Vol. 1, Pindasutta, (ed.), J. Kashyap Nalanda: 1959
50. Digha Nikaya, Vol. 1, (ed.), J. Kashyap, (Nalanda: 1958), p. 97
51. L.M. Joshi, op.cit., p. 27
52. Ibid., p. 20
53. See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. p. 481
54. *Baudhayana Dharma Sutra*, II. 6. 29-31, and also *Gautama Dharma Sutra*, 3:1 and 35:36

55. P.V. Kane, *The History of Dharma Sastra*, Vol.1. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974), p. 722
56. Valmiki Ramayana, Ayodhya Kanda, 109:34
57. Visnu Purana, 3:18, 95-102, translated by H.H. Wilson (London: John Murray, 1840), p.345
58. Brahannaradiya Purana, edited by Pancanana Tarkaratna (Calcutta: Vangavasi Press, 1316), B.S.
59. Narada Purana, Translated by G.V. Tagore, Volumes 15-16 of Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980-1981)
60. Yajanavalkya-Smriti with the commentary of Apararka edited by Hari Narayana Apte (Poona: Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, 1903-1904), p. 143
61. Lal Mani Joshi, op. cit., p. 209
62. CWSV Vol. V. p. 401. See also M. Hiriyanna, *Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), p. 36
63. John Panicker, op. cit., p.29. In the Gita, the author took the figure *Krisna* revered among the *Vrsnis* and elevated him to the position of Supreme Bhagavan. In the same manner the Puranic authors elevated the Buddha to the rank of an *avatara* of Visnu.
64. The Gita, (4:7-8)
65. For example, *Markandeya Purana* 47:7; 4:53-56 and *Matsya Purana* 47:39-45
66. *Matsya Kūrmo Varāhasca Narasimhoata Vāmanāh: Rāmo Rāmasca Kriṣṇasca Buddah Kalki eti ca Karmat'*
67. R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp. 84-90
68. P.V. Kane, *The History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1974), p. 723
69. L.M. Joshi, op. cit., p. 215
70. Ibid
71. CWSV, Vol. VI. p. 104

72. 72. See S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol.1, p. 481
73. R.C. Mujumdar, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV (Calcutta: The Ramakrishnan Mission Institute of Culture, 1969), p. 48
74. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Vol. I, abridgement by D.C. Somervell, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 544
75. L.M. Joshi, op.cit.,p. 220
76. S.W. Bakhle, *Hinduism, Nature and Development*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1991), p. 114
77. T.M.P. Mahadevan, op.cit., p. 21
78. Gyanendra Pandey, "Hindus and Others – The Militant Hindu Constructions" in EPW. Vol. XXVI. No.52 December 28, 1991, pp. 2997-3009
79. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1929), pp. 355-356
80. G.R. Ram, *The Bible of Hinduism* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p. 415
81. K.W. Jones, "Politicized Hinduism: The Ideology and Programme of the Hindu Mahasabha", in *Religion in Modern India*, (ed.), R.D. Baird (New Delhi: Maushar, 1981), p. 447
82. P.S. Daniel, op.cit., p. 68
83. Satyarth Prakash, Unless otherwise indicated is from its English translation Light of Truth, by Dr. Chiranjiva Bharadwaja (New Delhi: Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1984 (edn.), p. 237 Here after S.P.
84. S.P., pp. 417, 446
85. S.P., p. 506
86. S.P., pp. 170-172
87. S.P. pp. 479, 485, See also N.B. Sen, *Glorious Thoughts of Swami Dayananda* (New Delhi: New Book Society of India, 1966), p.136
88. S.P. pp. 464, 465, 483, 486, 487, 506
89. J.F.T. Jordens, *Dayananda Saraswati, His Life and Ideas* (Delhi: OUP, 1978), p 267

90. S.P., pp. 343, 536 & 539-541, 545, 548 f
91. S.P. pp 603, 606, 628, 630, 635, 643, 698, 725
92. S.P. pp. 671, 674, 679, 681, 684, 691, 693, 713 f
93. K.W. Jones, *Arya Dharma* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1976), p. 127
94. "The Nazis of Hindustan", *The Guardian* (Madras: 16 April 1936); Here Shri Shankaracharya of Kavir Pith extols Aryanism and how Dayananda could revive the Hindu society of the Aryavarta.
95. S.P. p. 729
96. S.P. p. 329
97. S.P. pp. 320—334: The Arya Samaj Stresses the following:
- (a) Vedic religion is the true Salvific religion.
 - (b) Vedas are the holy books.
 - (c) Hindi as a national language
 - (d) They emphasize the racial (Aryan) consciousness and territorial consciousness (Aryavarta)
 - (e) One supreme political authority, Sri Aurobindo made remarkable statement about the attempt of Dayananda, that "It is a remarkable attempt by Swami Dayananda, the founder of Arya Samaj to re-establish the Vedas as a living religious scripture"
- D.N. Shastri, "Contribution of Dayananda to the Vedas" in Garg, *World Perspective on Swami Dayananda Saraswati* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 1984), p. 421
98. In Rigveda the context is of Soma libation of Arya.
99. This Dayananda did in order to arouse the Hindu religion and the Indian nation.
100. V.P. Varma, *Modern Indian Political Thought* (Agra: Lakshmi Naraian Agarwal, 1980), pp. 43-56
101. S.M. Michael, "The Cultural Context of the Rise of Hindutva and Dalit Forces", *VJTR*. 60, 1996, pp. 294-310
102. D.S. Sarma, *Hinduism through the Ages* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973), p. 96

103. D.S. Sarma, op.cit., p. 96, See also Joshi (ed.), Lala Lajpet Rai, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: University Publishers, 1966), p. 208
104. J.F. Seunarine, *Reconstruction to Hindus through Suddhi* (Madras: The C.L.S., 1977), p. 39
105. G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 136
106. D.S. Sarma, op.cit., p. 96
107. The Hindu, 21 February, 1999, p. 12
108. Ibid
109. The Hindu, "Conversions and the Sangh Parivar", 9 November, 1999, p.12. Sumit Sarkar is the Professor of Modern Indian History, University of Delhi.
110. The Hindu, 1 February, 1999, p. 12. See also K.K. Katyal "*The curx of uncertainty*" The Hindu 1 February, 1999
111. Ibid
112. K.M. Panikkar, *The Determining Periods of Indian History* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1965), p. 53
113. P.S. Daniel, op. ct., pp. 120—173. This is indebted to the insights of P.S. Daniel.
114. CWSV Vol. IV. p. 181
115. Ibid., IV, 180, 187; I, 468; VI, 82f; VII, 96
116. Ibid., I, 324; VI, 82; V, 219; VII, 85; VI, 415f
117. Ibid., V, 191
118. Ibid., IV, 180; VIII, 138; I, 438; VI, 82.
119. Ibid., II, 379.
120. Ibid., VI, 416
121. Ibid., VII, 96; IV, 180-182
122. Ibid., IV, 181; III, 383
123. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, (Calcutta: Advaita Asrama, 1960), p. 313

124. CWSV, II, 365
125. Ibid., I, 318
126. Ibid., II, 318, I, 326
127. Ibid., VI, 46
128. Ibid., I, 124, 318, 326
129. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (Madras: 1964), p. 375
130. CWSV, I, 444; IV, 31; II, 473
131. Ibid., II, 231; III, 154, VIII, 179
132. Ibid., III, 357; VI, 46
133. Ibid., V, 292; I, 324
134. Ibid., VII, 85; I, 325
135. Ibid., I, 4; II, 383; VII, 286; IV, 332
136. Ibid., I, 468
137. Ibid., I, 3
138. Ibid., IV, 191; II, 384
139. Ibid., I, 24; See also VIII, 210; III, 359f
140. Ibid., IV, 182
141. Ibid., II, 361-363; II, 371
142. Ibid., II, 385; II, 369; VIII, 6 and II, 381
143. Ibid., IV, 51; VI, 16; III, 359, Perhaps Vivekananda is following his master Sri Ramakrishna, he says: "That is a glorious thing, that there should be so many paths, because if there were only one path, perhaps it would suit only an individual man. The more the number of paths, the more the chance for every one of us to know the truth." CWSV, VIII, 79,
144. Ibid., VI, 82; IV, 375; VI, 382; II, 386
145. Ibid., II, 363, 384; I, 24; III, 182-184
146. Ibid., VIII, 24, 210
147. Ibid., VI, 138

148. Ibid., III, 359, "It ought to be remembered that quarrels about religion arise from thinking that one alone has the truth and who ever does not believe as one does is a fool, while another think that the other is a hypocrite, ..."
149. Ibid., IV, 57
150. Ibid., II, 371; I, 3
151. Ibid., I, 24
152. Ibid., I, 24
153. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 18, 24
154. CWSV, II, 174, II, 276, 248, 246, 249
155. Ibid., II, 248
156. P.S. Daniel, op.cit., p. 136
157. CWSV, V, 190
158. P.S. Daniel, op.cit., p. 136
159. Ibid
160. CWSV, II, 346
161. Ibid., I, 17, 32, 331
162. Ibid., II, 352, 241; V, 81-82
163. Ibid., II, 429; II, 420
164. Ibid., II, 249; VI, 415
165. Ibid., II, 252; III, 233f, 281, 398. Vivekananda often uses the word 'monism' as an equivalent of Advaita, although the correct translation of which is non-dualism.
166. P.S. Daniel, op.cit., p. 145
167. Nalini Devadas, *Swami Vivekananda* (Bangalore: C.I.S.R.S., 1968), pp. 18-22
168. C.W.S.V., III, 422
169. Ibid., III, 432
170. Ibid., III, 404

171. Ibid., III, 424; II, 139
172. Ibid., I, 384f; VI, 96; II, 286; II, 237
173. Ibid., III, 249f
174. Ibid., III, 280; III, 182-184, 412
175. Ibid., II, 201
176. Ibid., II, 415
177. Ibid., I, 348; III, 186
178. Ibid., I, 348; III, 186f
179. Ibid., III, 273f; 286f.
180. Ibid., II, 277-282, 385-387
181. Ibid., VI, 105; I, 120
182. Ibid., II, 247; III, 432
183. Ibid., III, 175; V, 315, 454ff
184. Ibid., III, 275; VI, 105
185. Ibid., I, 3
186. Ibid., II, 169
187. Ibid., III, 269, 249 f
188. Ibid., I, 329
189. Ibid., VI, 393 f
190. Ibid., III, 333
191. Ibid., III, 209-213
192. Ibid., VIII, 79, 267; VII, 24, 85, 207, 210; VI, 183, 184, 462-63, 480, 483-84; IV, 174, 178, 180, 187; V, 53, 414
193. Ibid., II, 384-85; IV, 53-54; VII 458, IV, 54-57
194. Ibid., V, 301; III, 131-32, 359, 382, 501; IV, 54-57
195. Ibid., IV, 182; II, 373-74; I, 318
196. Ibid., I, 385; II, 366, 383; IV, 54, 55
197. Ibid., III, 359
198. Ibid., III, 483-84; I, 438; VII, 286, 290

199. Ibid., VII, 415; III, 422-23. This analogy is used not only in Hinduism but also in Jainism, Sri Ramakrishna also used this analogy. See K.P. Aleaz, *Jesus in Neo-Vedanta* (Delhi: Kant Publications, 1995), p. 30
200. Ibid., VII, 6, 341, 347; V, 81-82, 118; II, 240-53, 268, 430, 431
201. Ibid., III, 230, 324, 397, 438-39; I, 357, 400-404, II, 106, 125
202. See, P.S. Daniel, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-165
203. Ibid., p. 145, also Nalini Devadas, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-22
204. Ibid., p. 163
205. N.K. Devaraja, *Hinduism and Modern Age* (New Delhi: Islam and Modern Age Society, 1975), p. 104, see also Pandit Chanupati, "The Arya Samaj" in Haridas Bhattacharya (ed.), in *The cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV (Calcutta: RamaKrisna Mission Institute of Culture, 1969), p. 636
206. P.S. Daniel, *op.cit.*, p. 164
207. Vivekananda is making a strong case against Christian Missionaries, "that every Christian Child is taught to call the Hindus 'vile' and 'wretches' and the most horrible devil on earth"
208. See CWSV, IV. pp. 344-45, cited by Arun Shourie, *Missionaries in India* (New Delhi: Harper Callins Publishers India, 1997), pp 46-47
209. Ibid., VIII, 212
210. Ibid., V, 79-81
211. Ibid., III, 182
212. Ibid., VIII, 2
213. Ibid., VIII, 89f
214. P.S. Daniel, *op.cit.*, p. 171
215. CWSV, Vol. III, p. 132
216. K.P. Aleaz, *op.cit.*, p. 26
217. K.P. Aleaz, *Harmony of Religions, The Relevance of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1993), pp. 216-18, 241-42

218. Indra Prakash, *A Review of the History and Work of the Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu Sangathan Movement* (Delhi: Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha, 1938), p. viii, here after A Review.
219. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (Poona: V.G. Ketkar, 1942), pp 4, 28. See also K.N. Panikkar *Communal Threat, Secular Challenge* (Madras: Earth Worm Books, 1997), p. x.
220. Julius Lipner, "On 'Hindutva' and a 'Hindu-Catholic' with a Moral for our times" in *Hindu-Christian Studies*. Vol. 5, 1992, pp.1-8
221. Ibid
222. Swami Shradhananda, *Hindu Sangathan – Saviour of the Dying Race* (Delhi: Jan – Gyan Prakashan, 1926), p. 120
223. A Review, 1938. p. 132
224. DNB Pandit, 'Hindutva as a Political Ideology' in *Fundamentalism and Secularism: The Indian Predicament* (Madras: Gurukul Summer Institute, 1924), p. 162
225. Tapan Basu and Others, *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags* (Hydrabad: Orient Longman, 1993), p. 8
226. Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1989), p. 168.
227. D.N.B. Pandit, *op.cit.*, p. 163
228. Ibid
229. Tapan Basu and Others, *op.cit.*, p. 26
230. Christophe Jeffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New Delhi: Viking, 1996), p. 31.
231. V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva*, pp. 94-95
232. Hindu Mahasabha Constitution (Revised and recommended by the Hindu Mahasabha at the twentieth session held in Nagpur in December 1938), pp. 1-2
233. A Review, 1952, p. 110
234. B.R. Purohit, *Hindu Revivalisms and Indian Nationalism* (Sagar: Sathi Prakasham, 1965), pp. 141-142
235. John Panicker, *op.cit.*, p. 68

236. Savarkar, *Samagra Savarkar Wangmaya*, Vol. 6. (Pune: Maharashtra Prantic Hindu Sabha, 1964), p. 560
237. Tapan Basu and others, op.cit., p. 26
238. Ibid
239. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (2nd edition, Revised and Enlarged (Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashana, 1980), pp. 233-268; 667-673
240. After Gandhiji's Assasination, the RSS movement fell into disrepute and the Government outlawed it on 4th February, 1948. The ban was lifted on 12th July 1949. The Sangh submitted a written constitution to the Government. This was the first time the Sangh Possessed a written constitution. The main sources for the ideology of the Sangh we get from the constitution (1949) and from the Guruji's Bunch of Thoughts (1966), p. 208
241. Golwalkar, op.cit., p. 208
242. Indian Express, 11 May 1988 & Indian Express, 29 March, 1989
243. A.G. Noorani, "B.J.P. New Sights," Front line, October 13-26, 1990, Vol. 7, No.21, pp. 29-32.
244. K.R. Malkani, "BJP View of Nationalism, Secularism", The Hindu, 9 August, 1991.
245. D.N. Mishra, *RSS, Myth and Reality* (Sahibabad: Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 1980), pp. 73-74
246. In Hinduism *Varna* is decided according to the *guna*, i.e., (*satva, rajas & tama*)
247. The four stages are, *Brahmacarya, Grhastarima, Vanaprasta & Sannyasa*
248. Golwalkar, op.cit., pp. 128-129; 200, 292-293.
249. Ibid., p.156
250. Ibid., pp. 176-198
251. Ibid., pp. 166, 182, 184, 187, 194, 196, 203, 256
252. Ibid., pp. 47-50, 158, 279
253. K.K. Gangadharan, *Sociology of Revivalism* (New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan, 1970), p. 74

254. Golwalkar, *op.cit.*, p. 188
255. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (4th edition) (Nagpur: Bharat Prakasham, 1947), p.49. See also Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p.188, *We or our Nationhood Defined*, is known as the 'RSS' Bible.
256. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 45, pp. 182-183
257. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, pp. 48-49
258. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 51-58
259. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. .162, 165, 167, 173-175, 182, 184, 203, 229-230, 256
260. *Ibid.*, 123
261. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, p. 273.
262. *Ibid.*, pp. .224, 299, 230
263. *Ibid.*, p.230
264. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364
265. *Ibid.*, pp. 340-379
266. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76
267. Ninan Koshy, 'Secularism in India a new debate' in *Vision*. Vol.II. No.2, July (Kottayam: T.M.A.M.Orientation Centre Manganam 1993), p. 9
268. Christophe Jeffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New Delhi: Viking, 1996), p.18 and Christophe Jeffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalism: Strategic Sycrretism in Ideology building" in *E.P.W*, 20 march 1997, p. 517
269. James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1981), T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds, Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (New Delhi: OUP. 1997), p. 226
270. P.K. Dutta, "War over Music: The Riots of 1926 in Bengal" in *Communalism in India; History, Politics and Culture*, (ed.), K.N. Panikkar (New Delhi: 1991)
271. B.C. Chattopadhyay, *Anand Math*, trans. Basant Komar Roy (New Delhi: 1992), Vol..I. p.728

272. V.G. Deshpande, *Why Hindu Rastra?* (New Delhi: All India Hindu Mahasabha, 1949), p.10 and W.K. Anderson and S.M. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron. The Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications 1987)
273. Bipan Chandra, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India* (New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1994), p.132 see also Satish Desh Pande, "Communalising the Nation space: Notes on spatial strategies of Hindutva" in E.P.W. 16 December 1995, P. 3220

CHAPTER – III

**CHRISTIAN APPROACH
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A. THE ROOTS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNALISM

Introduction

It seems that it was God's purpose in creation that the human beings and the whole creatures should find their fulfilment by living in harmony with God and with one another. But this harmony has been disrupted and hence discord has become the hallmark everywhere in the universe. Different religions with different worldviews and value systems derived through the quest for and perceptions of Reality with numerous interpretations may be the reason for this anomaly of disharmony. According to M. Bage 'Religion may be understood as an expression of the Human search for an ultimate truth or Religion may be seen as an expression of the human desire to have a union with ultimate Reality or Religion may be understood in cultural terms as an expression of a particular way of life¹.' The worldview and the value system derived out of the perception of the ultimate Reality differ according to the cultural terms when it is expressed. Hence religious plurality is an issue from our existential life situation. According to Raimundo Panikkar:

Pluralism is today a human existential problem, which raises acute questions about how we are going to live our lives in the midst of so many options. Pluralism is no longer just the old school book question about the One-and-the-Many it has become the concrete day-to-day dilemma occasioned by the encounter of mutually incompatible worldviews and philosophies. Today we face pluralism as the very practical question of planetary human existence.²

As the history of religions shows, each religion arose in a religiously plural environment and shaped itself in reaction to that pluralism. Harold Coward says:

The creative tension Pluralism occasions has often been the catalyst for new insight and religious development.³

This is true with most of the ancient religions both Semitic as well as Mystic. The challenges of pluralism in one sense it is a crisis of our age and at the same time it is an opportunity for spiritual growth. Different religions have responded and are responding to the challenge of religious pluralism at least in three attitudes or principles which generally seem to be held in common especially in the Christian theological circles namely, exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.⁴

This chapter is intended to discuss Christian Response to Religious Pluralism in three sections. The first part will concentrate on the absolutistic standpoint of Christianity to other religions with its exclusive and inclusive attitudes, which creates suspicion, ill feeling and hatred from other religions. This absolutistic standpoint is one of the causes of communalism in India. The present turmoil in the Indian sub-continent is mainly centered around on the issue of conversion and Christian missions. The Christian missionary policy of conversion has been vehemently criticized by the Hindu Organizations. The present Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has called for a national debate to discuss the religious conversion issue and he reiterated to the Christian missionaries to abandon the policy of conversion.⁵ Hence the second section is concentrated on Christianity and conversion. The third section deals with the Pluralistic standpoint of Christianity and its way to open a synoptic view of

things to foster healthy relations among religions. This attitude also provides the platform for modality of dialogue.

1. ABSOLUTISTIC STANDPOINT

In this section two questions are mainly discussed. Firstly, how do the Christians see other faiths in the light of religious pluralism? Secondly, How do other faiths especially Hinduism see Christianity in the multi-cultural context?

Of late Christians assumed that Christianity was the one and only religion revealed by God. The tendency in the Church was to treat the people of other religions as pagans with scorn and condescensions and to think that pagans needed to be enlightened.⁶ They also considered that the revelation in Jesus Christ is the sole criterion by which all religions including Christianity can be understood and evaluated. This is called the exclusive attitude of Christian religion.⁷ The exclusivism stresses the point that salvation comes from God alone through Christ. Martin Luther called Christianity as the true and only religion. The traditional Catholic nation has been ecclesio-centrally rendered in the Cyprian maxim, 'that outside the Church there is no salvation.'⁸ Early Christians also claimed that they were the chosen people of God.⁹

This paradigm holds that other religions are marked by humankind's fundamental sinfulness and are therefore erroneous. Only Christ and Christianity offers the valid path to salvation is a firm affirmation.¹⁰ In this standpoint Christ factor is normative and absolute for salvation. Church too assumes significant position. This standpoint denies the Universal Salvific will of God. Christ is the norm to judge and evaluate other truth claims. The

world renowned theologians Karl Barth and Hendrik Kreamer are representatives of this approach.

a. According to **Karl Barth**, revelation as the abolition of religion. God's Truth is revealed in Christ, the word of God for all peoples and all religions.¹¹ He attempts to construct a significant difference between 'revelation' and 'religion'. For him Christian faith belongs to the former and other faiths to the latter. He made a distinction between the general knowledge about God in nature with the special revelation in Christ. He held that only revelation can reveal God and save humanity. The Christian gospel belongs to 'revelation' and other faiths are the product of 'religion', which are 'unbelief.' He observed that, religion is a concern...the one great concern; of the godless man.¹² He also held that, revelation singles out the Church as the locus of true religion. Hence Barth's position was that Christian religion is the true religion, fundamentally superior to all other religions.¹³ His aim was thus to secure both the central place of Christianity in mediating the salvation of humankind and the absolute uniqueness of Jesus for all humanity.¹⁴

Thus for Barth the Revelation of God in Christ becomes normative for all. This approach does not provide any room for mutual enrichment between Christianity and other religions. This standpoint does not approve other religions and their identity. This will only widen the gulf between religions. This is also called Separational Theological Model.¹⁵

(b) **Hendrik Kreamer** was a life long student of world religions. He wrote *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* as a preparatory volume for the Tambaram International Missionary Conference held in 1938. Kreamer also applied Barth's Theology of Religion to mission, thereby affirming a

Separational Theological Model, which tremendously influenced Asian theologians, for several years.¹⁶ According to Kreamer the gospel was essentially in discontinuity with the religions and cultural traditions of humankind. He rejected both Natural Theology and General revelation to emphasize the concept of 'radical discontinuity'. He states:

The revelation in Christ is special revelation, which contradicts and upsets all human religious aspiration and imagination as an indirect indication of its special quality and significance.¹⁷

Kreamer maintained that, salvation is found only through the grace of God revealed in Christ. He insisted that the biblical faith based on God's encounter with humankind is thus radically distinct from all other forms of religious faith.

This approach adopts an either or model of truth. There is no room for mutual enrichment between Christianity and other religions in their perspective.¹⁸ This position counts the revelation in Jesus Christ as the sole criterion by which all other religions are to be evaluated and judged. Thus the Barth-Kreamer negative theological approach put a stop to all attempts at discovering "points of contact" between the Christian message and the other religious traditions of Asia.¹⁹ The Biblical realism of Kreamer rejects any contact between gospel and religions, emphasizing the *sui generis* character of the Word made flesh.²⁰ Their approach of exclusive claims is only in the realm of monologue. Their theological interpretations do not open way for dialogue or mutual enrichment among religions. It will only create animosity and hatred among religions.

2. INCLUSIVISTIC STANDPOINT

The inclusivist position tries to reconcile and hold together the axioms of 'the Universal Salvific will of God' and 'salvation comes through God in Christ alone.'²¹ In this approach there is an openness in acknowledging elements of truth in other religions, although fully revealed in Christ or Christianity. Concerning the approach Gavin D'costa notes that:

This approach affirms the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions while still maintaining that Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God.²²

It accepts and rejects other faiths, i.e., accepts divine presence in other religions, but rejects them as not sufficient for salvation apart from Christ. It struggles to hold together two equally binding convictions. They are firstly, the grace of God is operating for salvation in great religions of the world and secondly, the uniqueness of the grace of God in Christ makes universal claim as the final way of Salvation.²³ All the truth in other religions belongs ultimately to Christ, who is their fulfilment.

(a) The Fulfilment Theory

J.N. Farquhar may be taken as representative of this theory.²⁴ J.N. Farquhar cited from Christ's words. "I have come not to destroy but to fulfil" (Mt. 5:17). With the publication of his book 'The Crown of Hinduism' he advocated the fulfilment theory. He writes:

By stating that Christianity is the Crown of Hinduism we do not mean Christianity as it is lived in any nation, nor Christianity as it is defined and elaborated in detail in the creed, preaching, ritual, liturgy and discipline of any single Church, but Christianity, as it springs living and creative from Christ himself.²⁵

Thus for him not only Christianity fulfils the aspirations of Hinduism, it radically displaces Hinduism. Farquhar's fulfilment theory could not survive long as a viable paradigm. It may be partly due to the increased awareness of other religions after the publication of his book.

(b) Anonymous Christians

Karl Rahner promulgated the theory of 'Anonymous Christians'. Paul Knitter rightly observes that if Vatican II was a watershed in Christian attitudes (especially Catholic) towards other religions, then Karl Rahner was its Chief Engineer.²⁶ Rahner attempted to keep the two axioms together. They are 'the Universal Salvific will of God' and salvation comes through Christ alone through faith. He was of the opinion that, Christianity should 'think optimistically about the possibilities of salvation outside Christianity, no matter how much error and evil they seem to find in the world. To think 'pessimistically of men' is to underestimate God's love and grace.²⁷

He considered non-Christian religions as lawful religions because it also contains supernatural elements arising out of grace, which is given on account of Christ. He was willing to accept non-Christian religions as vehicles of salvation because of God's grace operating in that religion.

Karl Rahner writes:

Therefore no matter what a man states is his conceptual, theoretical and religious reflection, anyone who does not say in his heart, 'there is no God' (like the fool in the Psalm) but testifies to line by radical acceptance of his being is a believer. But if in this way he believes indeed and in truth in the holy Mystery of God, if he does not suppose this truth but leaves it free play, then the grace of this truth by which he allows himself to be led is always already the grace of the Father in his Son. And any one who has let himself

be taken hold of this grace can be called with every right an "anonymous Christian."²⁸

Thus Rahner made an attempt to treat other religions as lawful religions. He was able to see the mediating grace of God working in other religions. By being 'anonymous Christians' the people of other faiths are appropriating what Christ has done exclusively in Christian tradition. Here also the spirit of exclusivism is inherent in his thesis. Nevertheless this paradigm offers a far more open and Catholic viewpoint with regard to relationship between Christianity and other religions. The above inclusivist paradigm unlike the exclusivist who argue for discontinuity and newness, emphasis on continuity and fulfilment.

The inclusivist paradigm extends God's Salvation to all human beings. The Universal Salvific will of God is upheld along with the finality of Christ's redemptive work. The acceptance of elements of truth in other traditions allows space for exploring the possibility of divine encounter in other religious traditions. But this openness vanishes when it comes to Soteriological considerations. For the adherents of this approach, Christ is definitive and normative because the aspirations in other traditions are fulfilled in Christ. The element of truth and goodness in other religious traditions ultimately belong to Christ.

Even though this approach avoids the absoluteness of Christ, it sees Christ as Supreme of fulfilling other religious aspirations. Thus it seems to exhibit a subtle and indirect form of exclusivism.

John Hick found the usage of 'anonymous Christian' as offensive to non-Christians. He found it creating barrier in genuine dialogue. He thinks that 'it

is an honorary status granted unilaterally to people who have not expressed any desire for it'. He also contends that, it is easy to label devout Christians as 'anonymous Muslims' or Hindus as they are labeled as anonymous Christians.²⁹

So as the Christians maintain that Christianity fulfils all other religions, the people of other faiths too can claim that their religion fulfils Christian tradition (for example, the *Advaitic* tradition of Hinduism by Vivekananda). Thus for developing a genuine dialogical relationship the inclusivist paradigm seems to fall short in expectation. Because this paradigm pre-judges the issue of religious truth, it seems difficult to construct a viable theology of religions from this perspective.

The above theological standpoints based on exclusive and inclusive truth claims motivated the Christian churches to send out Christian missionaries to almost all continents to involve in humanitarian service and make disciples of all nations by proclaiming the "goodness" of salvation to all peoples, converting them, they also 'planted' churches in almost every nation. India was one of them. The Colonial expansion of Western Europe brought Christian missionaries to India, and the missionaries thought of British colonialism as a god-given opportunity for the evangelization of India. They had laboured and 'planted' churches through 'personal' and 'mass conversions'. But the exclusive claims of the churches and their 'Policy of conversions' were vehemently criticized and objected by the Hindu revivalist.

B. CHRISTIANITY AND CONVERSION

The debate on conversion has been going on for more than a century. Only the contours have changed. In the present political context of India the issue of conversion has become very important for Christians as well as Hindu organizations. The Prime Minister Shri. Atal Behari Vajpayee has called for a national debate on the issue of conversion after the Orissa episode in which the Christian missionary, Graham Stewart Staines and his two sons were brutally killed.³⁰ The reason for this call can be seen as the reflection of an attempt to define and limit the role of Christian missionaries in India by the Hindu organizations.

Conversion is indeed a sensitive issue in a country like India in its present context not withstanding its secular nature. The religious fanatics are very intolerant when it comes to the issue of conversion. Hindu revivalists like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathi, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi and others, wrote against the missionary policy of conversion³¹ and their attitude of denunciation of Indian society and culture. As Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi showed repeatedly in their writings that 'the denunciations were based on gross exaggeration, often on, wholesale distortion on complete fabrication'.³² They also strongly condemned the excessive missionary policy of vilification of the native religions.³³

In this section an attempt has been made to analyse and answer some of the pertinent questions regarding the controversy on conversion. Why conversion is peremptory to Christian missionaries? Why do people desire conversion? What are the motives, desires and needs which are explicit or

implicit? What should be the position of Christians towards the issue of conversion as living in a secular India with a constitutional provision on religious freedom? How does the apologetic attitude of Hindu revivalist leaders on conversion and re-conversion affect the Pluralistic context of India?

1. CONVERSION AS PEREMPTORINESS

The controversy over Christian conversion has become a vibrant national issue in the Indian sub-continent especially the demand for an apology from the Pope John Paul II for Inquisition atrocities centuries ago for forced conversion in Goa and destruction of temples, by the *Sangh Parivar* while his visit in India in November 1999.³⁴ Already in Gujarat where the B.J.P is solely in power, a bill has been circulated to punish conversion through "allurement" by a minimum of three years in Jail.³⁵ The horrendous killing of Australian missionary with his two sons in Orissa was exclaimed by the President K.R. Narayanan as a savage act. K.R. Narayanan states:

Indeed, the savage act can in no way be seen as a mere law and order problem. It certainly belongs to the world's inventory of black deeds.³⁶

The *Sangh Parivar* blames all these on Christian missionaries and their forcible conversion. Hence the controversy on conversion between Christians and Hindus has become an irritable issue.

There seems to be no unity among Christians with regards to its fundamental aspect in Christian experience. There seems to be a wide spectrum of opinions that are representatives of the different Christian denominations. There are representatives of the churches that have come up with the suggestion that Christians should stop all attempts to convert non-Christians. Some others who passionately argue that without conversion

Christianity is a dead religion. There are also Christians taking indifferent attitude towards the issue of conversion.

An obvious area of difficulty is the missionary activity, which occurs when the superimposition of one's own criterion upon the other is followed by efforts to convert the other. It seems it is part of their nature as Christians that they want to share their most treasured convictions with others. Often this tendency is reinforced by the teachings of the Bible and tradition.

2. CONVERSION AND THE BIBLE

Proselytizing, that is trying to increase the number of the followers of a religion, is a common practice among the followers of many religions. The legitimization of this practice will be found either in the injunctions of the religion's founder or in some text that is canonical or normative by the religious communities. They interpreted it mostly in a fundamentalistic fashion.

(a) Concept of Conversion in Old Testament.

The idea of 'conversion' is found among the Old Testament Prophets mainly of the pre-exilic period like Hosea, first Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as to a lesser extent in those of the post-exilic prophets like Joel.³⁷ There is no teaching on 'conversion' as such among any of them. In fact the abstract words *shuba* or *t'shuba* are quite rare in the Old Testament. Surprisingly the abstract word *m'shuba* which is its opposite and is translated as 'back sliding' 'faithlessness' or 'apostasy' is more common.³⁸ But the root *shub* occurs in various verbal forms in the O.T. and is "basically a verb of motion-with the meanings return, turn back, go back, come back, often in reference to physical

motion of returning to a point of departure.”³⁹ So the verb has been given the theological meaning both of turning away from evil and a turning to or returning to God. W.L. Holladay uses the term as a “covenantal usage.”⁴⁰ In other words, when the covenantal relationship with God is broken by sin, ‘Conversion’ is a returning, in the sense of reconciliation with the covenantal partner.

In the book of Amos the verb *shub* is used in the sense of a returning to God.⁴¹ What is implied in this passage is that God had been urging Israel to return to him, but each time Israel refused. In the book of Isaiah also the same concept is referred:

“For thus said the Lord God, the Holy one of Israel: In returning (*Shuba*) and rest (*nahat*) you shall be saved, in quietness and trust shall be your strength. But you refused...”⁴²

In the book of Hosea, true ‘conversion’ implies a change of life style, that is, “a holding fast to love and justice.”⁴³ In the book of Jeremiah, he not only exhorts Israel as a nation to return to Yahweh, as the prophets before him had done, but he also urges every Israelite to do so. Here the verb “to return” he gives both the meanings that of “turning away from evil” and of “turning to God.”⁴⁴ In the Book Ezekiel it becomes clear that conversion is not a one-time decision but an ever-recurring phenomenon in the life of a believer.⁴⁵ Thus there will be a recurring abandonment of Yahweh followed by a return to him and vice-versa.

In the post-biblical times Greek speaking Jews coined a new term *proselytos*, which means a ‘*proselyte*’ or ‘one who has come over’, that is a convert from another religion to Judaism.⁴⁶ It appears for the first time in the

Septuagint, that is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁷ Ezekiel (44:9) already shows that Israel was open to receive non Israelites into its fold.⁴⁸ The full conversion of a Gentile to Judaism involved three steps. (1) the so-called proselyte to baptism (2) circumcision (3) a sacrifice to be offered by the candidate in the Temple.⁴⁹

3. CONVERSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The normal translation of the Hebrew *shûb* in the New Testament is not *epistrepho* or *apostrepho*, but *metanoeo*.⁵⁰ According to Kittel :

The linguistic material leads to the conclusion that for the Jewish Hellenistic world of the 2nd cent. AD. *Metanoeo* was a common and even preferred equivalent of *epistrepomai* = *shûb*, 'to turn', 'to convert'.⁵¹

In the New Testament both John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed 'conversion' as *metanoeo*, is addressed to all human beings, Jesus affirmed 'conversion' as a gift of God to enter into the Kingdom of heaven.⁵² Jesus addressed his message to each individual irrespective of denomination. Never was there a question of one individual trying to convert another, for all human beings, irrespective of their nationality and creed, are in need of God's grace. And the infant Church continued this proclamation of her founder. Preach the gospel to the whole creation⁵³ is the command of Jesus, who is the founder of the Church. Hence proclaim the gospel, baptize those who turn to God and save the people is imperative to the Church, for it is the injunction of its founder. The greatest teacher of the infant Church, Paul, puts it in his address to the nations of the world:

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ Jesus. Therefore, be reconciled to one another.⁵⁴

In other words since God has turned to human beings in Christ Jesus, human beings must turn to one another, and together return to the one common God.

Hence the Biblical understanding of 'conversion' is 'to turn' or 'to convert' to God from the evil way of life. We have seen that it is covenantal relationship with God for leading a righteous life in the society. New Testament emphasizes a '*metanoeo*' or 'repentance' as 'conversion' to enter into the kingdom of God as a partner with God to establish God's kingdom on this earth. In the New Testament we have noticed a command from the Jesus to preach this gospel of repentance and to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and the son and the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ Hence there is a mission command we see in the Bible especially in the New Testament teachings.

4. CONVERSION IN MISSION HISTORY

There seems to be no unanimity of opinion among Christians with regards to its fundamental aspects of conversion. Christians as well as non-Christians used to speak of 'conversion' with an ease that gives the impression that the idea of conversion that have practiced today was always true in the history of the Church. We normally use conversion to indicate that a person has left on religion for an exclusive attachment to Jesus Christ in the Church. We want to examine the varied history which the idea of conversion went through, whether the mission of the Church today has been deviated form the original vision and the command of the founder.

(a) Apostolic Period

Conversion in the early Church was not a change of religion at all. The earliest Christians were Jews and it is as Jews that they listened to the Gospel and accepted it. They did not consider themselves as followers of another religion. They continued to keep the Sabbath and attend the Jewish temple though they broke bread at home in memory of the Lord on the first day of the week.⁵⁶

The great architect and the builder of the Church, St. Paul, himself never mentions that he is preaching a new religion, but Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the promises made to Israel. He began his ministry in the Jewish synagogue by addressing a Jewish community. The early Christians of Jewish origins were Jews even after their baptism. The very intention of the baptism was to make them better Jews.⁵⁷ The first case of non-Jewish Christian Community is that of Cornelius and his household.⁵⁸ As in the case of Jews, so also the earliest Gentiles were not invited to accept a new religion. However faith in Jesus Christ and repentance for the sins were pre-requisite for Baptism.⁵⁹ Christianity was not a new religion but a heretical sect, which the parental body (Jews) tries to eliminate by persecution. Crossan is of the opinion that Christianity is not a new religion, rather the biblical Judaism of the second temple developed into two streams, that of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.⁶⁰ Crossan characterizes the early Christianity as the Kingdom of God movement, a Christ movement rather than a religion separated from Judaism.⁶¹ By the time of Paul there was a transition from Jesus of Nazareth and the kingdom movement to the Christ event, which atoned for the world's sin and achieved salvation.⁶² In the light of the Pauline theology, for the early Church

conversion became a matter of salvation. Baptism was the physical sign and seal of the turning to Christ in repentance and the sign of the entry into the Christian Community.⁶³

Deliverance from guilt and the power of evil has always been a major impetus to conversion. According to St. Ignatius of Antioch conversion brought the newness of eternal life, and the deliverance from the forces of magic, ignorance sin and death which Christ brought to us.⁶⁴ Similarly St. Cyprian described the effects of Baptism on him:

The water of regeneration washed away the stains of my past life. A light from above entered and permeated my heart, now cleansed from its defilement. The spirit came from heaven, and changed me into a new man by the second birth....⁶⁵

It is said that some of the great minds of the early times like Justin, Augustine etc., accepted Christianity because it satisfied them by its intellectual credibility and respectability.⁶⁶ The Christian concern for the poor and the marginalized also attracted many to the Christian community. It was Churches care for the poor, for its own poor and for outsiders, which impressed even emperor Julian..⁶⁷

(b) Middle Ages.

From Middle Ages onwards, especially from Origen, there seems an emphasize to the grace that was operative in the Church and was made available through baptism for salvation.⁶⁸ St. Augustine's teaching that the Church as the glorious city for all ages and for every region is associated also with St. Cyprian who held that outside the Church there is no salvation.⁶⁹ Hence, Jacob Kavumkal says:

Cyprian and Augustine together laid the foundation for the exclusive theology, which became the corner stone of the mission theology for ages to come.⁷⁰

This exclusive theology with the militant attitude of the chauvinistic leadership of the Church paved the way to Crusades and Inquisitions.⁷¹

(c) Colonial Period

In the Colonial Period Christian Mission was a geographical going out to convert other people to procure their salvation. Hence European Churches sent their missionaries to Asian and African continents to rescue millions of people who knew nothing about salvation and hence were heading to the eternal fires, as they were not baptized. Hence the mission is to aim at the conversion of people to the Christian faith, with a view to the 'expansion' or extension of the Church.⁷² Expansionism was the guiding principle of the conversion movement.⁷³ To quote Justo Gonzales:

“The west in general considered that God had placed the benefits of Western civilization and the Christian faith in the hands of the white people-both Europeans and North Americans, so that they could share them with the rest of the world. That responsibility was “the white man’s burden”: to take to the rest of the world the benefits of industrialization, capitalism, democracy and Christianity”⁷⁴

This was due to the 'separational model' of gospel-culture encounter emphasized during the colonial era.⁷⁵

Again from nineteenth century onwards there was a shift from ecclesia centrism to Christo-centrism, i.e., to preach the message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone.⁷⁶ Salvation is offered freely to everyone and should be accepted with repentance, faith, thanks giving and holiness of life.

Education and other activities were used as means to conversion. The South India Missionary Conference of 1858 set the goals of English education in India:

The object of all missionary labour should not be primarily the civilization, but the evangelization of the heathens... schools may be regarded as converting agencies and their value estimated by the number who are led to renounce idolatry and make an open profession of Christianity.⁷⁷

Another aspect of conversion in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was the mass movement, which led many groups voluntarily into Christianity, especially from the marginalized sections. The social elevation of the out castes and the destruction of caste system were the chief concerns of the missionaries.⁷⁸ With the beginning of the Twentieth Century there is again a shift in the perspectives and nuances in the understanding and approach to conversion. Until upto 19th century, Christianity considered other religions as false and their followers were heathens. But after the publication of *The Sacred Books of the East* by Max Muller, the perspectives had changed. Christians were increasingly perceived other religions as preparation for Christianity and Jesus Christ. J.N. Farquhar's published a book *Crown of Hinduism* in 1913 prepared the way for the fulfilment theory according to which other religions are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.⁷⁹ According to this theological position, 'Conversion' to Jesus Christ from other religions is not a radical break or discontinuity but is a fulfilment of the religions search in Jesus Christ.⁸⁰ Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the fulfilment of all creation, of all history, and of all human yearning for fullness of life.... In Him, "authentic values of all religious and cultural traditions, such as mercy and submission to

the will of God, compassion and rectitude, non-violence and righteousness, filial, piety and harmony with creation find their fulness and realization.”⁸¹

(d) Post Vatican II Theology

Apart from the new understanding of other religions, Vatican II ushered in also a fresh outlook on the history of the Christian mission. The relation between the mission of the Church and this world and its cultures is the main theme of the Council document *Gaudium et Spes*. The Council had made an evaluation of the theology of the Christian mission since the very inception of Christianity. In the words of Paul VI, “as an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a Kingdom, the Kingdom of God; and this is so important, ...”⁸² If so the purpose of the mission is not primarily planting churches, as it was understood earlier. Pope Paul was against such attitude. Further he goes on to say “for the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”⁸³ Jacob Kavumkal affirms, “While evangelization is the mission of the Church, inculturation as the very expression of mission. Inculturation is a community’s constant search for relevancy and meaningfulness of the Gospel as well as its response to the Gospel in its particular context. Inculturation is to be seen from the impact of it on the context, especially in transforming the dehumanizing elements of the context.”⁸⁴ Now we see a shift from Christocentrism to theocentrism, i.e., God centred Christology or Kingdom centred Christology. This is a new paradigm shift in understanding of salvation as conversion to the Kingdom of God.

(e) Kingdom of God as Jesus Announced

In the context of the Kingdom Jesus announced which was Good News primarily to the poor.⁸⁵ When we look into the gospels, Jesus' mission was to transform the Jewish culture by questioning the dehumanising elements in it. Jewish culture, through its laws, ritual purity and pollution, marginalized people in terms of race, profession, bodily situation, sin etc. In fact he relativised God in terms of the neighbour. While he identified himself with the poor and the out castes, he at the same time challenged whatever was dehumanising in the society of his times.⁸⁶ This total transformation of the society through the acceptance of God as the intimate parent and all human beings as brothers and sisters. This state of affairs he described as Kingdom of God. This message of the Kingdom is accompanied by the formation of a community of disciples whom Jesus sent after his death and resurrection to continue his mission, in all cultures.⁸⁷

The main theme of Jesus' mission and therefore of all Christian missionary activity is not forcible conversion through coercion, allurements and inducements, of person or community, but relate the gospel to the given community or culture, through love, compassion, reconciliation, service and fellowship. Hence Robert Webber says "The power of the Gospel will change no only the life of an individual, but also transform culture."⁸⁸ Arch Bishop Samineni Arulappa says, "Real conversion is conversion to God."⁸⁹ He continues, 'Every religion is part of God's Kingdom'. Hence conversion to God means conversion to the God's Kingdom. From the fruits of action, we can determine whether we are building God's Kingdom or Satan's Kingdom. Real conversion produces the fruits of God's Kingdom, that are love, joy,

peace, kindness, gentleness, patience and self control. The fruits of Satan's Kingdom are hatred, violence, immorality, division, envy, quarrelsomeness etc.⁹⁰ Hence the ultimate aim of conversion is total transformation of society from its inhuman practices such as caste and ideology.

4. CASTE SYSTEM AND CHRISTIAN CONVERSION

The gospel invitation is not only a call to personal conversion, but is also a call to social change. It is a struggle against the mamman of structures of injustice, enslavement and marginalization. It seems most missionaries considered the Indian caste system as a dehumanising structure, which deny social equality, brotherhood and social unity. Hence gospel invitation is also a call to the liberation of those people from the clutches of the bondage of caste hierarchy and its age-old stigma. Norman Maclead, the Convenor of the Church of Scotland's India Mission, says:

... that Hindu casteism is a frightful social scourge no one can deny. It has completely and hopelessly wrecked social unity, harmony and happiness, and for centuries it has opposed all social progress. But few seem to think that it is not so much as a social but as a religious institution that it has become the great scourge it really is. As a system of absurd social distinctions it is certainly pernicious. But when we view it on moral grounds it appears as a scandal to conscience, and all our moral ideas and sentiments rise to execrate it and to demand its immediate extermination. Caste is the bulwark of Hindu idolatry and the safeguard of Brahmanic priesthood. It is an audacious and sacrilegious violation of God's law of human brotherhood. It makes civil distinctions inviolable divine institutions, and in the name of the Holy God sows perpetual discord and enmity among His children.⁹¹

5. HINDU RESPONSE TO CONVERSION AND CASTE

The greatest Indian Prophetic figures like Vivekananda tried to defend castes with dual attitude. On the one hand he gives a justification for the principle of caste as a functional division within an organic society, claiming that it is one of the greatest insights, which India has to offer to the world. On the other hand, he believes that this inherently good system has become petrified and oppressive and must be reformed.⁹² Duncan B. Forrester says:

“Certainly he does not write the contemporary realities of the caste system or of the tradition. He is quite silent about the hereditary principle, about endogamy, about rules governing social intercourse. Indeed it would appear that what he defends as caste it is simply a division of labour or as a functional grouping within society....”⁹³

Ronald W. Scott says:

Vivekananda does make it clear that he is unhappy with caste as he finds it around him because it is rigid, makes man ‘a slave society’ and obstruct any kind of social progress.⁹⁴

Gokhale comments on the caste rigidity as follows:

The condition of ‘the low castes’ is so deeply deplorable, that it constitutes a grave blot on our social arrangements. We may touch cat, we may touch dog, we may touch any other animal, but the touch of these human beings is pollution. And so complete is the mental degradation of these people that they themselves see nothing in such treatment to resent, that they acquiesce in it as though nothing better than that was their due.⁹⁵

Dayananda Saraswati and his Ārya Samāj also found the existing caste system is not according to the ordering of the *Vedas*. He wanted to replace the innumerable castes or *jāthis* of contemporary Indian society with the four *Varnas*, according to the *guna* invested in each person.⁹⁶

Mahatma Gandhi's position seems to start from a kind of conflation of Vivekananda's and Saraswati's views; He affirms *Varna*, seeks to reform caste and assails untouchability as an excrescence on Hindu society. Duncan B. Forrester says, Gandhi's moral passion is never more intense than when he speaks of the evils of untouchability.⁹⁷ He quotes from Gandhi:

The curse of Hinduism and therefore India... the root cause of our down fall and of Hindu-Muslim discord.⁹⁸

Gandhi saw a large group of Harijans took conversions by Christian Missionaries because of the treatment they received from the high caste Hindus through the problem of untouchability. Gandhi was against any kind of conversion from one religion to another. He was severely critical of Harijans who spoke of conversion to another faith as a possible ways to escape from untouchability and even more caustic in his attacks on those who sought to make converts among Harijans.⁹⁹

Dr.S. Radhakrishnan's earlier writings on caste represent a remarkably vigorous defense of both of *Varna* and of the present realities of caste against Christian and secular attacks. He argues that a caste society is superior to the fluid, competitive, insecure, materialist society of the Christian West.¹⁰⁰

Radhakrishnan writes:

Caste may have some defects, but these are not fundamental; in its essence caste represents what is best in the Hindu *ethos*: 'the institution of caste'... illustrates the spirit of comprehensive synthesis characteristic of the Hindu mind with its face in the collaboration of races and the co-operation of cultures... the system of caste is the outcome of tolerance and trust. Though it has now degenerated into an instrument of oppression and intolerance, though it tends to perpetuate inequality and develop the spirit of

exclusiveness, these unfortunate effects are not the central motives of the system.¹⁰¹

Although he has praised caste as a characteristic product of the Hindu mind, he also affirms that caste on its social side is a product of human organization and not a mystery of divine appointment.¹⁰²

Again in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (1939) Radhakrishnan says:

The caste system is a degeneration of class idea. It does not admit that the individual has the right to determine his future and pursue his interests...The right of every human soul to enter into the full spiritual heritage of the race must be recognized. Caste is a source of discord and mischief, and if it persists in its present form, it will affect with weakness and false hood the people that cling to it.¹⁰³

Jawaharlal Nehru also upheld the old caste system, but he doubted whether the caste system would endure, because of the vast changes taking place in Indian society.¹⁰⁴ He is of opinion that:

The destruction of caste, which is virtually inevitable, might will lead to a chaotic disruption of social life unless something in the way of a new social structure, adapted both to the demands of modern times and to the genius of the Indian people, were to be put in its place. The old caste system, to be sure, had much that was good in it. It never fell victim to the morbid individualism of the west. It tolerated diversity. It produced a society, which was non-competitive and non-acquisitive. Democracy was allowed within each caste, and although the system as a whole was hierarchical, the internal structure of each caste was egalitarian... the ultimate weakness and failing of the caste system and the Indian social structure were that they degraded a mass of human beings and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition, educationally, culturally or economically... In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress. There can be

no equality in status and opportunity within its frame work, nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy...¹⁰⁵

Modern Historian K.M. Panikkar was against the rigid nature of caste system.

According to K.M. Panikkar:

Caste is quite clearly separable from the Hindu religion....And it needs to be reformed, indeed to be destroyed for caste is totally incompatible with democracy... it condemns millions to degradation, it obstructs education and progress....Since caste is not a religious institution... a religious attack on caste is irrelevant, whether it takes the Gandhian or Christian form.¹⁰⁶

Both Nehru and Panikkar are more interested in the future of Hindu society, and they are one in declaring that caste must go, and that the instruments which will speed it on its way will be legislation, industrialization and education rather than the religious techniques of Gandhi or the missionaries.¹⁰⁷

6. EVALUATION

From the above analysis, it is clear that most of the Hindu revivalists and Indian leaders are against the petrified and oppressive nature of caste system and they unanimously demand needs to be reformed. But they are against the missionary policy of 'Conversion' and their tactics to transform the society by leading people from one religion to another by blaming the Hindu caste hierarchical system is barrier to social progress. Swami Vivekananda said,

"It is not true that I am against any religion.... It is equally untrue that I am hostile to the Christian Missionaries in India. But I am protest against certain of their methods..."¹⁰⁸

M. Gandhi said:

"Conversion is the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth..."¹⁰⁹

The speeches and writings of the above Hindu leaders influenced the Hindu masses to the growing opposition to conversion. But recently there has been violent opposition to conversion, especially in Gujarat and Orissa. The V.H.P. "wants law to ban conversion."¹¹⁰ In an open letter to Pope John Paul II, on the occasion of his recent visit to India, Swami Dayananda Saraswati wrote:

On behalf of the non-aggressive religions of the world, the Hindu, the Parsi, the Jewish and other native religions in different countries, I request you to put a freeze on conversion and create conditions in which all religious cultures can live and let live.¹¹¹

M.V. Kamath too is of opinion that "total stop must be ordered (by the Pope) of conversion activities."¹¹² During the past one year several writers have put forward arguments against the missionary effort to convert people to Christianity. They are against "planned conversions." According to M. Rame Jois, a former Chief justice of the Punjab and Hariyana High Court, planned conversion goes against the spirit of secularism enshrined in the constitution.¹¹³ He says "In the constitution secularism implies respect for all religions without discrimination"¹¹⁴ But the desire to convert is rooted in intolerance towards other religions. This leads to the discussion of Religious freedom envisaged in the Indian Constitution and the Questions of conversion.

C. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE QUESTION OF CONVERSION

The constitution of India in its Preamble has pledged to give to the people of India, a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic committed to secure to all its citizens, social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity and dignity of the individual, fraternity of the people and integrity

of the Nation.¹¹⁵ The words 'socialist' and 'secular' were inserted into the Preamble later in 1976 through the forty second Amendment to the constitutions. Some commentators point out that the concept of secularism is firmly embedded in the guarantees of freedom of Religion in Part III, fundamental Rights, of the Constitution.¹¹⁶ The Supreme Court had held that secularism is one of the basic structures of the constitution.¹¹⁷

The constitution of India does not define secularism. The basic features of secularism were identified by the Supreme Court of India to mean that, "The state shall have no religion of its own, and all persons shall be equally entitled to the freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion."¹¹⁸ In a land mark decision in 1994,¹¹⁹ The Supreme Court of India, in a Full Bench decision spelt out the ingredients of secularism as follows.¹²⁰

- i) The constitution of India Prohibits the establishment of a theocratic state in the country.
- ii) The state is prohibited from establishing a religion of its own, it is further prohibited from identifying with or favouring any religion of its own, the state is enjoined to accord equal treatment to all religions, sects and denominations.
- iii) Secularism in India also does not mean that the society is anti-God or atheistic. It only means equal status for all religions without any preference or favour or discrimination.
- iv) Under the secular state in India the existence of a legal right or public duty does not depend on the profession or practice of any particular religion. The state attempts to secure the good of all citizens irrespective of their religion and practice.

- v) Secularism is a basic feature of the Constitution and therefore beyond the place of the amendment process. Any State Government, which violates the mandates of the constitution, as given above renders itself liable to action to supercede it under Art 356 of the constitution.
- vi) For the same reason, every political party in order to participate in the election to public offices must abide by the principles of secularism. Communalization of Politics is anti secular.

The Indian state cannot therefore be theocratic. It is neither anti-religion, nor does it create a wall of separation between the state and religion. It has equal respect for all religions. It embodies the age-old Indian precept of respect for all religions 'Sarva-Dharma-Samabhava'.

1. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

In the Constitution the specific provisions are given Articles 25 to 28 and Articles 29 and 30.

Right to Freedom of Religion:

- Article, 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
- 26. Freedom to Manage religious Affairs
- 27. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.
- 28. Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions

Cultural and Educational Rights.

- Articles. 29. Protection of interest of minorities.
- 30. Rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

Freedom of conscience and religion under Art 25, guarantees every person, not only citizens, the freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate religion. These rights are subject only to public order, morality and health and other provisions of the Constitution. Since the freedom belongs to every person, the freedom of one cannot encroach upon a similar freedom of another. 'Freedom of Profession' means the right of the believer to state his creed in public. 'Freedom of Practice' means his right to give it expression in forms of private and public worship. Freedom to propagate one's religion means the right to communicate a person's belief to another or to expose the tenets of that faith. As has been pointed out earlier, these freedoms and rights are subject only to the restraints imposed by public order, morality and health.

2. RIGHT TO 'PROPAGATE' AND 'CONVERSION'

The right to propagate religion has come under very severe, critical debate in recent times. There are incidents of religious discrimination and violation of religious liberty. Violent attack on Christians and Christian missions, Churches schools etc. reported from various parts of the country, give room to suspect the violation of religious liberty. Alexander says such actions are planned on a national and wider basis so as to intimidate and terrorise the miniscule Christian population.¹²¹ Re-conversions were also being organized by Hindu organizations.¹²²

As Justice K.K. Mathew, a former judge of the Supreme Court, points out, "In the context of Art. 25(1), Propagate means that every person has the right to disseminate or spread from person to person and place to place the religion he professes."¹²³ This certainly involves conversion that is renouncing one religion

and adopting another one. This is a fundamental right of an individual. As Art.18 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adapted by the U.N.O in 1948 puts it.

Every one has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Conversion is a matter of free choice based on personal conviction. Denying a person the right of conversion when he wants it, and compelling him for it against his will and conviction, both are equally infringement of his freedom.¹²⁴ The freedom of Religion Acts, passed by the Governments of Madhya Pradesh (1968), Orissa (1968 and 1978) and Arunachal Pradesh (1978), prohibiting conversion from one religious faith to any other faith by use of “force or inducement or by fraudulent means” have caused much debate.¹²⁵ These acts are explicitly directed against the works of the Christians and Muslims. For example, what Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Acts Prohibits is conversion of “any person from indigenous faith” (Art.3), that is religions of Indian origin. This means, though not stated explicitly, that there is no prohibition for conversion from Christianity or Islam to an indigenous faith. It may be said that what is prohibited is conversion by illegitimate means certainly such prozelytization is not justifiable and those who involved in it should be punished. But under the cover of such Acts, in some parts of the country Christians are persecuted and even denied of their primary right to practice their faith. The legislative history of Art.25 is revealing Shiva Rao, the author of ‘*The framing of Indian Constitution – A Study*’ observes:

In the Constituent Assembly when the matter was taken up, there was considerable discussion on the word 'propagate'...But the speech of K.M. Munshi gave the historical back ground of Art.25(1)... in which he pointed out the insertion of the word "propagate was the result of a compromise to re-assure that minority communities particularly the Christian community... and I know it was on this word that the Indian Christian community laid the greatest emphasis, not because they wanted to convert people aggressively, but because the word 'Propagate' was a fundamental part of their tenet... so long as religion is religion, conversion by free exercise of the conscience has to be recognized. The word propagate in this clause is nothing very much out of the way, as some people think, not is it fraught with dangerous consequences.¹²⁶

Hence the constitution clearly exhibit 'propagation, involves 'conversion' by free exercise of the conscience. Hence prohibition of conversion is clearly a violation of the freedom of conscience, which is fundamental feature of secularism. Though the state claims to be secular, it takes the interests of the majority as the norm and thereby denies religious freedom to minorities is the real issue perceived today. Such discriminative treatment created a sense of insecurity and frustration among religious minorities, which will encourage communalism that is in no way conducive to the wider interests of the nation. There must be a 'truly open situation in which all have the right to persuade all and in which we respect in each other the seriousness and sincerity with which convictions are held and expressed.'¹²⁷

Religious freedom should not be an absolute and unconditioned one. The freedom to profess, practice and propagate should be as Indian Constitution puts it, subject to the condition of 'public order, morality and health'. Practices and norms which violate human dignity and public morality should not be allowed in the name of religious freedom and secularism.

There is another side to this picture. As noted earlier, it also manifests on the part of Hindus a mood of insecurity. According to Hindu point of view, it has social and political consequences. Conversion means 'accepting an entirely different way of life...It means cutting oneself off from the root of one's family, society and culture. It means a break in age-old relationship.¹²⁸ Politically, conversion disturbs the power-relationship. Conversion means losing of power for the majority community and granting itself to be over-dominated by others. This is why conversion is strongly opposed by Hindus, and they are engaged in *Suddhi* movement to reconvert those who left Hinduism. Theologically 'conversion' is not conducive to Hinduism.

3. THEOLOGICAL INCOMPATIBILITY

We have seen that the Christian Theological stand believed the 'conversion' is that "Jesus is the one and only Saviour." This "exclusive" or the "inclusive" approach could not satisfy the Hindu revivalist. In India they are taught to believe that God is everywhere, that he is manifested Himself in many forms, and that, therefore they follow the path of *Sarva dharma samabhāv*. There are many ways to reach the goal (the truth). The Christian exclusivism, and inclusivism do not recognize the Indian dictum "All religions are different ways to reach the goal." Here Christians maintain that only their own religion is true and all others are false or partially true, and they are not sufficient for salvation to its adherents. This approach does not affirm the integrity and identity of other faiths. Hence it creates tension and conflict in the society.

In the light of the account given above, the Church has begun to recognize that the efficacious salvific will of God is present in all religions, and that

every religion worth the name is a valid means of salvation in its own right. Christian theologians are aware of the fact that the Church is only a Pilgrim, journeying alongside other Pilgrims, moving toward the full realization of Truth, to be revealed in the eschatological event. Thus they are fully aware of the fact that as pilgrims all religions are equal and as such they feel to establish a new standpoint in the religiously plural context. This paradigm shift, the pluralistic standpoint is a revolution in the theological realm, which seems to provide a theological compatibility in the theology of religions.

D. PLURALISTIC STANDPOINT

The pluralist paradigm result from a 'Copernican Revolution' or crossing of the Theological Rubicon' in Christian approaches to other faiths. It makes a paradigm shift - a 'Copernican Revolution' for Christian presence in the midst of a plurality of religious faith.¹²⁹ By pluralist paradigm we mean, the position that all religions embody truth and are valid means of salvation.

The pluralist approach accepts that all religions are different ways towards salvation, authentic within its own respects. It rejects 'exclusivism' and fosters a more positive approach to the question of religious diversity and truth claims. It rejects 'inclusivism' where Christ is still the locus of the religious truth. It attempts to overcome the claims of the uniqueness of Christ without rejecting the mediation of Christ in the Christian revelation. All religions are considered on an equal footing with regard to their validity and legitimacy in providing salvation.

Christ is as much unique as is Allah, *Kriṣṇa* or Buddha for their respective adherents. Pluralism forfeits all forms of 'exclusivism' and also the spirit of

condescending and paternalist 'inclusivism'. It thereby acknowledges the integrity of every religion as a way of salvation.¹³⁰

The pluralistic paradigm accommodates a plurality of religious claims and divine revelations. Another related expression of this approach is 'the pluralist view of religions.' There are number of variants of this approach like John Hick and Stanley J. Samartha

1. THE COPERNICAN REVOLUTION IN THEOLOGY

John Hick's primary theological articulation is based on the axiom: God's universal salvific will. He says God is the God of universal love. As God is the creator and father of all humankind, God wills the ultimate good and salvation of all humans.¹³¹ He advocated a Copernican Revolution in theological articulation with regard to other faiths. Copernicus replaced the Ptolemaic Cosmology by placing Sun, rather than the Earth at the center of the universe. Hick used this metaphor to argue that Christianity should replace God instead of Christ at the center of salvific faith. Thus replacing Christocentric approach, he advocated a Theo-centric approach to people of other faiths.¹³²

This Copernican shift radically challenges the Christological suggestions. It means that the major world religions can now be seen as encounters from different historical and cultural standpoints with the same infinite divine reality. The meaning of salvation undergoes change in Hick's thought. It is moving from self-centredness to reality centredness. He argues that salvation is taking place not only within Christian tradition but also within the other

great traditions, it would seem arbitrary and unrealistic to go on insisting that the Christ event is the sole and exclusive source of human salvation.¹³³

John Hick is held to be a representative of philosophical pluralists. He holds that all religions are paths to the 'Real' (a neutral term compared to God). The pluralist hypothesis is thus a philosophical interpretation of the global religious situation. It postulates an ultimate transcendent reality behind the different religio-cultural totalities, which is variously conceived, experienced and responded to in life from within these different religions.¹³⁴

Hick is indebted to Kantian epistemology to elaborate his Theocentric Pluralism. He makes use of Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon in his conception of religion as a human response to the transcendent Reality. This transcendent Reality is not the Reality itself but the Reality as humanly experienced. He considers that the conceptual scheme that religion uses to respond to his transcendent is culture dependent.

For him:

Because the different ways of being human have produced a variety of such conceptual systems with their associated spiritual practices, the transcendent Reality... postulated by a religious understanding of religion is experienced in a variety of ways which have become enshrined in the different religious traditions.¹³⁵

The Real Phenomenal is beyond; he would claim conceptions such as Allah, God the father, Nirvana etc. The noumenal is beyond all descriptions and the differing images within the religions are like phenomenal representations of the noumenal. The universalistic tendency is visible in Hick because he believes that all religions are equally correct by virtue of being

particular affirmations of the generic truth there is transcendent Reality and that salvation/liberation comes by centering on it.¹³⁶ Hick provides a pluralistic stand moving away from an intolerant exclusivism and a benevolent inclusivism. This approach necessarily entails the abandonment of any claim concerning the absolute uniqueness of Christ.

2. THE RELATIVITY OF ALL REVELATIONS

S.J. Samartha provides a significant contribution for a pluralist paradigm. He argues that Christians should move from 'normative exclusiveness to relational distinctiveness'. Relational because Christ does not remain unrelated to neighbours of other faiths. Distinctive because, no mutual enrichment is possible without recognizing the distinctiveness of the great religious traditions.¹³⁷ For Christians, to be in Christ is the only way to be in God. There is not other way. But in a religiously plural world, Samartha notes that, to be in Christ is not the only way to be in God.¹³⁸ In a religiously pluralistic society, Christianity cannot claim absoluteness for itself. He assumes that Christians have no monopoly of truth. No single religion can claim to know and to communicate the fullness of the revelation of God, so neither can Christianity. He strongly advocates inter-religious dialogue as an imperative for our times.¹³⁹

By affirming a mystery centred Christianity he rejected both exclusivism and inclusivism. For him to say Jesus is God runs the risk, of an impoverished 'Jesuology' and limiting Christ to Jesus of Nazareth becomes a narrow "Christomonism."¹⁴⁰ He argued that a theo-centric Christology provides a basis for retaining the mystery of God, while acknowledging the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ.

He was of the opinion that truth is a relative concept. It cannot be absolutized by Christians. He states:

To absolutise the relative by suggesting that only one among the many is true is to imprison Truth within history. Where the absoluteness of the Absolute is acknowledged and the relativity of the relatives accepted, Truth is cherished, because then it does not become the possession of any one particular community. Plurality does not relativise Truth, it relativizes different responses to Truth.¹⁴¹

He believed that, the Mystery centred Reality can narrow down differences between religions.

3. EVALUATION

Pluralistic standpoint holds all great religious traditions on an equal footing. It considers the differences among religions to be due to linguistic, cultural and social conditioning of the religions. It seeks to build bridges between religions by accepting the truth claims of each religion as valid response to the 'Ultimate concern.' It holds that all absolutisations have marks of superiority and hence should be condemned. This approach does not renounce the uniqueness of Christ, but makes it relative. So the other saviours in other religions too can claim uniqueness of themselves. They seek the diversified mutual enrichment.

Lindbeck has labeled this view as "experiential expressivism." It is not "indifferentism but the acknowledgement that each path is the best for its adherents in the given social and cultural milieu."¹⁴² Those like John Hick can be dubbed as phenomenal pluralist because they claim that religions refer to the same noumenal and transcendent reality which is related to us in profoundly different ways.¹⁴³ Raimundo Panikkar and Joseph Runzo are called radical

argues that, we have a situation of pluralism only when we are confronted with mutually exclusive and respectively contradictory ultimate systems.¹⁴⁴

Runzo adds:

The different worldviews must be considered irreducibly plural.¹⁴⁵

Panikkar argues that it is not just enough to hold that truth is 'perspectival' but that "truth itself is pluralistic... neither one, nor many."¹⁴⁶

But such a model is not exclusive to Christianity alone. The *Advaitic* stand of Hinduism attempts to bridge the gap between the One and Many. The same line of philosophy one can see in the concept of *Anekāntavāda* in Jainism also. These two stands, i.e., *Advaita* of Hinduism and *Anekāntavāda* of Jainism, are taken by Gandhi to respond the fleeting problem of One and Many relationship which is the root cause of contemporary communalism in India.

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121. An independent fact finding team with retired Justice H. Suresh of the Mumbai High Court, Prof. Kamal Chinoy of Jawaharlal Nehru University. Ruth Manorama, President of the National Alliance of Women and a galaxy of eminent persons have found that the attack on Christians and the community's institutions at Dangs in Gujarat in December 1999 was conceived and planned as far back as in 1990. The team, which had visited Dangs district in January and in March went around the demolished areas and spoke to a cross section of Christian and Hindu leaders and workers, has compiled the evidence through photographs, Pamphlets and official and un-official circulars to reveal the various nexus between some Hindu bodies and government apathy towards Christians. See *Indian Express* (9 April, 1999) and *Sunday* (25 April – 1 May 1999), p. 9
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CHAPTER – IV

**ISLAMIC APPROACH
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A. THE ROOTS OF ISLAMIC COMMUNALISM

In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the roots of Islamic Communalism in India. Islam entered India predominantly as a faith of the ruling class, which had a well-defined worldview, system of values and principles of social re-construction with cultural apprehension of its ethos and identity. In the course of its encounter with Hinduism, which was doctrinally amorphous, socially segmented, politically dispersed, and embedded so deeply for millennia into the cultural traditions of thousands of closed villages, neither could it totally Islamize India nor was it absorbed in Hindu Pantheon. Hence two types of social groups with specific cultural interests with a definite cultural boundary exist in the Indian sub-continent from 9th century onwards. It seems cultural exclusivism is a threat to religious pluralism which is the root cause of communalism in India. In the first Chapter it has been pointed out that the cultural exclusivism emphasizes two claims – the claims for the possession of the finality of Truth and the supreme authority of the way to God or Salvation.

This section discusses how the cultural exclusivism of Islamic vision responds to religious pluralism. Some contemporary Indian Muslim scholars have tried to argue that while the external aspects of culture, such as dress, food and technology are different in different places and times, the values of a given culture are derived from its religion.¹ Since values are any way basic to a culture, if religion is affirmed as the sole source of a culture's values, it is tantamount to affirming that religion determines the whole culture of a community. This is true

in Islamic culture also. It demands us to search the theological, cultural and emotional standpoints in moulding the Islamic community and its consideration of the Indian Muslim response to Religious Pluralism.

The Rise of Islam

Islam was born within the context of Judaism and Christianity in the Arabian region. Muhammed understood his revelation to be a continuation and fulfilment of the Jewish and Christian Biblical traditions. Muhammad's respect for the Biblical tradition is exemplified in his teaching that during prayer one should face the direction of Jerusalem. It was only when the Jewish community of Madina refused to accept Muhammad as the leader of the one community of God that the Prophet ordered the direction of prayer be shifted towards Mecca.² Muhammad was convinced that he was appointed as a *Rasul* (a messenger of God) and that he was asked to give this message to his fellow Meccans. Later he became a warrior, Legislator, judge and ruler in Madina and the believers were constituted as "*Umma*", one community.

The history of Islam in India begins with the Arab general Muhammad bin Qasin's expedition in Sind in 711 AD.³ Now Muslims alone constitute more than twelve percent of the population of India and it is the biggest minority community. Here it is discussed how far the theology of Islam tended to mould a cultural exclusivism in the Islamic community.

1. THEOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

Theology is not just the explication of one's own faith in the ultimate. It involves also putting that faith along side others' faith in the ultimate, and along side rationality and human values which one shares with others, allowing the

examination of each on it.⁴ This section deals with the theological standpoint of Islam in this context. Theological standpoint is the chief criterion by which any religion judges and shares its relation with other religion and values.

(a) Absolutist Paradigm

(i) The Holy Quran

The word Quran is derived from the Arabic root '*iqra*' which means read or recite. This is the first word of the first revelation said to have come down to Muhammad (Surah 59:1). Thus the meaning of the Quran is something to be recited. The Quran is considered as the heart and way of Islam. They considered that every word of Quran is literally God's word.⁵ It was written on the "Preserved tablet" (Surah: 85:22) which is called the "Mother of the Book" (Surah 13:39). They believed that during the month of *Ramadan* in the "night of destiny", the scripture was sent down to the lowest heaven. From there it was revealed in portion to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.⁶ Hence the Quran is revelation and inspiration and eternal. Since Quran is revealed in the Arabic language they considered Arabic language as divine.⁷ The orthodox Muslims believe only in one Book, i.e., the Quran, which they considered as the final word of God. They include every word of the Quran in the category of *Qal Allahu*, 'Allah has said,' and consequently they rate the other books (scriptures) much lower because they are not cast entirely in this mould.⁸ They also believed that after the revelation of Quran all other scriptures became invalid and Quran is the fulfilment of all other scriptures.⁹ Any religion profess, propagate that their own scripture and its language is only divine, final, correct and all others are corrupted,

invalid or irrelevant and not from God, then co-existence of religions is not possible. This absolutistic standpoint is a hindrance to religious harmony.

(ii) The Universality of Quranic Message

There are Muslim scholars like Fazlur Rahman, who recognize “Quranic Messages as universal and identical,¹⁰ because all prophetic messages come from a single source. Therefore, Rahman says that Muhammad is made to declare in the Quran that not only does he believe in the Torah and the gospel but “I believe in whatever Book God may have revealed.”¹¹ God’s Truth and guidance are not restricted but are universally available to all. “For every people a guide has been provided.”¹² Hence the word Book is often used in the Quran not to refer any specific revealed book but as a generic term denoting the totality of divine revelations.

According to the Quran (2:213) there was originally a unified humanity, which due to its own rebelliousness became divided. In the Surah 5:48, it is said:

If God so willed, He would have made all of you one community, but [He has not done so] that He may test you in what He has given you; so compete in goodness. To God shall you all return and He will tell you [the truth] about what you have been disputing.

Here it can be seen that the Quran challenges all other religions to a competition in goodness and emphasizes that Islamic goodness is higher than other religions. Harold Coward says though the above verses obviously referred to Jews and Christians, the Quranic logic is that there is the one divine Book of which the prophetic utterances of the various religions are simply different manifestations of that Book. The Quran is of course the complete and full

revelation of the one **divine Book**, all other being only **partial** and **incomplete** presentations.¹³

This position counts that the revelation in the Quran is full and all other manifestations are only **partial** and subordinate to the Quran. Hence the Quran is the sole criterion by which all other religions are to be evaluated and judged. Therefore, the universalistic message in the Quran reveals an **inclusivistic** standpoint, which is a **hindrance** to Religious Pluralism.

(b) Inclusivist Paradigm

In this approach there is openness in acknowledging elements of truth in other religions. But this attitude accepts and rejects other faiths. It accepts them on the ground that other scriptures are simply the manifestations of the 'divine Book', but rejects them because later followers corrupted these scriptures.¹⁴ The original truth has been tarnished by the followers of other religions, hence their scriptures are insufficient and inadequate for salvation. Quran is the only way of salvation for humanity.

The acceptance of elements of truth in other religious traditions creates space for exploring the possibility of divine encounter in other religious traditions. But in Islam this openness disappears when it deals with goodness and salvation of humanity. The Quran has become normative and definitive to its adherents by emphasizing that it is the **fulfilment** of all other scriptures. This attitude destroys the identity and efficacy of other religions. Then it generates hostility and violence. As D.P. Pattanayak says 'This is the beginning of communalism'.¹⁵

(i) **The Uniqueness of God Allah**

The first Surah of the Quran *Alfatihah* clearly depicts the uniqueness of Allah and its 4th and 5th verses say, Allah is “the owner of the day of judgement,” “Thee (alone) we worship, Thee (alone) we ask for help.” The two central dogmas of Islam are (i) Unity of God (*Tawhid*) (ii) And the Prophetic mission of Muhammad (*Risalat*). i.e., There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his apostle. The whole Muslim theology is built around these two beliefs which is called by the name *Kalima*. The oneness of God is expressed very clearly in Sura 112, which says:

He is Allah, the One!
 Allah the eternally besought of all!
 He begetteth not nor was begotton
 And there is none comparable unto Him.¹⁶

Tawhid (unity of God) is beyond human words and thinking. The greatest of all sins is associating partners with God, which is called *Shirk*, and it is unpardonable in Islam. Islam holds strict monotheism. Allah is neither be identified with any other gods nor is superior to all other gods. He is unique to be accepted and worshipped by all. Here Islam negates all other religions and their gods.

Islam maintains a self centred exclusivism emphasizing that one’s own religion and god is true and all other gods and modes of worship are false, futile and unpardonable in the sight of Allah. The orthodox Muslims followed a strict monotheism and a theo-cratic rule.¹⁷ Thus the Islamic Theology gives the kind of values and vision to mould the Islamic community in an exclusive cultural way leading to negative consequences in a multi-religious society.

The Absolutistic (inclusivistic and exclusivistic) paradigm promoted by the interpreters of Islam divide the people in to two, those “inside” Islam and those “out side”. This type of vision or worldview isolates Islam from the agenda of nation building and national integration policy. This unilateral and exclusive vision (*ekānta dr̥ṣṭi*) involves serious theological and secular problems in the society. It teaches human values are inherented only in its teaching and in its community. Therefore searching values and reality in other religions and cultures are not advisable. More over cultural exclusivism ruined up with power, economic, political and military lead to tensions, terrorism and conflicts in the society.

This is one of the crucial issues in Asian Continent especially in India today. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was the result of exclusive cultural nationalism, promoted by the kind of religious values injected by the leaders in the society. Hence one is inclined to agree with *Erol E Fay*'s opinion that “Religion is the main instrument for the expression of values. It supplies ethos, prevalent tone and or sentiment of a given culture.”¹⁸

The above analysis was an attempt to show how the Islamic Scripture and its interpretation (theology) gave rise to Islamic worldview and system of values and moulded the Islamic community (*Umma*) with social and personal behaviour of cultural exclusion. This cultural exclusion gave momentum to hatred and enmity with other religions by not accepting the cultural identity of other religions, which is one of the root causes of communalism.

2. THE CULTURAL STANDPOINT

In the previous section it is noted that the Islamic theology and its interpretation of the Quranic motifs pave way to the moulding of an exclusive community (*Umma*) by imparting its system of values, behaviour patterns, symbols, language, rituals and traditions. This section deals with some of the important concepts and Religious duties of Islam which seem to construct an Islamic culture exclusive from other religious traditions and promote religious rivalry and hatred among religions.

(a) Concepts

(i) Jihād (The Holy war)

Islam rose and developed within the context of religious pluralism. Islam considers itself a theo-cracy in which Allah reigns. The ultimate aim of theo-cracy is a religious state. Democracy is often not viable in Islam, since there is only one ruler – Allah. His people are to submit to him unconditionally.¹⁹ Islam in Arabic means submission or surrender, not only voluntary but also by force.²⁰ Islam is a missionary religion aiming to conquer the whole world for Allah.²¹ In the early years of Islam the principle of *Jihād* was relaxed in the case of Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians.²²

Islamic scholars have identified four kinds of *Jihad*.²³ (i) *Jihād* of the 'heart' (spiritual striving) (ii) *Jihād* of the hand (physical striving, work, labour) (iii) *Jihād* of the tongue (striving in preaching or debate) (iv) *Jihād* of the sword (striving in war, holy war)

Jihād develops in part as a response to idolatry. Allah is to be accepted and worshiped by all. It seems this concept has its base in the Holy Quran. The Quran, Surah: 8:1, says that the Prophet Muhammad announced an absolution for all fighters in Holy War, to justify and comfort his sorrowful Muslims:

The spoils of war belong to Allah and the messenger, so keep your duty to Allah and adjust the matter of your difference, and obey Allah and His messenger if you are true believers.

This verse clearly shows that the war is sanctioned by Allah.

According to Surah 8:15 says:

When you meet those who disbelieve in battle, turn not your backs to them.

Again in Surah 8:16 says:

Whoso on that day turneth his back to them unless maneuvering for battle or intent to join a company, he truly hath incurred wrath from Allah and his habitation will be hell ...

Again in Surah 8:17 says:

Ye (Muslims) slew them not, but Allah slew them. And thou (Muhammad) threwest not when thou didst throw, but Allah threw, that He might test the believers by a fair test from Him...

With these Quranic verses killing in an Islamic Holy War was justified. Allah appeared as an impassioned God of war and an irresistible murdering Lord. If a Muslim kills an enemy in a Holy war, he is considered innocent, because he has carried out a commendable deed; he has offered himself to Allah and has been an instrument in His hand. The Muslim is not the slayer but Allah is.²⁴ The revelation of Muhammad in *Surah The Cow* 2:216-218 legitimised Holy War for all Muslims. (Other verses are Surah: 2:191, 4:89 & 91, 9:29).

ABDAL-MASIH in his interpretation of Quran says, “whenever a Muslim dies in a holy war, he is promised immediate entrance into Paradise. Only when dying for Islam will he be exempt from the Day of Judgement.”²⁵

One effect of the concept of *Jihād* of the sword was rapid expansion during the period A.D. 634—732. Within one hundred years Islam had spread to Spain, France, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, India, Africa, further to China, Java and Philippines.²⁶ Thus it is clear that the expansion of Islam in its earlier period was through compulsion not by voluntary yielding, i.e., *Jihād* of the hand but by *Jihād* of the sword. This militant attitude of the earlier Islam moulded a community with a worldview to negate all other communities that do not submit to Islam. Thus the spirit of *Jihād* was latent in the culture of Islamic community and it reveals this spirit when it encounters other religions.²⁷

Islam in India

In the pre Mughal and in the Mughal periods there were Islamic invaders, plunders and conquerors who entered India with an aggressive policy totally alienating the sympathy of the Hindus.²⁸ Muhammad Gazni is widely known as the despoiler of temples and the idol braker.²⁹ Bevan Jones describes ‘he resolved to wage a *Jihād* each year against the idolaters of Hindustan. He raided India seventeen times and he captured Somnath in Gujarat 1025—26 A.D. and he has become the champion of Sunni Islam.’³⁰ Qut-b-ud-din founded the slave dynasty and he was a mighty “fighter of Allah.”³¹ Aurangzeb also followed the *Jihād* way and under his rule Hindus faced severe hardships. Many Hindu temples were destroyed and *Jizya tax* imposed for humiliating Hindus. He forcefully converted Hindus into Islam.³² He followed a policy of Islamization.³³ Hence Al-Biruni, the

Muslim historian, who recorded his impression existed between his people and the Hindus, 'In all manners and usages they differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us ... and as to declare us to be the devils breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper.'³⁴ Thus the practice of *Jihād* created two communities with exclusive cultures which existed side by side in India with very little love.³⁵ This gulf between the Muslims and Hindus only widened during the British rule and also that continued even after the partition of India. Hence Margoliouth says:

"Islam was intolerant in the beginning as it is today. Intolerance is part of its very creed. It is a declaration of war, a battle cry against non-Muslims and their God and historically it began so and continuous to be so"³⁶

Mahatma Gandhi was also inclined to say that 'the Islamic strength was two fold, its highly attractive doctrine of equality and the power of the sword'³⁷

This concept gave way to the opinion that the world is divided into two parts *darul-hārb* (House of war) and *Darul-Islam* (House of Islam.)

(ii) The House of Islam (Dar-ul-Islam)

This is another concept, which expresses the basis of relationship between Muslims and the non-Muslims. According to one school of thought since the message of Islam is universal, the call to acceptance of Islam is compulsory.³⁸ At first Muslims must invite unbelievers to Islam verbally, then it becomes obligation upon the former to fight them until they accept Islam.³⁹ This school emphasizes it is the duty of the believers, where they can to extend the domain of Islam at the expense of the second.⁴⁰ But this did not happen in many countries like India. They could not completely Islamize the nation. Then Majid Khadduri writes:

“The impossibility of universalizing Islam and the failure to set up a world state divided the world in to the world of Islam and the world of war.”⁴¹

And in another instance Khadduri writes:

The Pax Islamica (the abode of Islam) was in theory in a state of war with the *Darul Harb* because the ultimate objective of Islam was the world.⁴²

Once more the same contention is brought in to focus in another way:

Islamic law recognizes no other nation than its own since the aim of Islam was the subordination of the whole world to one system of law and religion to be enforced by the supreme authority of the Caliph.⁴³

In other words, Islam has to go on fighting until the whole world is conquered and converted. A.H. Abdel Kader refers to it as the bellicose nature of Islam.⁴⁴

R.E. Miller says that both *dar-ul-Islam* and its opposite *dar-ul-harb*, represent formidable realities in Indian Muslim history, recalling not only the struggle for Islam, but also the vision of the Islamic statehood.⁴⁵ The object and purpose of an Islamic state is to promote Islam, to implement the moral code according to Islamic penal law.⁴⁶

From the above analysis it is evident that the House of Islam (*Dar-ul-Islam*) is the ultimate goal of Islam and it is the duty of the true believers to extend the domain of Islam. This is to transform the plural society to an exclusive Islamic community with a culture in accordance with Islamic ideology and values. Such an approach does not accept the boundary and identity of other religions and becomes a hindrance to religious pluralism. This is the problem we face in India today.

(b) Religious Duties

Along with the above concepts, there are certain obligatory duties based on definite instructions in Quran, which mould the believer and the community with

an exclusive culture. These religious duties are five in number, and they are called the “five pillars of Islam”⁴⁷

The first one is *Tashahhud* or *Shahadat*. This word comes from a root meaning “testify” and consists of a confession such as this:

“I testify that there is no god but Allah; I testify His unity and that He has no partner. I testify that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger.”⁴⁸ This is also called *Kalima*.

Here the emphasis on strict monotheism and associating partner with Allah is sin (*shrik*)

The second pillar is *Salat* (Worship). A muslim prays to God five times a day. Tradition has fixed the time for prayers.

The third pillar is *Saum* – or fasting (*Roza*) fasting during the month of *Ramadan* is an obligatory duty. They abstain from food, drink, perfume and conjugal relations, between sunrise and sunset. Young children and idiots are excused. The Sick and journey can postpone it another time.

The fourth one *Zakat*: It is an obligatory duty of every Muslim to give *Zakat*, annually on his savings provided he has enough for his own sustenance. Those liable to pay *Zakat* must fulfill these three conditions.

- i. That a person should be an Islam
- ii. A free man
- iii. Possessor of a fixed amount of property.

Zakat is given to the poor and the needy. (Surah: 2: 43, 83, 110)

The fifth pillar of Islam is *Hajj* or Pilgrimage to Mecca. It is an obligatory duty laid down in the Quran. Surah 22: 27,29 and 3: 97. Pilgrimage should be made once in life.

These obligatory religious duties make the Muslim community to feel their oneness everywhere in the world. Five times of prayer, facing towards Mecca, confessing that Allah is the only true God and pilgrimage to Mecca are unique features of Islam.

Muslim theology does not accept any other gods as true gods and associating any god with Allah is unpardonable sin. They also recognize Mecca as their Holy land and fatherland (*Punyabhūmi* and *Pitrubhūmi*) where the *Kaaba* is situated, and it is imperative to make pilgrimage there at least once in their life. Islamic worldview, and system of values imbibed from its religious practices helped Islam to develop a separate cultural identity.

J. Ahmed upholds that it is the culture that has developed from religion, which determines the existence of a nation. He says:

“...Their idea of nationality is not based on identity of race or community of economic interest or attachment to the geographical boundaries of a particular territory; it rests on a definite life – out look and a social polity.... Islam is a social policy and a state idea whose purposes cannot be fulfilled except through a corporate and well-ordered society. It is on this basis that the Muslims take their stand as a distinct political and social unit. They are deeply conscious of their separate cultural characteristics, which have developed from their adherence to an all embracing creed and certain moral principles governing all aspects of life. It is these separate cultural characteristics which entitle them to claim for themselves the status of a separate nationality.”⁴⁹

(c) Islamization

This section deals with the Islamic concept of '*Islamization*' and its assertion of exclusive culture and identity affecting its relationship with other religious communities and the nationalism of India. Though the scope of this section is

limited to *Islamization* in the Indian subcontinent, a brief analysis on the historical background is inevitable because the popular account of Islamic resurgence by international media. This attitude of Islam may be a product of the long and uneasy relationship between the Muslims and other religions characterised by fear and contempt.

Resurgence in religions is a universal phenomenon. Mircea Eliade has defined this as “religious nostalgia” and the current resurgence in Islam is also an expression of that nostalgia.⁵⁰

The Policy of Islamization can be traced back to even earlier times of the prophet Muhammad itself.⁵¹ This policy was also followed during Muslim invasion of India. But when the British rule came the Muslim elites (*ulama*) perceived a threat on their policy of Islamization because they were under a non-Muslim ruling power. Hence they embarked on a struggle for Islamic resurgence. Moin Shakir says that their slogan in the Indian sub continent was “Islam in danger”.⁵²

Mainly there were two types of Muslim responses. One group who had gained their education abroad through a new system based on western models wanted to modernize Islam incorporating rationality and Indian culture. This will be discussed in the next section. Another group rejected the western models and advocated a return to the ‘golden age of Islam’ that is to the time of the prophet and his fledging Muslim Community at Medina. i.e., the desire to return to the *illud tempus* (the primordial situation at the time of its origin).⁵³ These people were called the *ulama*. They controlled education and practice of religion (*shariah*) of which they were the sole interpreters. They wielded so much power in society.

The *Ulamas* felt that the greatest threat that the Muslims faced was that of losing their religion, identity and culture. Seyyed Hussein Nazar sees this threat coming from all sides and affecting every aspect of Muslim existence: law, education, government and administration, architecture, city planning, interior decoration, diet, dress and even religion itself.⁵⁴ He says, 'the Islamic world is faced with mortal danger of polytheism or *Shirk*'.⁵⁵ Hence Muslim elites were in a crisis to protect their culture and religion from these threats. Muslim intellectuals like Hasan-al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Iqbal, Mawdudi and others responded to the problem and challenge of plurality by formulating their integrative political ideology based on the idea of one sovereign God-one law.⁵⁶ *Jama-at-e-Islami* is one of the organizations founded in India and Pakistan to respond to this challenge of plurality.

(i) Jama-at-e-Islami: Mawdudi

It was formed in August 1941, and Maulana Syed Abdul Ala Mawdudi was its first president and Chief ideologue. It was an organization of the Muslim elite. Taking religion as the basis of life, the Jama-at-e-Islami advocated the cause of religion. It exhorted the people to shed their narrow conception of religion and practice as it was practiced by the prophets. In a way the message of Jama-at-e-Islami was to go back to the original message of Quran and Sunnah (tradition).⁵⁷ The speeches and writings of Mawdudi immensely influenced the shaping of the ideology of Jama-at-e-Islami. This section deals mainly with his ideas of *Islamism* and Islamization shaping Islamic politics in the Indian sub-continent.

Mawdudi's ideology is based on three principles which are the central ideas of Islamism⁵⁸ namely (a) *Tawhid* (unity of God), i.e., God is one and Sovereign

(b) Prophethood (*ris-~~la~~*) i.e., An Islamic state must, in all respects be founded upon the law laid down by God through His prophet (c) Vice-gerency (*Khil-fa*).

The three principles mean that God alone has the right to command and forbid; people are under obligation to obey him only. Mawdudi's ideology stands as an antithesis to secular democracy, which regards people as sovereign, law makers, (its execution lie in the hands of people). His ideology of polity, the belief that intended man to be the *Khilfa* (vice-gerent) of God on earth is rooted in the *Quranic* and *hadith* accounts.⁵⁹ Vice-gerency involves a certain exercise of authority and ruler-ship, and is a "collective right of all those who accept and admit God's absolute sovereignty over themselves and adopt the divine code, conveyed through the prophet, as the law above all laws."⁶⁰ Vice-gerents are the totality of Muslims believers who submit to the One sovereign and his laws received through the prophet having repudiated all previous national, ethnic or cultural norms. Hence all believers possess the right to be vice-gerents. Mawdudi calls this polity, Islamic democracy.⁶¹ This reveals that the Jama-at-e-Islami advocates a polity of "theo-democracy" which emphasizes both absolutism and inclusivism, negating all national, ethnic and cultural norms other than that consistent with the above three principles. The vice-gerents are the administrators to establish the Islamic state.⁶²

Mawdudi criticises nationalism, because it is people's construction and those people ignore God and revelatory laws of God. He says:

These principles have blighted the sacred ideals for which the messengers of God endeavoured since the earliest of times. These satanic principles have stood as formidable obstacles and powerful adversaries against the moral and spiritual teaching embodied in the heavenly books, and against the law of God.⁶³

According to Mawdudi, if nationalism brings people together, it also divides them on the basis of their territorial claims. Whereas Laws of one God bring people of different languages, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds closer together. Nationalism as Mawdudi saw it involved veneration of the state or fatherland instead of one God. Thus he felt that there was a need for the integrative Islamism and finally God will establish a state where there is one God, one law and the unity of His representatives.⁶⁴

(ii) Islamism as Final Revolution

Mawdudi identifies Islamism as the final dispensation through which God will establish his kingdom. God will soon establish good and constructive elements of life through the final burst of Islamic revolution.⁶⁵ All will recognize and accept that there is one God and that all human beings need to submit to his laws.

The model for this final success of the universal Islamic revolution comes from the early Islam of Arabia from Muhammad's own time;

It seems strange that, while during the space of thirteen years, only three hundred persons embraced Islam. In the latter ten years the whole country of Arabia adopted this religion wholesale... The matter is quite plain. So long as life had not been actually planned and organized on the basis of this new ideology people could not understand what this novel type of leader wanted to do...men whose realistic vision could see clearly that the salvation of mankind lay in this new creed. But when a complete system of life was built upon this ideology and people has actual experience of it... it was then that they understood... (and) it became impossible to deny this open reality. Gentleman! This is the method by which Islam seeks to bring about Islamic revolution.⁶⁶

Here what Mawdudi emphasizes is when Islam gives concrete vision (worldview) with a clear ideology (values) in the society, it leads to many changes bringing about transformation in the life of the people which will subsequently attract others and hence, they imbibe these values in their life within a community fellowship with a cultural identity.

In his final remarks Mawdudi clearly placed his hope of Islamic revolution before the students of Aligarh University:

I am addressing the students Aligarh and placing before them the plan of that movement for bringing about a social revolution of an Islamic nature. I have done my duty and communicated you whatever I had in mind. The responsibility of changing your hearts not lie on me.⁶⁷

From the above analysis it is clear that Mawdudi's and Jama-at-e-Islami's ideology of Islamism and Islamization advocates a theo-democracy and hence an exclusive religious nationalism in the Indian sub continent.

But the situation in India is different from that in other Muslim countries. Here the secular and democratic ideals have already influx among the people irrespective of religion. In India there are two types of Muslims, one group comprises of converts from low castes (*ajlafs*) and the other considered as the descendent of foreign origin (*ashrafs*), though a minority, holding themselves as racially superior. The shifting of power from the *ashrafs* to the British after 1857 AD, made them inward looking and their religious policy became more religiously militant and orthodox.⁶⁹ They began to see disjunction between them and *ajlafs*. They considered the *ajlafs*' ideological visions as heresies and they were blamed for having caused the wrath of God upon Islam on account of their un-Islamic practices that they had imported into Islam.⁷⁰

The *ashrafs* undertook a massive programme of Islamization with a view to purging the *ajlafs*' un-Islamic practices and there by creating conditions for the return of Muslim Political power. Among whom Mawdudi was one of the most important figures.⁷¹ Since the British created communal electorate, numerical strength became an important criterion for political participation and power. Thus the policy of Islamization clubbed *ajlaf* and *ashraf* together and statistically Muslim population achieved something significant. This created suspicion among high caste Hindus. Therefore they launched *shuddhi* campaign to re-convert the *ajlafs* in to the Hindu fold. The *ashrafs*' attempt to Islamize *ajlafs* and reform the plurality of religious visions within Islam in the subcontinent promoted the idea of inclusivism on the unitive vision of Islam. This inclusive approach led to a conscious effort among the Muslims to maintain their "cultural identity."⁷²

Thus Jama-at-e-Islami and Mawdudi advocate a theo-democracy consisting of both exclusivism and inclusivism. Exclusivism in the sense that it rejects and renounces allegiance to the non-Islamic polity, nationalism, democracy and secularism. Inclusivism in the sense that it permits its adherents to maintain their different nationalities as long as they believe in one God and abide by the code of conduct set forth by Islam.⁷³

Islam as an identity assumed increasing significance in the socio-political life. The identity gives a sense of security and belonging. This involves political interests and manipulations. Politics of 'Cultural exclusivism' and 'religious nationalism' would generate enmity, vengeance and communal discord among religions.

A.A. Engineer strongly argues that communal phenomenon is political in origin. He notes that communal tensions arose as a result of the skilful

manipulation of the religious sentiment and cultural ethos of a people by its elite group which aimed to realize its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community.⁷⁴ Hence the concept of Islamization, a political theory of Jama-at-e-Islami is originated by the elite Muslims (*ashrafs*), skilfully manipulated the religious sentiment and cultural ethos of the *ajlafs*, aimed at consolidating the whole Islamic people within one fold in which the elite would continue to remain powerful politically. In a multi religious society like India any religion that does not accept nationalism, democracy and secularism the co-existence of religions will be impossible sub-nationalism will generate cultural war and will destroy the integrity of the country.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL STANDPOINT

With the decline of the Mughal Empire and the loss of political power to the British, the Hindus and the Muslims started drifting away from each other in India. It seems the Muslims grew apprehensive of Hindu domination because they were the majority in India. This minority - majority psychological ill feeling enhanced aggressive attitude between Hindus and Muslims. This section deals with the psychological depression of the Muslim community responding to the religious pluralism in India.

We have seen that the politics of cultural exclusivism and religious nationalism promoted by some Muslim leaders encouraged the Muslim community to regard the very idea of nationalism as anti-Islamic. Jurgensmayer described this as the greatest evil of the Modern world.⁷⁵ They see Muslim nationalism as a short-term goal and looks forward to a Muslim unity beyond the Muslim nation state.⁷⁶ This yearning for a single Islamic nation runs deep in Muslim consciousness. This also encourages the growth of Islamic nationalism in

India. In India a large portion of Muslims are from the low caste Hindus converted to Islam and they are economically, socially backward and uneducated. The traditional Muslim bureaucratic elites of Persian origin (*ashrafs*) were only benefited by the British policy of keeping them in the administration as subordinates.⁷⁷ These elites (*ashrafs*) became the authoritative leaders of Muslims in the British rule. The British provision of communal electorates was to appear their ambition. And at the same time the British also chivalrously gave hearty patronage and protection to Hindu temples and their priest craft. Swami Dharma Theertha explained ten ways in which Britain encouraged Brahmanism especially through Judicial decisions and administrative classification and even by legal enactment.⁷⁸ Historians of Orientalists supported the golden age of early Hinduism and encouraged the Indian historians to revive the Indian spirituality and the culture.⁷⁹ Indian historians worked for one nation theory before Muslim League defended two-nation theory.⁸⁰ But Utilitarian historians criticized severely Hindu culture and described it as backward and antinational and supported Muslim civilization. Thus British Policy, Oriental and Utilitarian historians' and Indian Historians' interpretations of history divided the country in to two communal strands, a sort of Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism which divided the country into two in later.

(a) The Majority-Minority Conflict

Since Muslims were minority in India, even before the partition, it seems many of the India National Congress leaders, the policy of Hindu organizations like Hindu Mahasabha, the *Āryasamāj* in the Punjab strengthened the Muslim suspicion, because of the active members of the Punjab Congress were supplied by the *Āryasamāj*.⁸¹ This was interpreted by the Muslims as foreshadowing the

“virtual establishment of a Hinduraj” once the British relinquished their power.⁸² The Hindu organizations like *Suddhi* and *Sanghattan* could only increase their suspicion and insecurity. Then they began to mobilize movements like *Tabligh* and *Tanzim*. The fear psychosis among the Muslim aggravated the drift between Hindus and Muslims.

The minority consciousness of Muslims feared that the idea of democracy included in the draft constitution by the national leaders, would lead to oppression of their community by the majority. According to Jinnah:

... Mussalmans should be made to feel that they are secure and safeguarded against any act of oppression on the part of majority and that they need not feel that during the transitional stage towards the fullest development of National Government the majority would be in a position to oppress and tyrannies the minority as majorities are prone to do in other countries.⁸³

Jinnah adds:

Muslim India cannot accept any constitution, which must necessarily result in a Hindu majority government. Hindus and Muslims brought together under a democratic system forced upon the minorities can only mean Hinduraj. Democracy of the kind of which the Congress High Command is enamoured would mean the complete destruction of what is most precious in Islam.⁸⁴

This is the way the Muslim leaders injected fear and insecurity among the Muslims and made it clear that the minority position is in danger compared with the majority of Hindus.

Muslims felt that accepting the proposed federal constitution emphasizing democracy would be for them permanent surrender of their national life and unqualified renunciation of their national future. Hence Muslim League proposed

to divide the country into two. Linlithgow also supported this. He wrote to the King Emperor:

This plan has been adopted by the leaders of the League because it offered the sole means to escape from the dilemma in which the Muslim minority finds itself in face of the introduction of democratic institutions... They refuse to contemplate a future in which they would be in constant subordination to the Hindu majority.⁸⁵

All this shows the fear, suspicion and prejudice (they) perpetuated by the Muslims through narrow communal outlook, which divided the country in to two.

(b) Partition and Aftermath

After the partition also the Indian Muslims Psychological depression increased. None expressed more poignantly the sense of disillusionment than Abul Kalam Azad when he said:

It was now clear to them... that the only result of partition was that their position as a minority was much weaker than before. In addition, they had through their foolish action created anger and resentment in the minds of the Hindus.⁸⁶

Quaderuddin Ahmed says "They were left a truncated and defenseless minority. How was it possible to grapple positively with religious pluralism in this context?"⁸⁷ Their leaders, their seats of power and culture, their friends and companions were gone. In addition to all these atrocities, they had to deal with "sympathetic condolences from Pakistan deploring India's Policy of 'de-muslisimizing' those who have remained under the Hindu thumb."⁸⁸

The South Asian Muslim world also considered secularism as against Muslim ethos. This influenced the Indian Muslims' sentiments against secularism.⁸⁹ According to K. Gauba:

“...the Indian Muslims have wandered shepherdless and almost friendless mis-understood at home and mis-represented abroad.”¹⁰⁹

These are the Psychological syndromes of the Muslim Community in India. The recent development from the Majority Community especially from the Hindu Organizations intensified their fear and suspicion over the success of the secular state and hence hindrance to the advance of inter-religious relationships. Some of the issues mentioned may be, the threat of common codes of law to Muslim personal law; the elimination of Urdu language, inequities in appointments and employment, fear of the security of Muslims and their Mazjids, pressure on the management of the religious trusts (*waqt*) concern for apparent Hinduization of school texts, inequities to admissions to educational institutions, etc.⁹¹ Hence the Muslims in India remain a threatened and Psychologically oppressed community. Three recent incidents reveal the Muslim perception that the existence of Islam in India is precarious. An attempt to ban the Quran in 1985 where the writ petitioners argued that since the Quran describes the followers of other religions as *Kafirs*, the Muslim sacred book is dangerous and threatens to exacerbate communal tensions in the country. The Calcutta High Court did not immediately dismiss the petition.⁹² Saying that the petition, infringed upon section 153 of India’s criminal Procedure code.

The second one is the Shah Bano Case.⁹³ The Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that Rs.179.20 per month has to be paid as maintenance to divorced Shah Bano by her husband Mohammad Ahamad Khan. Khan took the matter to the Supreme Court claiming that according to Muslim personal law, he was not required to make any ongoing payments to his divorced wife. In 1985 Supreme Court upheld the High Court decision. The Muslim community protested against

this. Saying that it is an attempt to attack on their identity, religious freedom, and Muslim personal law.⁹⁴

The Third and the most burning issue is the Babri—Mazjid Ramajannabhoomi dispute. Mazjid was erected in 1528 by Babar in Ayodhya. The dispute between Hindus and Muslims about the site date back to 1857. On 22 Dec. 1949, the mosque was illegally occupied and idols of Ram were installed. The legal battle continued. In 1986 Dist. Judge of Faizabad ordered opening of the locks so that the Hindus might offer *Pūjā* in the disputed site. The Muslim were not given similar rights to offer *Pūjās*. The Hindu based V.H.P. and its allies are determined to construct a temple on the site. On 6 December 1992 the Hindus destroyed the Mosque. What is more disturbing for them is that the Hindus claim more than three hundred other mosques in the country are similarly built upon the ruins of temples and must be restored to their “original glory.”⁹⁵

The above three incidents epitomize the Muslim perception of threat which poses Islam in India today.

In a democracy what is needed is mutual trust between various communities. Many of the Muslim leaders rejected secular laws in favour *Sharia*.⁹⁶ Sangh Parivar and its allies equated Hinduism with nationalism. Both groups were volatile to the spirit of nationalism and secularism. V.D. Savarkar’s idea of *Hindutva* is a bond of common territory, common blood and common civilization.⁹⁷ This ideology attempted to promote an inflated identity-consciousness to the Hindus and placed the non-Hindus under a disturbing cloud of suspicion, hatred and hostility. Thus the mutual trust between the communities is lost in the Indian sub-continent.

According to A.A. Engineer:

Even after the constitution came into force Muslims loyalty to the country was questioned and they were accused of being Pro-Pakistan. Such suspicion still persists in some quarters. In many riots, the slogan '*Musalmān' jāo Pakistan or qabarastān* (Muslims go to Pakistan or to the cemetery) became quite common.⁹⁸

The majoritarian attitudes weaken the very foundations of Secularism, Democracy and the logic of modern nation state. A modern nation state can run only on the basis of constitution and secular laws.

A modern democracy cannot succeed until the minority feels completely secure. But the crucial problem in India today is that the minority feels they are completely insecure. Hence they are unhappy and dissatisfied because of the treatment and governance of the majority. The insecurity and suspicion among the religious communities are the outcome of the cultural exclusivism coupled with politics. Hence Rasheedudin Khan rightly observes:

Communalism of the minority exhibits itself in the form like 'separatism', 'exclusivism', 'anarchism, and it focuses itself on limited symbols, specific and divisive traditions and on a wide range of differences and dichotomies away from the mainstream communalities.⁹⁹

If the majority community also follows the same line of Psychological approach of the minorities, then it also exhibits minority traits of separatism, exclusivism 'withdrawal', and anarchism. This, we see in the statement of Ashok Singhal the then president of the V.H.P:

I have a feeling that one-day Islam and Christianity will come under Hinduism. Mosques and Churches might still exist, but under the Hindu fold.¹⁰⁰

Thus R.C. Majumdar succinctly expressed on the permanently divided and culturally exclusive communities as:

“...Two distinct but important communities and cultures stood face to face, and India is permanently divided into two powerful units, each with marked individuality of its own, which did not prove amenable to a fusion or even any close permanent co-ordination.¹⁰¹

Thus the cultural exclusivism combined with politics and the Psychological depression of the elite Muslim community paved way for the aggressive attitude towards other religions though not with all Muslims.

B. MODERN ISLAMIC HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

INTRODUCTION

The previous section was concentrated on the cultural exclusivism of the Islamic religious traditions perpetuated by the *Ashrafs* (Muslim elites), which created serious misconceptions of their own religious texts and the ideas they contain. They have been to some extent successful in establishing the idea in the minds of the Indian people that Islam alien to India and that it is absolutely contrary to Indian culture. The historians also made strategies to divide the Indian people. R.S. Sharma says that the nineteenth century colonialist historians and archeologists succeeded in injecting the heavy dose of communalism in Indian historians, which gave impetus to wide the hatred between Hindus and Muslims.¹⁰² While Utilitarian Historians severely criticized the inimical and anti-rational characteristics of Hindu culture and they eulogized the to Muslim culture, Where as Orientalists projected an ideal Hindu society in ancient period and attributed the ills of India to the coming of Muslims.¹⁰³

We have seen that the Muslim elites advocated a polity of 'theo-democracy' against Secularism, Democracy and Pluralism based on the literal interpretation of Quran and tradition, which emphasizes exclusivism, absolutism negating all national, ethnic cultural norms other than Islam. This type of Islamic revivalism only create antagonism among religions especially multi religious and multi cultural society like India.

But there are instances of communal harmony propagated by Islamic thinkers in pre-colonial, colonial and modern period in the Indian sub-continent. They interpreted Quran and Sunna in a more rational way. One of the most formative influences in the making of the Muslim ethos in India in a way to promote a composite culture has been that of Sufism. This section is divided in to three parts. The early part deals with the characteristics of Sufism and its ways of interpretation of Quran and tradition with a view to provide the key for opening the door to a genuine encounter with other religions by reconciling all the creative values of the community to the Islamic way of life. This Sufistic ways of Islamic Hermeneutical heritage enlightened many personalities irrespective of religion and caste over the centuries. These people tried to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Islam. Among the leaders only two persons Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Abul Kalam Azad are taken. Sir Syed Ahmed is taken because he was the first Muslim leader, under whose leadership the first Muslim Movement – Aligarh Movement started in India. He was also the man who sow the seed of the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College, which was later raised to the Status of a University Known as Aligarh Muslim University. This is the first Muslim University, which is alleged to the platform for the formation of the Muslim League and the intellectual centre for the demand for Pakistan.¹⁰⁴

Abul Kalam Azad is taken because Azad represents a bridge figure between theological extension and constructive reflection providing a new paradigm in the Quranic interpretations for inter-religious understanding and unity.

1. SUFISM – A NEW HERMENEUTICAL PARADIGM

India is the biggest centre of Sufism in the world.¹⁰⁵ Sufism is a vision and a way of life in Islam. It is also called Islamic mysticism. It was a religious movement in Islam, stressed asceticism and inner experience of the divine. The four well-known *Sūfi Silsilas* (orders) in India are the *Qadiriya*, the *Chistiya*, the *Naqshabandiya*, and the *Suhrawardiya*.¹⁰⁶

While '*Sharia*' gives emphasize to the external performance of rituals and activities, Sufism stresses of the inner self (soul). It owes its origin chiefly to two factors.¹⁰⁷ The first is an effort to break-away from the unsatisfying idea of a purely transcendent God. The second is an attempt to recover from the failure of the free thinkers to solve certain philosophical difficulties by the side of pure reason. Rasheeduddin Khan says, "Sufism built bridges between the Orthodox and the heterodox, the rich and the poor between groups and communities. They softened the animosity between communities, gave rise to syncretic humanism, promoted spiritual eclectism and placed man as the expression of the divine in the centre of all activities"¹⁰⁸ Sufism presented a face of piety rather than sword, tried to reconcile Hindus with Muslims and Hinduism with Islam.¹⁰⁹

This type of most eloquent expression one can see vividly in the entire corpus of Urdu poetry and literature.¹¹⁰ These literature not only reflect the composite culture of India that has grown out of the fusion of Islam with Hindu polity but also the dominant trend of *Sūfi* and *Bhakti* message of eclectic

humanism. These literature refuted narrow Muslim Orthodoxy, showed a scorn towards the Mullah and the Mosque, taunted Allah and the heavens, extolled the virtues of heresy, defiance and love spiritual, universal and personal, treated mosque and temple as variation on the same theme, referred to the beloved as 'Kafir' and *Sanam* (idol), projected the values of compassion and toleration, brought intensity to Patriotism, denigrated rich and the money maker, defended the poor and the down trodden, sang passionate songs of revolt, revolution and of a new world.¹¹¹ Hence these literature tried to weave the design of a composite culture by intertwining the threads of the *Bhakati*, *Vedanta* and *Sufi mystic* traditions. Again Khan says, "Their approach created an environment of reconciliation rather than refutation, co-operation rather than confrontation, co-existence rather than mutual annihilation."¹¹²

Some of the important persons who tried to interpret Quran and traditions with a view to uphold a composite culture and nationalism are given.¹¹³

(a) New Hermeneutics of Sufism

The Sufism interpreted the Quran not based on the immediate meaning of the text which corresponds more or less the linguistic definition of any given word, but they make use of logical devices as analogy and deduction and at the same time to expand the text so as to meet the newly arising circumstances in the ever dynamic Muslim society.¹¹⁴ A large group in Sufis followed a dimension of Pantheistic view in its interpretation. Bayazid, a Persian brought in pantheistic elements and the doctrine of passing away in God (*fana*) assumed a central position in the structure of Sufi theory.¹¹⁵

Quran Surah 21:25 interprets Abu Yazid that "Glory to me! How great is my majesty; and "verily I am God, there is no God except me, so worship me."¹¹⁶ A prominent Sufi Mansur al-Hallaj was executed on a cross for heresy by the Orthodox Ulama, for teaching that man may be viewed as very God incarnate. His words, 'I am the truth' were blasphemy enough to bring about his execution.¹¹⁷

From Al-Ghazali onwards three principles are recognized interpreting the Quran.¹¹⁸ They are *naql* or tradition, *aql* or reason, and *kasf* or illumination. Tradition represents the authority of the Quran and the Sunna; 'reason' is the basis of analogical reasoning and philosophical theology; and 'illumination' is the direct revelation made upon the mind of the Sufi.

To the *Ittihadiya Sufi*, God is everywhere and everything speaks of God for that they take Surah 50:16 and 17:44.

The seven heavens and earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise.

Surah:50:16 says.

We verily created a man and we know what his soul whispereth to him and
We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.

Here we see Sufism as a spiritualistic Pantheism

The Sufis invoked the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* or unity of being which was akin to Hindus with their philosophy of the oneness of all life, *advaita* or non-dualism. Some Sufis preached that God was in everything and in everyone including in Hindus and Hinduism. While in the eyes of other Sufis a Hindu was the same as a Muslim¹¹⁹

Shaik Muinuddin Chisti (d. 1236) founder figure of Islamic mysticism reached India before Ghauri whose tomb in Ajmir attracts both Hindus and Muslims.

The *Ihhamiya* group interprets the transcended characteristics of the reality of God.

Hence, Bevan Jones says:

“From the Philosophical point of view God is pure Being, from the mystical and devotional point of view God is Absolute Beauty, of which all earthly beauty, whether it be of form or thought or action is but a dim reflection. Our finite cannot comprehend the Infinite... and the whole universe is the mirror of His Beauty’¹²⁰

This is very close to the Hindu Philosophy of *advaita* Example: The *Mundaka Upanishads* II. 2.12. Says:

“*Brahmaivedam Visvamidam Varistam*” and the *Is. UP. I.* “*Īsavāsyamidam Sarvam...*” and *The Brihadaranyaka UP. II 4:6,*

“*Edam Sarvam Yadayamatma*”

and *Māndukya. UP. 2.* Says: “*Sarvam hyetādbrahma, Ayamātma brahma...*”

This is also very close to the teachings of Bhakti tradition, especially the teachings of *Viśvarūpa darśana yōgam* of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, 11:20.

The whole universe is fully pervaded by the exciting and gleaming body of the Bhagavan, which is Absolute Beauty.

Bh.G.11:8 Bhagavan says; to Arjuna

“You cannot see that *Viśvarūpa* with your own eyes (*Sva Chaksusha*) for that I shall give you divine eyes.” (*divyam chaksum dadāmi*)

This comes very close to the Sufi concept “Our finite cannot comprehend the Infinite...the whole universe is the Mirror of His Beauty.”¹²¹

Another characteristic of Sufi religious order, is concerning the Mystic Path. Sufism speaks of the advancement in the spiritual life as a journey and the seeker after God as a *Salik* or traveller. Its teaching is intended to guide the traveller¹²² to the attainment of the perfect ‘knowledge’ (*marifat*) of God, the only Reality diffused through all things. Subsequently the wandering soul is led onwards by slow “stages” (*Maqamat*) and through the experience of certain stages” (*ahwal*)

along a path (*at-tariqat*) to the desired goal of union with God called *fana fil-haqiqat*, absorption (lit. "Extinction") in Reality.¹²³

Sufism speaks man as a seeker after truth and at every stage he is advancing towards the Reality, and only at the end of his journey he attains the full knowledge of the Reality. This reveals the knowledge about the Reality to the seeker at its every stage of the path is incomplete, partial, amorphous, vague and not lucid. This means the Reality is a mystery, which cannot be easily comprehensible and can be conceived or fully understand only at the last stage of the journey. Last stage is union with God (*fanafil haqiqat*) or absorption in God. Once the seeker is absorbed in the God, then he cannot convey the real knowledge about the Reality. Hence the Reality always exists as Mystery. This concept also have similarity with Hindu concept, God as mystery and cannot be conceived fully.¹²⁴ This also exhibits that no knowledge about the Reality is final, and all knowledge have some meaning in it, hence cannot be rejected. Moreover the sum total of all knowledge of Reality is not the Supreme Reality.

The emphasis on knowledge and science in the early Islamic tradition derived inspiration from the Quran and the sayings of the prophets resulted in the establishment of several *Bait-ul-Hikma* (House of knowledge) in the many parts of the Muslim world.¹²⁵ The famous Arab translator Yaqub Ibn Ishaq al-Kindi wrote:

"It is fitting them for us (Muslims) not to be ashamed to acknowledge truth and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us. For him who scales the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself, it never cheapens nor abases him who seeks."¹²⁶

Here the Islamic thinking and especially the interpretation of Sufism do not show an exclusive, superior or absolutistic approach to the mystery of knowledge.

It accepts knowledge from all sources. Therefore, there is an openness to the pursuit of knowledge provides an ontological basis for tolerance and acceptance. It is beyond cognitive knowledge (*tarka*), it opens to vision (*driṣṭi*) and intuition (*anubhava*) is a positive response to religious pluralism.

It seems this visiosn (*driṣṭi*) is not a unilateral or (*ekānta driṣṭi*), but it accepts visions from all quarters, i.e., it has an *anekānta driṣṭi* and *anubhava* (experience) is not only the self intuition but some total of all.¹²⁷ It seems this is very near to the teaching of Jaina thinking *anekānta driṣṭi* in understanding and approaching Reality, which has no quarrel with any system of philosophy.

Sufism also teaches that the full truth or knowledge can be attained only when the soul merge with the divine or union with the divine. Robert C. Lester says, "The realization of Truth is 'seeing God face to face', *Moksa*, which is at the same time self realization."¹²⁸ Hence the concept 'merge with the divine' or 'union with the divine' of Islam and 'seeing God face to face', or *Mokṣa* of Hinduism are beyond describable within the fold of human sense experience. It is mere mystery. As Samartha says, "Mystery lies beyond the theistic/non-theistic debate. Mystery is an ontological status to be accepted not as an epistemological problem to be solved. Without a sense of mystery, Theos cannot remain Theos, nor *Sat* remain *Sat* nor can Ultimate Reality remain ultimate."¹²⁹ Hence, Sufism's approach to the Reality is positive to religious pluralism. Sufism also emphasizes co-existence of religions for a meaningful search for the worldview and value system in a particular cultural setting. They believed in a pacific and non-violent approach towards the problems of the society. Ahluwalia says, "They attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community and became bearer or instrument of a Social and Cultural Revolution."¹³⁰ Hence, Sufism propagated a

social and cultural revolution through the new Hermeneutics of Quran and tradition by amalgamating all the meaningful values of the existing community. This new paradigm shift in the hermeneutics provided the key necessary for opening the door to a true encounter with other religions.

Sufi vision provided a new design for a composite culture. The main characteristic of this culture is freedom from caste prejudice; general love of mankind, salvation to everyone irrespective of status and socio-religious upliftment of society with an emphasis on 'love and renunciation' is a way to realize God.¹³¹

The Sufi interpretation provides Islam with a way of recognizing the truth present within other traditions because it sees divergent paths as the way to the *Kāaba* – the experience of unity with one God. Seyyed Hossein Nasr says:

Though the ways are various, the goal is one. Do you not see that there are many roads to *Kaaba*? ... So if you consider the roads the variety is great and the divergence infinite; but when you consider the goal, they are all of one accord and one.¹³²

Gandhi also believed and affirmed that all religions are essentially identical because:¹³³

- (i) It is one Truth/God that inspires all religions.
- (ii) All religions are different paths to same God.
- (iii) All strive towards a perfection unachieved.

According to Sufi vision sincere believers of other faiths are considered as spiritual neighbours and are helped along their path toward the final goal of the *Kāaba*.¹³⁴ Though this view and interpretation have posed unresolved problems for Orthodox Islamic law and doctrine, this has been very helpful to Muslims in Minority communities in host cultures.

2. MODERN INDIAN ISLAMIC HERMENEUTICS

In the previous section the discussion is centred around on the Sufi way of Hermeneutics with a view to create a composite culture by adapting all the creative values of the community. Hence it may be called a *Pan-Indo-Muslim hermeneutics*. Their aim was to create an egalitarian society with justice and fraternity as its corner stone,¹³⁵ and love and renunciation as life style. *Sufism* could profoundly influence the orthodox and heterodox, the rich and the poor, the *ajlafs* and the *ashrafs* and particularly many Hindus also. Their strand of syncretic humanism and spiritual eclectism enlightened many personalities over the centuries, like, Baba Farid, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Akbar, Prince Dara Shikuh and Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad etc. These people tried to bridge the gulf between Hinduism and Islam and also shown an intelligent understanding of Hinduism and its religious heritage.

Among the Modern leaders, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Maulana Mazhar Ul Haq (1866-1930), Moulana Obaidulla Sindhi (1872-1941), Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878-1955) Maulana Manazar Ahsan Gilani (d. 1956) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) were eminent Muslims whose enlightened views were conducive to a better understanding of Hinduism. Most of them had high appreciation of *Vedantic philosophy*.¹³⁶ They had broad humanistic vision of Islam and worked for inter communal harmony and peace by interpreting the Quran and traditions more appropriate to the Indian circumstances. Among these leaders only the contributions of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Abul Kalam Azad will be discussed in this section.

1. SIR SYED AHMED KHAN (1817-1898)

It seems Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in Delhi found a position in the British administration contributed many progress in the Islamic Community in India. The orthodox school of interpretation taught that Muslims in India is *dārul-hārb* (house of war), since it has become a non-Muslim State under British rule. But Syed insisted that India is *dārul-Islam* (house of Islam) since Muslims under British rule were free to practice their religion. He was convinced that the well being of the Muslims in India laid a new attitude towards the British and the scientific influence of the West and its education. He fought against the Muslim prejudice with regard to Western science and advocated social freedom.¹³⁷ He started a school in Aligarh later it was raised to the status of College in 1877 as Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College and now Aligarh Muslim University. It promoted Western learning among Muslims, which aroused the Muslims to a sense of their educational backwardness.

He also fostered religious reforms by spreading modern ideas about Islamic religion among Muslims. He told the Muslims not to consider the Christians as “infidels” and “enemies” as many Muslims believe. He also repudiated the view held by some Muslims that Hindus are infidels.¹³⁸ He made an emphasize on the proper interpretation of Quran in order to have religious amity among different religions. He stood for social accommodation and co-ordination between Muslims, Hindus and Christians.

Aligarh Movement started by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, shows a secular character in its working principle.¹³⁹ He encouraged people to have social dealing, mutual affection, love and sympathy between various religious communities. He said Islam is truly a rationalistic religion, since the founder did not claim any

miraculous powers. He said, "Reason alone is sufficient guide."¹⁴⁰ Though there were severe criticism against Syed, M.A.O. (Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College) and Aligarh Movement, Syed's approach to other religions, secularism, Nationality and scientific interpretation of scriptures and its study are prime importance in a multi-religious society like India.¹⁴¹

Syed was an advocate of secular state. He wanted religion and politics to be separated. D.R. Bali says:

Sir Syed was a great nationalist... but he preferred to remain away active politics... there is nothing communal in his opposition to Congress. He was not against Hindus in any way, nor he advocated separatism.¹⁴²

This was a radical approach among the Muslims in the Indian sub continent during that period. This was also a practical and realistic outlook. Syed's approach to the Ultimate Reality and to the interpretation of scriptures seems that he followed the Western hermeneutical methodology with its importance of scientific rationality and the Asian hermeneutical methodology with its paramount importance given to other scriptural validity. Hence his approach to plurality is synthetic, accommodative and adaptable. It is flexible having a wider vision, with a view to foster inter-religious relationship, was a new paradigm shift in the Muslim scholarship.

2. MOULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD (1888-1958)

Son of a Bengali Sufi, Azad provided fresh Quranic interpretations for inter-religious understanding. Azad represents a bridge figure between theological extension and constructive reflection. In the following inspirational words he clearly indicated his view of the relation of being Muslim and being Indian:

I am a Musalman and am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of 1300 years are my inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, the arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and my fortune. It is my duty to protect them.

But in addition to these sentiments, I have others also which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments; it guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality.... I am an essential element, which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this dream.¹⁴³

He had firm hope and conviction that developed the common love of nation would be the power that would make religious pluralism work.

His Tarjuman-ul-Quran is a commentary to underline the 'oneness of religion' or faith as different from the divergence of Sharia.¹⁴⁴ Azad said divine revelation given to every one without distinction inculcates Universal religion, which is al-din or al-Islam, the one religion that is appropriate to the nature and function of all humanity.¹⁴⁵

He said: "Muslims are to maintain a two-fold relation with the members of other religions. On the one hand, it is their duty to remind them of their essential truth and, as it were, to call them back to their first love."¹⁴⁶

He says:

The first doctrinal principle of the Quran is to recognise the founders of all religions and endorse their teaching, which at the basis is one and the same, and to conform to the way shown them; as the Quran says: Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers.¹⁴⁷

He said both Hinduism and Christianity are subject to critique, because they have deviated from the original truth. For example the Christianity added “monotheistic polytheism” and in Hinduism “the beauty of the Indian mind and all its great achievements have been cluttered by superstition and image worship....”¹⁴⁸ Thus Islam asks them “to return to their own religion by first discarding all the aberrations that they have heaped thereon, and strictly adhere to the original faiths....”¹⁴⁹ Since the inner congruence of spirit of these faiths is the same as the spirit of Islam, he asked the Muslims to maintain a warm and cordial relation with the people of other faiths. The outward path (*Sharia, Minhaj*) may vary according to the circumstances. The differences which exist between one religion and another are not differences in *din*, the basic provision, but in the manner of giving effect to it¹⁵⁰ Hence, Azad asked the Muslims to concentrate on this “basic provision” and respond positively for inter-religious relations. For which is summed up in the Quran (2:177) as devotion to one God and righteous living.

... And those who keep their treaty when they make one and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God fearing.

The inner spirit in all religions is same, is a common platform for religious pluralism. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan also says in the same line:

‘Amid all the confused ferment of *vedic* devotion, a certain principle of unity and comprehension was asserting itself. In some hymns the conception of a single central power was actually formulated. The *upanishads* carry over this tendency. They recognize only one spirit almighty, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, self-existent, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. He is the light, lords and life of the universe, without a second and the sole object of worship and adoration.¹⁵¹

Rasheeduddin Khan says, "No theologian of this stature in India ever attempted to build a religious base for composite nationalism as Azad did. For the composite nationalism he cited the example of Prophet Muhammad and his covenant of Madina in (623 AD). In that document he declared that in religious matters every one will have his own religion, for Jews their religion and for Muslims their religion."¹⁵² But he categorically stated that all the parties of the covenant have become *al-ummat-al-wahida*. Maulana Azad explicitly translated *al-ummat-al-wahida* as one nation. i.e., *Umma* means nation, and *Wahida* means one. But other commentaries translated it variously as one people, one community, one congregation etc.¹⁵³ Maulana Azad argued from the innovative experiment of the Prophet in building a multi-religious political community, for creating a unified nation in India, by strengthening Hindu-Muslim unity and solidarity. He also strived for a multi-religious harmony for political unification and nation building based on the new interpretation of the religious texts and tradition from religious angle itself.¹⁵⁴

On this basis, Azad call upon Muslims to create in them the quality of tolerance. In religious matters there will be varieties in points of view, but those must not become the grounds for conflict. For that he paraphrases Quran 10:99 as follows:

Man by disposition likes to follow a way pleasing to him. Just as you think your way is the right way, even so others think theirs is the right way. Create therefore in you the quality of tolerance.¹⁵⁵

Rasheeduddin Khan comments, "Maulana Azad remains a shining example of the fusion of the rationalist heritage of Islam and the compassionate heritage of India. He coalesced with indigenous creativity of *Vedantic* vision of the several paths to truth with Islamic doctrine *Wahdate-Din* (Unity of faith) and *Sulhe-kul* (Universal

peace). This is almost the echoes of *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family)¹⁵⁶ and the *Anekāntavāda* of Jainism. Gandhi has taken many of these ideas for moulding a composite culture to combat communalism that will deal in the next Chapter.

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101. R.C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Vol. V), p. XXVIII, see also R.S. Sharma, *Communal History and Rama's Ayodhya* (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1990), p. 8
102. *Ibid.*, p. 12
103. Romila Thaper, "Communalism and writings of Ancient Indian History", in *Communalism and the writings of Indian History* (eds.), Romila Thaper, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1987), p. 3
104. Aleyamma Zachariah, *op.cit.*, p. 40
105. Paul Jackson (ed.), *Muslims in India* (Delhi: Islamic Studies Association, 1988), p. 253

106. The Chisti Saints fought the Muslim tyrants of their times in defence of justice, Peace and the rights of men. The Chisti Saints like Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti of Ajmir (1143-1234). Baba Farid, Khwaja Nizamuddin Aulia were essentially humanists who drew to themselves all persons irrespective of caste and creed. See M.M. Abraham. *Islam Udayavum Vikasavum*, Thiruvalla: The T.L.C. 1994, pp. 99-101, also Paul Jackson op.cit., p. 269
107. L. Bevan Jones, *The People of the Mosque* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1988), p. 123
108. Rasheeduddin Khan, op.cit., p. 68
109. See Rajmohan Gandhi, *Revenge and Reconciliation* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 74
110. Ibid., pp. 69-71. Examples of Philosophy of Universal Truth & love, Theosophical approach, Universal love transcending religious walls, eclectic, humanistic and syncretic literature are given..
111. Ibid., p.72
112. Ibid., 73
113. Shaik Muinuddin Chisti (d. 1236) Baba Farid (1175-1265), was a Punjabi saint who had deeply influenced both Sant Kabir (1440-1518), and Gurunanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism. He was equally revered by Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), a Sufi poet philosopher was an outstanding pioneer of composite culture. Mughal Emperor Akbar (1542-1605), who initiated the process of Hindu Muslim reconciliation at the political, social and intellectual level. Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khan (1556-1627), who was not only a known Krishna bhakth but a pioneer of Hindu poetry was famous for his folk traditions in *Braj* culture. Prince Dara shikuh (1615-1659), who translated fifty-two *Upanisads* in to persian and wrote a comparative study of Islam and *Vedanta* in his book *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (commingling of oceans) and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958), the briant intellectual who was a creative interpreter of the Islamic heritage as is evident in his *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* and a dedicated upholder of composite nationalism and culture.

114. A.A. Abdel Khader, "The Islamic Involvement in the Process of History" *Religious Pluralism and World Community* (ed.), Edward J. Jurji (Leiden: E.J.Brill 1969), p. 101
115. S.V. Bhajjan, "The Islamic Religious Tradition" in *Religious Traditions of India* (eds.), P.S. Daniel, David C. Scott, G.R. Singh. (Manganam: Indian Theological Library, 1988), p. 284
- For Pantheism, everything is God and of the same essence. For these the creed, "There is no god but God" means that besides Allah there is no existence. They are called *Ittihadiya*, i.e., monists. There is *Ilhamiya* group, they consider the transcendent Reality of God, i.e., God as pure Being.
116. L. Bevan Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 127
117. A.J. Arberry, *Sufism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950), pp. 59-60
118. Bevan Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 127, Gandhi elucidated this *Pantheism* with a beautifully expressed "drop and the Ocean" analogy. "The ocean is composed of drops of water, each drop is an entity and yet it is a part of the whole, "the one and the many". In this ocean of life we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God..." See also, *The Hindu*, 12 September 1927, in CWMG Vol. 34, p. 505
119. Rajmohan Gandhi *op.cit.*, p. 74
120. *Ibid.*, p. 131
121. *Ibid*
122. A.J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 59 ff.
123. L. Bevan Jones, *op.cit.*, p.132
124. *Tait-up.II.I* 'He who knows Brahman as real (*satya*) , knowledge (*jaina*), *infinite*(*ananta*), residing in the cave of the heart and in the highest heaven, he obtains all desires' and *Tait-Up. III.I* 'The mystic name of this Supreme Reality is '*idam-dra*', Self-seeing, *Chand Up. VII. 17; Brh. Up. IV, 56.* 'He is the One in whom everything else is known'. *Chand Up. VI.1,4* 'Though him 'the

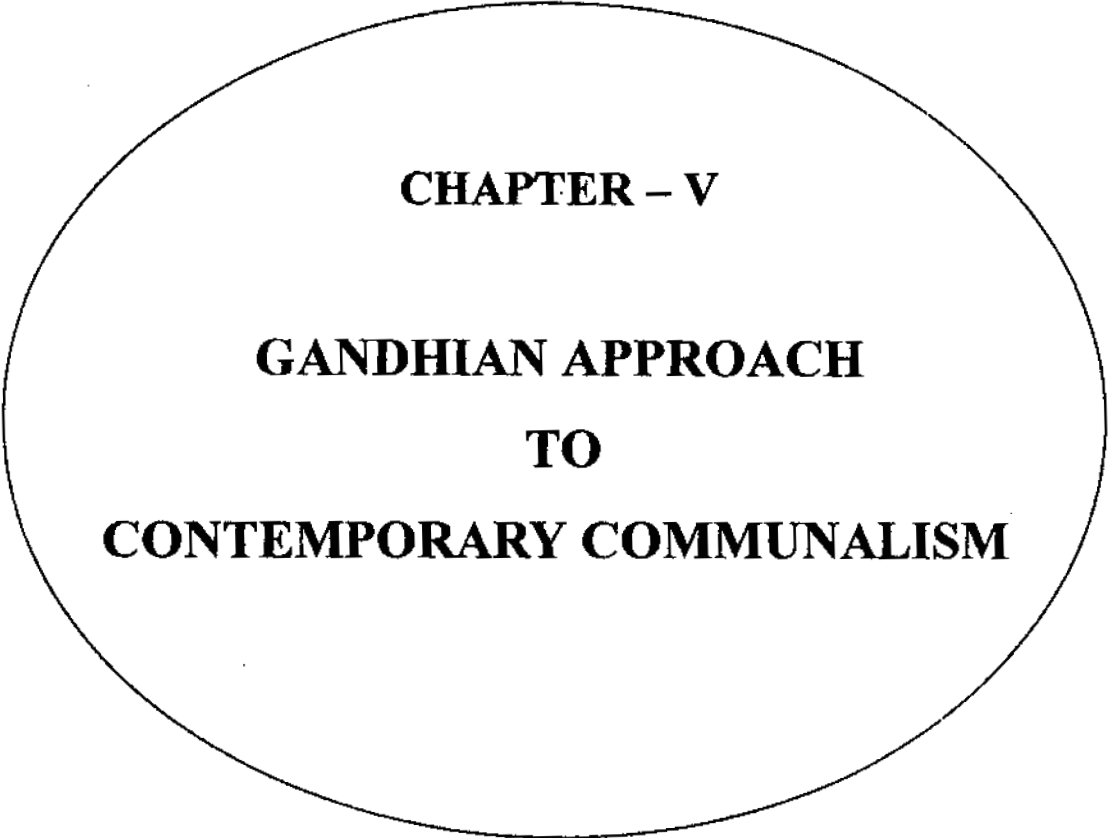
unheard becomes heard...the unknown becomes known' *Brh. Up.* III. 4, 2 'He is the seer of seeing...the hearer of hearing...the under-stander of misunderstanding

125. Rasheeduddin Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80 - He presents the following from the saying of the prophet on learning and knowledge.
- "know ye! The worst of men is a ill educated man, and a good learned man is the best"
 - "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."
 - "To spend more time in learning is better than spending more time in praying."
 - "Pursuit of knowledge is a divine commandment for every Muslim"
 - "That person who pursues the path of knowledge, God will direct line to the path of paradise."
 - "Acquire knowledge. It enableth its possessor or to distinguish right from wrong"
 - "With knowledge man riseth to the heights of goodness and to noble position."
 - "Who are the learned? They who practice what they know."
126. *Ibid.*, p. 82
127. See the prophet's saying "Go in quest of knowledge even into China." and "Learn to know thyself and "Acquire knowledge" cited in Rasheeduddin Khan, *op.cit.*, pp. 79-80
128. Robert C.Lester, "Towards Unity with Diversity: Gandhi on Equal Respect for All Religions" in *facets of Mahatma Gandhi* (eds.), Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (New Delhi: Deep and Deep publications, 1994), vol. 4., p. 265.
129. S.J. Samartha, *One Christ – Many Religious*. *op.cit.*, p. 95.
130. M.S. Ahluwalia, "Baba Shaik Farid : A Harbinger of Hindu Muslim unity", *Medieval Bhakti movements in India* (ed.), N.N. Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989), p. 75.

131. Ibid., p.74.
132. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), p. 149.
133. Raghavan N. Iyer (ed.), *The Moral and Political writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1989), Vol. 1., p. 520; 542. Detailed discussion is followed in the next section.
134. Harold Coward, *pluralism challenge to the World Religions* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1996), p. 62.
135. See The Quran Surah 3:92, 93
136. Rasheeduddin Khan, op.cit., pp. 178-192
137. Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1994), pp. 36-37
138. Ibid., p. 38
139. M.M. Abraham, op.cit., p. 127.
140. J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), p. 97
141. The Ulama called Syed an 'atheist', 'renegade' anti-Christ. See J.N. Farquhar, op.cit., p. 93; A.A. Engineer remarks: "The British rulers found it an opportunity to woo the Muslim elite and try to stem the tide of the Indian National Congress", see *Imprint*, November 1980; Again A.A. Engineer alleged that the British government was using the Aligarh Movement as a counterpoise to the Nationalist Movement: He says, 'that is the British Imperialists could perpetuate their rule only by keeping their subject divided.' Ibid. See also Elizabeth Zachariah, op.cit., p. 40; Andreas D'Souza says Partition was a culmination of the thinking of Indian Muslims such as Sir Syed Ahmedkhan, who opposed National Congress and advocated autonomy for the Muslim community. His seminal ideas were completely elaborated by Mohammed Iqbal and were given further practical form by Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Andreas D'Souza, op.cit., p. 36; See Muarri Lal. *Hindu Visva*, June 1985; says:

"Aligarh University was the outcome of the British Policy of 'divide' and rule'. It was actually set in motion by the British but they made Sir Syed as a tool in their hands. It draw wedge between Hindu and Muslims"
142. D.R. Bali, *Modern Indian Thought* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1984), p. 162

143. Presidential address to Indian National Congress, Ramgarh, 1940, on "The Minorities and the Political Futures in India", in *Zaidi*, Vol. 5, p. 174. S. Radhakrishnan said of Azad: "The National spirit was the driving force in his life. He was an apostle of national unity and communal harmony", Occasional Speeches and Writings, October 1952, January 1956 (New Delhi: Government of India, The Publication Division 1956), pp.278 f.
144. See Rasheeduddin Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 185
145. Tarjuman al-Quran, Vol. 1. Surat-ul-Fatiha, edited and translated by Syed Abdul Latif (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p. 155
146. R.E. Miller, "Modern Indian Muslim Responses" in *Modern Indian Responses to Religious Pluralism* (ed.), Harold G. Coward (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publication, 1991), p. 255
147. See the Quran Surah: 2:285 and also Syed Abdul Latif, Tarjuman al-Quran. Vol. 1., *op.cit.*, p. 171
148. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 141
149. *Ibid.*, p. 174
150. *Ibid.*, pp. 158 f. Azad brought a Catholic outlook on Islam and maintained that one must distinguish between *din* and Shariah rituals, while Islam and Hinduism are in compatible at the Shariah level, while Shariah differentiates, *tariqah* (way of life) integrates, see A.A. Engineer *Lifting the Veil: Comtemporary India* (Delhi: Sangam Books, 1995), p. 304
151. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1.(London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1977), pp. 144-145. See also B.U. III. 9.1 see also the same idea he expressed in another article "Hinduism" in *A Cultural History of India* (ed.), A.L. Basham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 60-61
152. Rasheeduddin Khan, *op.cit.*, p. 185
153. *Ibid*
154. *Ibid.*, p. 186
155. Tarjuman al-Quran, Vol. 1. Surat-ul-Fatiha edited and trans. by Syed Abdul Latif, *op.cit.*, pp. 139 f.
156. Rasheeduddin Khan, *po.cit.*, p. 186



CHAPTER – V

GANDHIAN APPROACH

TO

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Mahatma Gandhi was one of the great activist theoreticians of the Twentieth century. He has exercised immense influence on the lives and thoughts, not only of Indians but of all people of the world. He has been variously depicted as a politician, a social reformer, an economist and a religious thinker. Though he confesses 'I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain'¹ there is ample evidence in his writings that he has well acquainted with the Philosophical *darsanas* both of Indian and western origin. He tried to unify all his activities in different areas by directing them all towards one ultimate goal: to realize Truth or to see God face to face.² Though he claimed to be an Orthodox Sanatani Hindu, he was yet the greatest reformer Hinduism had ever seen. He was "the real architect of the Neo-Hinduism, as A.L. Basham remarked, and Hinduism after him is not the same as it had been before him. R.C. Zaehner is right when he says that Gandhi was the "conscience of Hinduism that hungers and thirsts after righteousness in defiance of the better of the law of gods and men."³

It is not easy to present Gandhi's ideas systematically. He himself was not a systematic Philosopher or theorist. He aptly called himself "a practical idealist"⁴ He was primarily a man of action. Whatever Philosophical formulations he made were inspired by and directed towards the solving of problems in the society. Hence he wrote incessantly and his writings are capacious. As S.J. Samartha observed:

His writings are so voluminous, his statement. So repetitive and the context in which he wrote them so utterly different that sometimes one is at a loss to understand the exact import of his words.⁵

This fact is to be taken very seriously in examining any of the ideas of Gandhi.

There were basic disagreements regarding Gandhi's method and Philosophical formulations by figures such as Tagore, Subhas Bose and M.N. Roy. Yet he earned immense respect from his critics and detractors. While Bose called him the 'father of the Nation', Tagore described him as 'Mahatma'.

Gandhian era enormously exhibits religious rivalry and hostility. The intensity of the religious hatredness pained him much. He devoted his whole life to bring about harmony and peace among the followers of different faiths and sacrificed his own life for that cause. Before analysing his approach to communalism, it is essential to look into the landscape, in which Gandhi had invested his whole life and to analyse the forces that generate communal tensions in the Indian sub-continent.

A. COMMUNAL LANDSCAPE OF GANDHIAN ERA

Gandhi entered as a leader in the Indian National Movement in the year 1919 after his two decades of struggle against racial cruelties in South Africa. It was there he evolved the technique of *Satyagraha* based on truth and non-violence. When he entered in the National scene, it seems he had to face four kinds of defiant forces based on socio-political cultural nationalism fleeing one another in

the National Movement. They are (a) Indian National Movement (b) Hindu National Movement (c) Muslim National Movement (d) Subaltern Movement.

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. The Congress leaders of those days believed that they could achieve freedom through constitutional methods, and British rule could be reformed from within. Those who followed this policy were called the 'Moderates'. C.H. Heimsath says that 'early Indian nationalism developed an ideology which could properly encompass all Indian cultures and religions.'⁶ However a radical wing grew within the congress opposed Moderates ideology and adopted a radical method of political agitation. They were called 'Extremists'. The Extremists' wing was led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandrapal and Lala Lajpat Rai. They asked people to look into the glory of the Indian past, so that they could develop in themselves national pride and self-confidence. Tilak started two newspapers 'Kesari' in Marathi and 'Mahratta' in English, to inculcate the national feeling among the people. He gave importance to the cultural foundation of the Indian society. He followed the path of his predecessors such as Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda. Vivekananda affirmed that 'India alone had a spiritual message, where as the west was steeped in sensuality.'⁷ "U.P, India and conquer the world with your spirituality."

There arose cultural controversies in the National Congress. By the end of the nineteenth century there were mighty struggle for the control of Congress.

Moderates and Extremists have different views on proper end and means of the national movement. While Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gopala Krishna Gokhale promoted reforms in Hindu Culture, the Extremists

glorified Hindu culture and opposed any kind of reforms. Moderates envisioned a modernization of India with liberal ideas of adoption from west. But Tilak was against it and glorified the deeds of the Vedic civilization.⁸ Tilak considered solidarity among Hindus. So S.M. Michel says that he emphasized the superiority of Hindu religion, encouraged revivalism, politicized the Ganapati festival and converted Shivaji into a cult figure, these serving both religious and political objectives.⁹ Tilak alienated Muslims and invoked the spirit of resurgent Hinduism to fight the national cause. So he identified nationalism with Hinduism, emphasized the factor of Indian society, which is the feeling of '*Hindutva*'. This has been discussed in the earlier chapter of Savarkar and Golwalkar. The Extremists tend to reflect a kind of Kṣatriya world view, value system, symbols, myths and behaviour pattern. Thus they presented Indian culture as exclusively Hindu culture and encouraged the growth of militant nationalism in India. This seems, in the hands of Extremists Hindu religion has tended to be less 'religious' and more 'ideological', it is accepted not so much in the spiritual and ethical sense but in a political and ideological sense. They tried to protect secular interests through religious means, that is religion is used as a political ideology.

The Bengal partition in 1905 created Muslim majority in eastern region of Bengal. This act of Curzon widened breach between Muslims and Hindus. Terrorists Movements arose in different parts of the country. V.D. Savarkar was one of their leaders. He was a secular modernist like Jinnah. The British policy of 'divide and rule' encouraged the upper class Muslims (*Ashrafs*) to form their own organizations against Indian National Congress, branded the Congress as a movement of Hindus. Thus the Muslim League was formed in 1906. Jinnah became the leader of the Muslim League. He was a secular person, he used

religion as a powerful ideology to unite people for political purposes. As a result of the intensification of Hindu-Muslim tensions, a new influential militant organization Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh was established in 1925 by Hedgewar, who was deeply influenced by Tilak and Savarkar's treatise of '*Hindutva*'. They wanted to promote one culture, one nation with one race and language.

The demands for the maintenance of a racial unity in a nation necessitates the assimilation or inextricable fusion of non-Hindu population. The non-Hindus should merge fully into an original national race. Golwalkar even suggests the model of Germany, where they tried to eliminate Jews for a racial purpose. This intensified the gulf between Hindus and Muslims. Hence Muslims demanded for a Muslim nation and Muslim nationalism irreducibly increased.

One of the strategies of the Hindu nationalists '*Suddhi*' movement could only strengthen the Muslim suspicion, and they started '*Tablique*' and '*Tanzim*' among the Muslims aimed at promoting conversion to Islam. Thus the communal politics wanted to increase their numbers, through conversion or re-conversion and motivated the interests of their own communities. Only the upper classes were benefited by the activities of the communalists. They hardly bothered to improve the lot of the downtrodden sections of their co-religionists.

An alternative cultural vision of Indian nationhood movement was arose at this by the subaltern leaders. This was mostly against the upper caste Hindus and their notion of Hindu national culture. The upper caste Hindus derived their Hindu culture from *Vedic* times and as fundamentally a creation of the Aryan people. They accept *Varṇa dharma* and *Varṇāśhrama dharma* as inherent parts of their culture. As it is seen, they not only made use of high caste religious

symbols in their mass organizing, they also made a crucial use of the 'Aryan theory of race' in interpreting cultural traditions. It is in this context of nature of the Indian national culture and its glorification, an alternative vision provided by prominent non-Aryan or non-Brahmanic leaders within India. They tried to create a counter culture as against the Aryan culture. The main leaders were Jotirao Phule, E.V. Ramaswami Periyar, Baba Saheb Ambedkar, Sri Narayana Guru in (Kerala), Acchutanand in (UP) and Mangoo Ram in (Panjab). Only the first three will be discussed here.

Jotirao Phule (1826-1890) aimed to construct a social order, on the basis of social equality, justice and reason. It is seen that the European Orientalist Theory was an important moral boost to high caste Indians. Thus Indian civilization was seen as primarily derivative from *Āryan* civilization and caste system was landed as a means by which people of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds were brought together and subjected to the civilizing influence of *Āryans*.¹⁰ Phule argues that *Shudras* and *āti-shūdras* were the original inhabitants of the country, enslaved and exploited by the conquering *Āryans*, who formulated a caste based Hinduism as a means of deceiving the masses and legitimizing their power. Hence the ancient history of India was nothing but the struggle between Brahmins and non-Brahmins.¹¹ He sees the seeds of the Brahmin's power, supremacy and privileges lay in their scriptures and *Purānas*. He saw religion as an ideology legitimizing domination. The *avatārā* concept in the *Purānas* is for legitimizing the Aryanization. Therefore he formed Satya Shodhak Samaj, which is an anti Brahmanic Movement. He is also known as the father of Indian Revolution (N.G. Pawar).

E.V. Rama Swami Naicker (1879-1973) seeks to depend the right of the Dravidians as against Aryan Domination. He started self-respect movement. He blamed *Āryans* introducing an unjust and oppressive social system in the country. According to Periyar, Rama and Sita are despicable characters not worthy of imitation or admiration even by the lowest of fourth rate humans.¹²

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) was a revolutionary, and rejected caste because it was unjust and immoral. He was against the teachings of Dayananda Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi on the issue of casteism. He emphasized a society of equality, liberty and fraternity. He believed that no development would affect humans without having structural change in the social hierarchical system. Ambedkar and his companions asserted that the *Manusmriti* is the creation of high caste people, the sole basis for the rigid caste system and untouchability in India. This denied *shudras* reading or even hearing *Vedas*. So the bonfire of *Manusmriti* was quite intentional. He said that 'we made a bonfire of it because we see it as a symbol of injustice under which we have been ground down under despicable poverty, and so we made the ash, started at, took our lives in our hands and performed the deed.'¹³

The above Phule/Periyar/Ambedkar tradition represents the effort to construct an alternative cultural identity of the people based on *non-Aryan* and low caste perspectives. That was critical not only of the oppressiveness of the dominant Hindu Caste society but also of its claim to antiquity. Here also the issue was basically not racial but cultural, a matter of group identity.

One can question, whether the subaltern revivalism and movements were really point to communal. These may not be considered as communal movements

but were reactions against the upper caste Hindu religious nationalism and cultural exclusivism.

The Subaltern movements were retaliation against the Brahmanical hegemony who denied the *non-Āryan* culture and its antiquity which goes beyond the religion and culture of the *Vedas*. Hence it was a revival of the values of the non-Aryan religion and culture of the ancient history in the multi religious context of India. In a sense the subaltern leaders did not want to negate Indian culture, but they wanted to revive Indian culture with a solid basis of *non-Āryan* elements, which is all-inclusive not exclusive like *Āryan* culture.

When Gandhi entered in the national scene, he had to face the above competing ideologies, which were trying to establish their own cultural and religious identities in the Indian sub-continent. He found the above theocratic ideologies linked with oppressive structures and interpretations were a real hindrance to social change and development in the country.

He observed that the concept of nationalism has turned into an excessive form of group egoism, which by its hidden and powerful impulses and emotions can become a force of oppression. A sense of national pride is necessary in areas of rapid social change. This national pride tends to impel the people to accept political autonomy and political order. This was completely eroded by the ethnic pride in his time.

A sense of national identity is imperative for human solidarity and community. The creation of nationhood is possible only by generating national consciousness among the people. But at the time of Gandhi, instead of national

identity, people followed more sectarian religious identity and equated religion with nationalism.

Again in order to have national development, people must have national loyalty and common social obligations by the accompanying spirit of service. But in the Gandhian era the loyalty of people to the nation has turned in to their religion and to imposter culture. Gandhi found the real meaning of religion has been distorted by the leaders who used 'religion' as an 'ideology' to manipulate their own ends. Gandhi observed their demand for religious nationalism and cultural exclusivism tend to establish a worldview, system of values and community organizations and relationship as according to their own interpretations of scriptures have become a perennial threat to the national integrity and unity of the people. Religion has become a divisive force through its exclusive dogmatic interpretation rather than a spiritual force for synthesis of various cultures and faiths.

Gandhi believed that no revolution is possible till we build our national character. Gandhi was aware that without having a national unity, a revolution in the Indian society cannot be achieved. No social revolution is possible without having a cultural change. Since religion is the matrix of culture, religion gives impetus to cultural change and that subsequently gives room for a social revolution. Social change itself will not have any lasting impact if it is not interiorized through a cultural transformation. Gandhian approach to contemporary communalism, was for a cultural transformation by providing a religious bare, in the real sense of the term 'religion.'

Gandhi was well aware of the problems of religious pluralism. He knew that as long as each religion makes exclusive claims for itself there would be no peace

on earth. In order to counter communalism Gandhi preached the doctrine of equality of all great religions of the world. According to him equality of religions means:

1. All religions are true more or less, that is, there are elements of truth in every religion and no religion is absolutely false.
2. All religions are imperfect and have some error in them that is no religion is absolutely true.¹⁴

A careful analysis of the writings of Gandhi will make it clear that he evolved the doctrine of equality of the principal religions of the world on two major grounds:

1. Practical and Pragmatic
2. A New Hermeneutics on philosophical and theological.

Practical and Pragmatic

Gandhi was perfectly practical and realistic in approaching the problems that faced him. For him religious pluralism was not merely a philosophical problem about the rival truth claims but a matter of living together peacefully in the community. As Margaret Chatterjee observes:

His (Gandhi's) own experience of living in a multi religious society, something he shares in common with all who live on the Indian sub-continent, provides constant reminder that the discursion of religious truth is not a mere theoretical matter but has a direct bearing on how men behave towards each other bearing with each others creedal and 'observational' differences, and that the whole question is infact intimately related to whether men of different persuasions can live together in harmony or not.¹⁵

Gandhi strongly believed that Swaraj would be an impossible dream if Indians were divided and disunited on the basis of their religious affiliations. Hence he continuously worked for the Hindu-Muslim unity. He declared, "I have strives

for Hindu-Muslim unity because India cannot live free without it, and because we would both deny God if we considered one another as natural enemies".¹⁶ He threw himself into the struggle to heal the tensions that existed between the two communities and strove to become "the best cement" between them. Hindu-Muslim unity, for Gandhi was not unity only between Hindus and Muslims but between all those who inhabited in India, no matter to what faith they belong. He believed that there would be no peace in this country, even after the attainment of political freedom, if the people of different faiths revile each other in the name of God, if there exists mutual fear, hatred and distrust among them. They can live together in peace and harmony and work together for the development of the country only if there is mutual respect and tolerance at all levels. He wrote in *Harijan*, "Insistence on a particular form or repetition of a credo may be a potent cause of violent quarrels leading to bloodshed and ending in utter disbelief in religions, i.e., God Himself."¹⁷ This mutual acceptance and harmony can be attained only by accepting the concept of equality of all religions by all.

B. TOWARDS A NEW HERMENEUTICS FOR A SYNTHETIC CULTURE

It has been noted above that Religion played an increasingly important role in perpetrating the communal culture in India. The powerful elites and middle class distorted religion and its values by using it as a powerful ideology to legitimise religious domination. The communal interpretations of *Sruti*, *Smriti* and *Purānas* literature have become totally oblivious and barricade to impart great values of love, peace, empathy, justice, sharing, co-operation and co-existence in the society. Then the elite communal culture gave birth to a culture of domination and de-humanization. Gandhi observed that there are humanizing elements in

religions. But these elements are lost in the darkness of oppressive culture of Hindus. Gandhi wanted to revive those humanizing elements in religion, so that it will be a force to inculcate a new culture of pluralism. It will liberate the down trodden people from the tears of despair to the sparks of hope. This pluralistic approach will create a new society mainly based on ethical and moral component of religions. He also observed that pluralism is the key to the national unity. According to Gandhi, the root cause of major evils that humanity is faced with lies in the moral degradation of humanity. For Gandhi the real progress means moral progress and that is the true mark of an ideal culture. He firmly believed that the moral progress would be provided to humanity only through religion. Hence religion will become a transforming force to combat communalism in India.

Enormous literature has come out on the topic of Gandhian approach to communal conflicts by different scholars. Most of them concentrated on Gandhi's practicability on this issue. Yet there are scholars who have come out with Gandhian metaphysical and phenomenological approach, to this problem. Since many scholars have come out with practical approach, this section is not intended to look into such approaches. This is intended to concentrate on how Gandhi as a synthesizer of *Āstika* and *Nāstika* religions of the Indian sub-continent to promote an inclusive culture for a peaceful living. Though Gandhi was not a philosopher in the true sense of the term, Gandhi wanted to promote an inclusive approach to different Indian originated philosophers to have a sound philosophical basis for a synthetic pluralistic culture. Without having a sound philosophy of life there will not be a sound culture and civilization. Hence Gandhi was trying to build for an integral philosophy to have an integral pluralistic culture in the Indian sub-continent. He found cultural exclusivism and subsequent cultural nationalism

based on exclusive interpretation of theology and philosophy as the root cause of communalism in India. In order to counter this exclusivism he was in favour of having a pluralistic interpretation or Hermeneutics of scriptures and philosophies.

The present face of communalism Gandhi perceived as a retaliation against Semitic religions, because those religions both Islam and Christianity ruled India for centuries, and Hindus were only subjects under their rules.

The Christian missionaries and their education immensely influenced both the marginals and the elites. This initiated both religious and national consciousness among the people; especially the low castes began to think about their freedom and identity. The western enlightenment literature introduced in India created an awareness about their down trodden condition, and that initiated them to redeem from this pathetic situation imposed on them through religious cultural legitimization. Thinking to get release from the stigma of untouchability many have joined to Christianity and Islam through conversion and *Tabliq*. The missionaries enlightenment enterprise helped to emerge subaltern leaders, who interpreted their religious antiquity to the *Pre-vedic* tradition, and some of them were against Vedic traditions and Vedas. The conversion movements and the subaltern opposition greatly moved Gandhi to work for an integral community.

The *Nāstika* religions like Jainism and Buddhism do not believe in the authority of Vedas. But these religions greatly influenced the Indian people through its spiritual values, especially through the ten-meritorious¹⁸ deeds and eight fold paths¹⁹ of Buddhism. *Pancasīlas* of Buddhism²⁰ and five great vows of Jainism²¹ immensely influenced Indian spirituality and Gandhi.

The great emperors of India like Srenika Bimbisaran, Chandragupta Maurian and Kharavelan of Orissa encouraged the growth of Jainism. At the time of emperor Ashoka and Kanishkan Buddhism developed its missionary activity. Gandhi was also born and brought up in Gujarat where Jainism was prevalent and prominent and Gandhi was influenced by Jain spiritualities. Guptas were tolerant Hindus. Gandhi wanted to revive these tolerant attitudes of 'eclecticism' or 'syncretism' of early Hindu kings, so as to accommodate and co-operate with other religions to have a synthetic culture in India.

Gandhi found there are ample religious literature both in *Āstika* and *Nāstika* religions supporting for a pluralistic approach to religious and cultural diversity. Some of the Indian religious leaders have taken those concepts and have already shown a pluralistic path. Gandhi was only trying to revive those concepts and paths from the Indian religious traditions.

It seems he has taken "the *Advaita* concept" of *Āstika* religion and '*Anekāntāvāda*' concept of *Nāstika* religion for an integral approach to religious pluralism in India. It was Gandhi who first took the philosophy of '*Advaita*' as the basis of radical social change in India.

This section is intended to discuss and analyse the above concepts and seek how far these concepts are valid for cultivating a cultural pluralism in the Indian sub continent. This section is divided into two parts. The first part will be discussed on '*Advaita*' and its implication. The second part is an analysis on Gandhi's views on *Anekāntāvāda* in the light of religious pluralism.

1. GANDHIAN INTERPRETATION OF ADVAITA

Gandhi by his own confession subscribed to the *Vedantic* view of the universe. In a couple of significant statements Gandhi affirms his faith in *Advaita Vedanta*.

‘I believe in the *Advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives.’²²

In another statement Gandhi says:

“In my opinion there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority. I believe in the rock bottom doctrine of *Advaita* and my interpretation of *Advaita* excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage what so ever...”²³

Again Gandhi affirms:

“I am an *Anekāntavādi*. This is the most important thing that I have learnt from Jain Philosophy. It is implicit in Vedanta Philosophy.”²⁴

“I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity, what though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source.”²⁵

In his forward to Maha Dev Desai’s book ‘*Gītā According to Gandhi*’, he sets forth the *advaita* position. Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Sankara and also by Swami Vivekananda who was a strong Champion of *advaita*. What is *Advaita Vedanta*? And what is its central concept? Literally *Vedanta* means ‘the end of the *Vedas*’, the concluding part of the *Vedas*, the culmination of the *Vedic* teachings and wisdom.²⁶ The *Vedanta* is also known by the term ‘Upanisads’. It has claimed that the Upanisads made explicit what is already contained implicitly in the *Vedas*. The views of the Upanisads also constitute the final aim of the *Vedas*.

‘That which is hidden in the secret of the Vedas, even the Mystic Doctrines (Upanisads) Brahma knows that as the source of the sacred word (Brahman)’ (Svet. Up. V: 6)

The Upanisads contain four important *Mahāvākyas* (statements). “I am the Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*), the *Ātman* is the Brahman (*Ayam atma Brahma*), that thou art (*Tatvamasi*), and all this is the Brahman (*Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma*).

The Upanisadic teaching of the *Brahman-Ātman* relationship may be traced back to the **Rig Veda** especially Rig Veda X: 90. Rig Veda X: 90 is generally known as *Purusa-Sukta*. *Purusa-Sukta* holds that every thing, the sun and moon, the wind and all creatures have come from the first *Purusa*. *Purusa* was sacrificed by the gods and was dismembered into various things of the world.

Thus **RV. X: 90** reads: ²⁷

3. So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is
Purusa.
All creatures are one-fourth of him three-fourths eternal
life in heaven.
12. His mouth became Brahmana
And his two arms the *Ksatriya*;
His thighs became the *Vaisya*-class
And from his feet the *Sudra* sprang.
13. The moon was gendered from his mind,
And from his eye the Sun was born;
Indra and *Agni* from his mouth,
And *Vayu* from the breath was born
14. Forth from his navel came the air,
And from his head evolved the sky;
Earth from his feet and from his ear
The quarters: Thus they framed the worlds.

Though the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* shows a monotheistic tendency, yet monist trend appears to be far more pronounced. The world does not appear to be created by the *Puruṣa*, but emanates or proceeds from the *Puruṣa*, and ultimately the whole universe forms the various elements of the *Puruṣa*. Yet He is not only immanent but is also transcendent reality beyond the world. Because of this transcendence *Puruṣa-hymn* ceases to be completely pantheistic. The term pantheism is referred to where the God is identified with the universe. It seems ancient thinkers practice and consider the ultimate reality with eclectic and syncretic view with a prospect to avoiding mutual conflict.²⁸ The early seers search for an ontological power, which could be either impersonal or semi-personal. They never hinted that all other gods were false but one. They also said that the Supreme Impersonal Reality can only be an object of realization and not of worship. *Advaita* follows the same principle, that the ultimate object of man is self realization. While analysing Gandhian interpretation of '*advaita*' Gandhi also follows the path of the ancient thinkers with a view to avoid mutual conflict and with an emphasize of centripetal approach of self-realization. At the time of Gandhi, the country has witnessed intense social tensions, conflicts and even frequent riots between communities in the name of religion. In this scenario it would be worthwhile to look at Gandhi's views on '*advaita*' and its original proponents **Gaudapada** and **Sankara**.

Gaudapada, the 7th century thinker was the teacher of Govinda and Sankara was the disciple of Govinda who revived the non-dualist tendencies of *Upaniṣads* in a systematic manner. The Gaudapada Karika or the Mandukya Karika also known as the *Agama sastra*, has four chapters. The third Chapter establishes the *Advaita* theory.

In the third chapter Gaudapada says the *Ātman* like space, the individual selves are like space in jars. When jars are destroyed their spaces merge into space. So do the *jivas* merge into *Ātman*, when ignorance is destroyed by the right knowledge. Spaces in jars differ in forms, functions and names, but there is no difference in space, similarly *jivas* differ in forms, functions and names, but there is no difference in the *Ātman*.²⁹

The same idea can be viewed in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*:

“Just as my dear by one piece of clay every thing made of clay may be known – the modification is merely a verbal distinction, a name: the reality is just clay.” (Ch. Up. VI. 1-4).

No doubt, things made of clay appear to be separate and different and many because of their varying shapes and sizes. But these differences are mere name and form (*Nāma – rūpa*). No matter by whatever name we call different things of clay, the underlying stuff of each is simply clay. In this way, if we survey all things then we find that they differ in name and form only. Their underlying reality is the sole reality of *Brahman*. Hence the *Upaniṣads* declares: “Verily all this is but *Brahman*.” Therefore, *Brahman* is the supreme underlying reality of both the external and inner world of subjective and objective things. The same thought is repeated in *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III 2:13 also. Non-duality is the ultimate truth. Gaudapada propagates non-duality (*advaita*) even between unity and diversity.

Gaudapada identifies the unborn and the non-dual Absolute with the *Ātman* or *Brahman* or *turya* or *advaita* which can be directly by Right knowledge or *Asparśayoga*.

It has been noted above that Gaudapada's philosophy is essentially based on the *Upaniṣads* particularly on the *Māndukya*, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, and the *Chāndogya*. He has also drawn upon the *Brahma-Sūtra* and the *Gītā*. He was much influenced by the *Sūnyavāda* and *Vijnana vada* of *Mahāyana-Buddhism*. His mission is to prove that *Mahayana Buddhism* and *Advaita Vedanta* are not two opposed systems of thought, but only a continuation of the same fundamental thought of the *Upaniṣads*.³⁰ Sankara himself makes the confession that the absolutist (*advaita*) creed was recovered from the *Vedas* by Gaudapada.

Gaudapada teaches, "the merciful *Veda* prescribes three different spiritual stages for the three kinds of people, of lower, middle and higher intellect. *Karma* and *Upāsana* are taught to the lower and the middle, while *Jñāna* is taught to the higher"³¹ He further contends, "it is only the dualists that quarrel with one another in order to strengthen their respective views. The *Advaitin* quarrels with none."³²

Sankara referred to Gaudapada complemented him for having recovered the *Advaita* doctrine for the *Vedas*. Sankara is also called a non-dualist (*advaitin*), because he did not accept the ultimate difference between the *Ātman* and the *Brahman*. Sankara does not mean that I, the infinite being as such, is identical with the *Brahman* but the *Ātman* in man is the same as the *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the unchanging reality underlying the variety and multiplicity of phenomena. *Brahman* according to Sankara is, "the cause from which proceeds the origin or subsistence and dissolution of this world which is extended in names and forms."³³ Like the *Vijñāna* of the *Vijñānavādins*, it is beyond all attributes (*nirguna*) and all categories of the intellect (*nirviśesa*); but unlike their *Vijñāna*, it is eternal and it is Being itself. It is not *sūnya*, which is neither Being nor non-being.³⁴ Ultimate reality according to Sankara is *Brahman*, which is existence, consciousness and

Bliss (*Sat-cit-ananda*) Brahman is the Self of all. The individual self as it appears is but an appearance only, while the ultimate truth is the true Self which is one for all, as pure Existence, pure Consciousness and pure Bliss. The Brahman is the Absolute and is impersonal; but God is not the Absolute, he is personal. He is not a separate being from the Absolute. The *Brahman* as God is called *Isvara* (the Lord, the Ruler of the world).³⁵ Brahman associated with its potency (*śakti*) *maya* or *Mūlavidya* appears as the qualified Brahman (*Saguna* or *apara Brahman*) or the Lord (*Isvara*) who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this world which is His appearance.³⁶

The main **three tenets** of Sankara's *Advaitism* are:

*Brahmasatyam Jagan mitya
Jivo Brahmaivana parah.*

1. The world is illusory, though has empirical reality.
2. There is supreme reality of *Brahman* popularly styled as *sat, cit, ānanda*. This alone is *paramārtika satya*.
3. The world is an illusory super-imposition on Brahman, which is the indescribable support.

Gandhi was immensely inspired by *Advaita Vedanta*, which Hinduism teaches in its loftiest form. Gandhi said, "I believe in *Advaita*. I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spirituality the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."³⁷ This is the basic insight of *Advaita* in Gandhi's standpoint. The basic insight of *Advaita* is that Reality is one, and non-dual (*ekam sat*) existence is one (*advaitiyam*) without a second. Sankara refers to the supreme truth as "the oneness of self" (*ātmaikatva*) as 'the all--self nature'

(*Sarvātmabhāva*). In his autobiography Gandhi contends his standpoint as follows:

“To see the Universal and all pervading spirit of truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself.”³⁸

Advaita holds that the entire universe has been emanated out of a single divine source. Hence there is no room for any kind of discrimination in it on any score. Since there is a spiritual unity of mankind, self-realization consists, not in advancing the good of isolated individuals, but the good of all. For Gandhi thus implies the love of all, that is to share the lot of the poorest and the lowliest. Hence P.T. Raju observed, “It may be traced also to *Advaita Vedantic* idea that no individual salvation is possible but that one has to wait until the whole world is ready for salvation”³⁹

Though Gandhi did not explicitly pronounced on *Puruṣa-Sūkta*, his ideas about the relationship of human being with the ‘One’ has its affinity to *Rig Veda*, and he said his concept of *Varṇāśrama dharma* is *Vedic*, not in its present popular and crude sense. He said, “I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies, we have but one soul. The rays of the Sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source.”⁴⁰ He identified Ultimate reality with truth and as One infinite spirit (*ekam sat*).⁴¹ It is seen that the *Rig Veda* had affirmed the absolute unity of all things in the Supreme (*Ekamevam advaitiyam*). What is ‘One’ the sages in their poetic conceptions presented as Many. Hence Gandhian interpretation of ‘*Advaita*’ may be traced to its roots in the *Vedic* tradition itself.

Further Gandhi observes that there is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. “I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power

which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.”⁴² Here Gandhi sees “the One” as a mysterious power, and to understand this mystery is possible only through experience and experiment. Since it is experiment with truth there is every possibility of defying. Hence religion according to Gandhi, is that which underlines all religions which brings us face to face with our Maker.⁴³ It is non-sectarian because it transcends different formal or customary religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and others. Gandhi states that it does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.

It seems **Gandhian interpretation of ‘Advaita’** viewed religion in a rather wider perspective of what the Indian tradition is known as *Dharma*. Madhuri Wadhwa says, *Dharma* is synonymous with universal morality and a universal code of conduct and all-inclusive world culture.⁴⁴ As it is seen from the Gaudapada’s contention that it is only the dualists quarrel with one another in order to strengthen their respective views. The *Advaitin* quarrels with none. The *Advaita* concept is not exclusive; what attracted Gandhi to *Advaita* was not its religious prescriptions of the rituals or the mystic experience, but its propensity to accommodate the positives and eliminates the negatives of different religious persuasions. Hence Gandhi finds the Hindu concept ‘*Advaita*’ has unique qualities of tolerance and synthesis. Gandhi once remarked that the Indian civilization “is a mingling of the cultures represented by different faiths and influenced by the geographic and other environment in which cultures have met.”⁴⁵ Gandhi firmly believes that the Indian civilization built on this worldview (*advaitic*) and system of values was always receptive to every new culture and was prepared to shed its dogmatism and rigidity in order to work out a new synthesis. Gandhi was

convinced that Hinduism emerged stronger and richer with the historical interactions with the alien religions, like Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. For Gandhi, the Indian civilization was hospitable to criticism and reform. Hence C.F. Andrews rightly observed that it imbibed the quintessence of all religions to the extent that it exercised tremendous influence in the shaping of his philosophy and action.⁴⁶ Hence Gandhi embodies a *Vedantic* vision of a core of truth in all religions and teaches not only tolerance of, but respect for all religions. P.T. Raju observed that Gandhi's idea that the God is the ultimate truth and also that the law and the lawgiver are one may be traced to the *Advaita Vedanta*.⁴⁷

(a) Arguments On Gandhi as an Advaitin

Dr. D.M Datta, a devoted follower of Gandhi, argues that Gandhi was rather a theist than *advaitic* level, should not be regarded as a follower of Sankara.⁴⁸ Sankara was a believer in an Indeterminate, Attributeless, Impersonal Absolute (*Nirguna Brahman*). The reasons that Datta gives are (1) Gandhi was born in a family of *Vaiṣṇava* who followed Vallabhacarya and Vallabha did not accept Sankara's interpretations of *Vedanta*. And Gandhi remained a *Vaiṣṇava* all his life.

Since Gandhi has faith in the grace and in the efficacy of prayer, he is a theist. Gandhi says in his autobiography "... perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace ... without an unreserved surrender to this grace complete mastery over thought is impossible." Dr. Datta argues this statement is typical of theist *Vaiṣṇava* and Sankara and his followers do not believe in grace but in knowledge as the path to liberation.⁴⁹

(2) For Gandhi the world is not mere appearance, while it is for Sankara. Moreover Sankara looked upon the world as 'resting on the ignorance of individual, i.e., God's creatorship of the world is no more real than the magicians creation of a show.'⁵⁰ Gandhi who was a *Vaiṣṇava* did not reject the world as what is unreal. And more over, his strong sense of duty towards suffering fellow being exhibits, his consideration about the reality of this world. In Harijan 21 July 1946 he writes:

Joy or what men call happiness may be, as it really is, or dream in a fleeting and transitory world.... But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures as unreal and thereby provide a moral alibi for ourselves. Even dreams are true while they last, and to the sufferer his suffering is a grim reality.⁵¹

(3) According to Sankara, the self and Brahman are absolutely identical in reality. The *Vaiṣṇava* school do not accept the doctrine of Sankara. Gandhi's conception of the relation of individual to God shows again his general affinity to the *Vaiṣṇava* thinkers rather than to Sankarites.⁵²

(4) Gandhi considered the basic principles of theism to be found in those faiths of Islam and Christianity and accepted it. After long study and experience Gandhi says, "I have no hesitation in regarding the Quran as revealed, as have none in regarding the Bible, the Zend Avesta, the Granth Saheb and any other clean scriptures as revealed. Revelation is exclusive property of no nation, no tribe. If I know Hinduism at all, it is essentially inclusive and ever growing, ever responsive.... I can pay full respect to the Quran and the prophet..."⁵³ Again Gandhi observed all religions valid and none exclusive. He says, "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the *Vedas*, I believe in the Bible, Quran and Zend Avesta, to be as much divinely inspired as the *Vedas*."⁵⁴

5) In another passage Gandhi says that he is an *advaitist* and yet can support *dvaitism* (dualism) and also declares that he has no objection to being called an *anekāntavādi* or *Syādvādi*.⁵⁵ Dr. Datta concludes: 'But suffice it to say, that his own words clearly show that he is not the *advaitist* in the sense of Sankarite who would neither support dualism nor the logic of *Syādvāda*'.⁵⁶ This is also supported by Ramjee Singh in his introduction to '*Gandhi and the Future of Humanity*'.

Now the question is whether one can believe in a personal God and the same time be convinced that the ultimate reality is the non-dual Brahman. While it is time that *advaita* seeks to go beyond theism, the supreme reality is absolutely unconditioned, it is super-personal. But T.M.P. Mahadevan opined, 'it appears as if personal in order to serve as the ground of the universe and as the other object of adoration of man.'⁵⁷ Thus God is greatly significant for the *Advaitin*. Again T.M.P. says that 'the idea of God is not to be brushed aside as irrelevant postulation or as an impossible and inconsistent concept. The place of God in *Advaita* is neither pernicious nor precarious: on the contrary the concept is quite pertinent to and precious for the *Advaita* experience.'⁵⁸ *Advaita* does not seek to abolish the distinction. Vivekananda one of the greatest proponents of *Advaita* does not negate *Dvaita* or *Viśiṣṭādvaita* in his philosophical formulations, yet considers it as stages to attain in the *Advaita* position.⁵⁹ Vivekananda says "I accept all the religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with everyone of them in whatever form they worship him."⁶⁰ Hence Gandhi was a close follower of Swami Vivekananda, he was an *Advaitin*.

Sankara compares God to the sea and soul to its wave, then it would be proper to say that the wave belongs to the sea and not the sea belongs to wave.⁶¹ It

has been said that duality assumed for the sake of devotion is more beautiful than even non-duality.

Self-realization is the ultimate goal in the Philosophy of *Advaita*. Self-realization is a process. In the process of self-realization Atman and Brahman seem to have distinction. When it is achieved in the goal there is no distinction. It means God is a reality in achieving self-realization. Vivekananda also accepts this, and says there are three kinds of *Vedāntins* and all *Vedāntins* believe in *Īśvara*. They also believe that *Vedās* are the words of *Īśvara* (*apouruṣeya*), it means it is the expression of the *Īśvara Jñāna*.⁶²

When Sankara says this world is illusion, it does not mean it is not real. *Jagat* (this world) is not real in *Paramārtika dristi*, but it is real in *Vyavahārika dristi*. More over Sankara himself expresses *Īśvara* as *Saguna* in his *Upaniṣadic* interpretations. *Īśvara* is the *Upadānakāraṇa* (material cause) and *nimittakāraṇa* (efficient cause) of this world. Hence *Īśvara* is object of *Upāsana*, and is adorable.

If there is a place for God in *Advaita* and that a key place, it follows as a consequence that there is an important place for Gods grace and also for prayer. On this account Gandhi's emphasis on the need for grace and prayer is quite consistent with his *Advaita* conviction. It is a well-known saying that even the inclination towards *Advaita* comes from God's grace alone.

*Īśvarānugrahād evapuṁsam advaita vāsana
Mahad-bhaya – Paritraṇa dvitraṇam Upajāyate*

Sankara says that it is by divine grace that wisdom is gained and the supreme goal reached. 'It is by knowledge caused by God's grace that release is gained.'

*tad-anugraha-hetukenaiva vijñānena
mokṣa-siddhir bhavitum arhatī*⁶³

Commenting on the *Gītā* 18:56 Sankara says:

‘He who has resorted to God as his Sole refuge gains, the eternal *Vaiṣṇava* status through God’s grace.’⁶⁴

Although Gandhi began his life as a conventional believer in a personal God, there is evidence to show that he went beyond it as he grew up and came to be convinced of the highest truth of the non-dual spirit. I don’t regard God as a person, declares Gandhi, ‘truth for me is God... I have come to the conclusion that God is Truth. Two years ago I went a step further and said that truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements. “God is Truth” and Truth is God.’ I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search, after Truth, which began fifty years ago.⁶⁵

Another argument is, since Brahman is the sole reality, the world according to *Advaita* is non-real. No theist can subscribe to this view. And Gandhi who was a theist could not reject the world as unreal. Now the question is, whether Gandhi believed in the reality of the world? Was the world to him as real as Brahman? Dr. Datta admits that sometimes Gandhi speaks like Sankara and calls the world unreal. That is, Gandhi believes that the world is unreal. Then what does he mean by the word unreal? It is only impermanent or transitory. Gandhi explicitly says in a very striking sentence, about the reality of Brahman and the unreal aspects of all else. He says:

The wonderful implication of the great truth – “*brahma satyaṁ jagan mitya*” (*brahman* is real all else unreal) grows on me from day to day.”⁶⁶

Now the question is, does the *advaitin* not grant any reality to the world? Does Gandhi believe as Dr. Datta alleges, that the world rests’ on the ignorance of the

individual? The answer is a definite 'no'. While from the standpoint of the absolute truth the world is not real, from the empirical standpoint it has a relative reality; it has empirical existence *Vyavahārika satta*. The empirical world is not totally unreal, for it is a misapprehension of the real Brahman. The general *Advaitic* view is that the world is neither real nor unreal, nor both real and unreal, and it is the projection of Brahman as endowed with Maya. Even the dream world has a degree of reality it has *pratibhāsika satta*. And so Gandhi is perfectly right in saying that 'dreams are true while they last.' Gaudapada says that creation is Lord's sport (*kridārtham*) that is God's nature or *māya (svabhāva)*.⁶⁷ Hence *Advaita* would have no objection to the descriptions of the world as God's sport, *līla*. Hence Gandhi is right in accordance with *advaita* when he says 'Therefore, it is that Hinduism calls it all his sport, *līla*, or calls it an illusion, *māya*.'⁶⁸

It does not seem to be right to hold that if *advaita* accepted as the final experience there would be no place for social service, for redressing social and political ills, for bringing comfort to the suffering and to the lowliest and lost. Swami Vivekananda was a great advocate of *Advaita*, but his Philanthropic ministry to the poor is exceedingly remarkable. It is from Vivekananda, Gandhi received great inspiration in formulating his service programmes. Hence **Gandhi** can be placed as a **votary of *advaita***.

Why did Gandhi place himself as a votary of *Advaita*? Gandhi believes along with Gaudapada and Vivekananda that the conventional theism is exclusive, which will create conflict in the society. The conventional theist will hardly admit that any brand of theism other than his own is as valid as his. Since centuries some of the faiths claimed that they had the exclusive possession of God and that other faiths were mistaking anti-god for God. Gandhi believes that in order to see

the unity of religions one should go beyond them, one should at least conceptually or intuitively have a vision of *Advaita*. If religions as Gandhi rightly says, are but different roads converging upon the same point, then that converging point must exceed them one of the essential insights of *Advaita* pertains to the transcendental unity of religions. *Advaita* educated all a technique of 'looking at all religions with an equal eye.' Hence T.M.P. Mahadevan has rightly observed that 'the teachings of Sankara's *Advaita* is the same as that of Gandhi in regard to religious unity: The one religion is beyond all speech', 'true knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith' 'the soul of religion is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms.'⁶⁹

Gandhi declared explicitly that he was a believer in *Advaita*, the essential unity of God and man and all that lives. The doctrine of man's oneness with God and humanity has several implications.

Advaita holds that the entire universe has been created out of a single divine source. Hence there is no room for any kind of discrimination in it on any score. It disallows all discrimination between man and man and even between human beings and all other living things. Now when all living beings are to be looked upon and treated as equals, a whole gamut of consequences flow from it, like social and economic equality, self determination and democracy, civil liberties and freedom of the conscience, equality between men and women and so on.

Though *Advaita* had been accepted as the first article of faith by many religious sects in India, Manmohan Chaudhiri says nothing that revolutionary had happened here in the previous one thousand years or so. Indian society had become rigidly stratified and divided into castes. Untouchability flourished.

Social and economic inequality was rampant and gender inequality was at the zenith.

(b) Universal Brotherhood

Gandhi had preached universal brotherhood on the basis of *Advaitic* principle with greater need, meaning and relevance today than ever. In India, a huge country weighed down by communal disharmony, charged with regionalism, torn apart by linguistic cultural and especially religious tensions, the message of universal brotherhood as lived and proclaimed by Gandhi should grip every person of goodwill to dedicate his/her life to establish peace, harmony and brotherhood among the people. Gandhian concept of universal brotherhood is derived from the *Advaita* concept- that the entire universe has been created out of a single source, which the *Puruṣa-Sūkta* of *Rig Veda* (X:90) clearly depicts.

His concept of universal brother hood is very much linked with his idea of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and the concept of the welfare of all (*Sarvodaya*) since self realization is the ultimate goal of *advaita*, Gandhi believed, that can be possible only through service and identification with the poorest.⁷⁰ He was gravely disturbed by the inhuman plight of the untouchables and the communal rivalries between Hindus and Muslims, all in the name of religion. This concept of universal brother hood enabled him to work for the removal of all social and religious discrimination based on caste, creed, birth and sex. He vowed to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims.

(c) Universal Fatherhood.

It is seen that the entire universe has been created out of a single divine source. Hence this single divine source is the nucleus, all other elements revolved

around this center. Gandhi calls this single divine source as God. Because of the limitedness of human beings they know God through his various attributes and call him by different names. Since all are the Children of the same father, all become brothers and sisters to each other. Therefore, Gandhi says:

“We are all Children of the same father whom Hindu, the Muslim and Christian know by different names...The Allah of the Islam is the same as the God of the Christians and the *Ishvara* of Hindus... and little man has tried in his humble way to describe Mighty God by giving him attributes.”⁷¹

God being the source of the universe and all the beings in it, He is held as the father. This we see in the *Bhagavad Gītā* IX: 17

“I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the Dispenser and the Grand Father...”

The *Advaita* postulate that Reality is one and indivisible, he considered the entire universe to be a manifestation of God, the Ultimate Reality, *Īśavāsyamidam Sarvam* as the *Īśavāsyā* Upanishad puts it. It implies not a mere unity of all that lives but an essential oneness of all creations. Therefore, Gandhi said:

“I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul...”⁷²

The universal “brotherhood” and “fatherhood” of Gandhian interpretation on “*Advaita*” concept has profoundly influenced to reduce the stigma of the untouchability. Gandhi did not consider untouchability an integral part of Hinduism.⁷³ On 19 January 1933 he wrote in *Young India*:

Untouchability is not *Satan*. The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth...The spirit of the *Vedas* is purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, godliness, and all that makes a man or a woman noble and brave.⁷⁴

Again on 11 Feb. 1933 he stated in the *Harijan* that “it has no sanction whatsoever in the Hindu Shastras taken as a whole.”⁷⁵ In fact, it “degraded both

the untouchables and the touchables.” It stunted the growth of about forty million human beings who were denied even the ordinary amenities of life.⁷⁶

It is seen that in *Rig Veda, Puruṣa-Sūkta* places person at the centre and head of every thing. He is all, at the beginning of all, and from him is everything else, including class and castes of people. Hence Chettimatam, is right when he says that *Puruṣa-Sūkta* synthesizes various theories concerning the origin of universe and of man of moral code.⁷⁷ Since the ‘essence of reality’ in *Puruṣa*, the Supreme Lord and the essence in human beings and creatures is one, there perceives a vertical unity and horizontal unity, in the *Veda*. Because there emerged a ‘unity’ between human beings, Gandhi did not believe in the superiority or inferiority by birth and observance of different forms of restrictions on social interaction. He did not believe that either God or scriptures had created this. He asserts:

God did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority; no scripture which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance; it is a denial of God and Truth which is God.⁷⁸

And he firmly stated:

If I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability, I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself.⁷⁹

Gandhian period increasingly experienced the Subaltern movement against the upper caste hegemony and untouchability. The Subaltern leaders like, Phule, Periyar, Ambedkar and Sri Narayana Guru emphasized a society of equality, liberty and fraternity. Some of them were against the *Vedas* and *Smritis*, thinking that, those scriptures legitimize the caste hierarchy, under which low caste people have been ground down under despicable poverty as Swami Vivekananda observed. He says:

In this country of ours, the very birthplace of *Vedanta*, our masses have been hypnotized for ages. To touch them is pollution, to sit with them is pollution!. Hopeless they were born, hopeless they must remain! and the result is that they have been sinking, sinking, sinking and have come to the last stage to which a human being can come. For, what country is there in the world where man has to sleep with cattle?...Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot, till they became helpless, till under this torment, the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water....They cannot rise try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they fed the blows showered upon them by a cruel society,...They have forgotten they too are men. And the result is Slavery.⁸⁰

This is the situation of India, while Gandhi entered in the National Scene. Thinking to get deliverance from the age-old bondage of slavery many low caste people joined Christianity and Islam through Conversion or by *Tablique*. They thought this would improve their social acceptance.

Gandhi said:

If they as mass give up Hinduism they will do so because of these common disabilities, which brand them as lepers of Hindu society. Hinduism is passing through a fiery ordeal. It will perish not through individual conversions, not even through mass conversion but it will perish because of the sinful denial by the so-called *Savarna Hindus* of elementary justice to Harijans. Every threat of conversion is therefore a warning to the *Savarnas* that if they don't wake in time it may be too late...⁸¹

According to him, the very idea of Conversion is "the deadliest poison that ever sapped the fountain of truth."⁸² The RSS and the VHP were quite against the policy of conversion. They see this as an anti-National activity. Golwalkar even advocates, militant means (*'dharma yudha'*) to put down these anti-National activities of the *'aliens'* and the hostiles. This created great turmoil among the communities. Hence on the basis of *Advaita*, Gandhi wanted to synthesize all religions and cultures, he preached equality of religions. Gandhi wanted to bring

the low castes *dalits* to the main stream of Hindu religious tradition, by reducing social segregation, humiliation, discrimination and injustice, so that they may gain social acceptance, which was the main argument of subaltern leaders especially Ambedkar.⁸³ Gandhi understands, the concepts of 'universal brotherhood' and 'fatherhood' will elevate the status of the *dalits* and will develop a kinship in the community. Then they will not go after conversion. He was against conversion of one person by another. Therefore he wrote:

I disbelieve in the conversion of one person by another. My effort should never be to undermine another's faith but to make him a better follower of his own faith. This implies belief in the truth of all religions and therefore respect for them...⁸⁴

Again Gandhi asserts:

India my opinion, there is no sanction in Hinduism, Islam or Christianity for the *Suddhi*, *Tablique* or proselytization respectively, as it is going on today...⁸⁵

Equal respect for all religions is central principle in Gandhi's creed because *Advaita* holds that there is an essential unity between God and individual selves.

Men may differ in size, colour, talents etc. but "the soul that is hidden beneath his earthly crust is one and the same for all men and women."⁸⁶ He compared the humanity to a large tree having countless branches and leaves through all of which throbbled the same life. Although the universe is full of endless variety, there is nevertheless an all embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity.

Advaita extends oneness of life not only to human beings but to all forms of life. Therefore, he wanted to realize brotherhood or identity not merely with the beings called humans but with all life, even with such things that crawl on earth.⁸⁷ Since both human and non-human beings have a common descent from the same

God and all life is essentially one, no being can be exploited by man for his/her purpose.

Here Gandhi posits a strong bond between religion and social order. On the one hand, religion is regarded as a socially unifying force, which generates and reinforces social solidarity in the society as a whole, on the other hand religion is viewed as an instrument by the dominance of the elite, who uses available mechanism, to *usurp* and maintain power and privileges in the society. It seems Gandhi interprets '*Advaita*' as a universal religion, not as a customary religion. This universal religion refers to *dharma*, a moral order and is a unifying force of all denominational religions like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. There is no exclusivism in this universal religion, but only inclusivism. It has space to include all religions and cultures of *Āstika*, *Nāstika* and *Semitic*. It can accommodate not only the religions proposed by Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar, but the religions of antiquity of the Subaltern leaders like Phule/periyar/Ambedkar/Sri Narayana Guru. This universal religion is '*Hindutva*', not the *Hindutva*, of the *Sangh Parivar* preached and practised, exploited its vote catching potential as Ram Jethmalani has explained. But it is a way of life or a state of mind as the Supreme Court of India has recently described.⁸⁸ Mahatma Gandhi practiced this *Hindutva* in thought, word and deed.

He found no conflict in reading and reciting the scriptures of all religions in his prayer meetings. Hence he said:

My Hinduism is not sectarian. It includes all that I know to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. I approach politics, as everything else, in a religious spirit. Truth is my religion and *Ahiṃsa* is the only way of its realization...⁸⁹

(d) **Advaita As Universal Religion**

In *Advaita* Gandhi could see a universal religion, all comprehensive, all embracing, all inclusive, rather than exclusive, a synthesis of man's religious creeds a summum bonnum.⁹⁰ Thus Christianity, Islam Buddhism, Zoroastrianism all find a place in the structure of his Hindu faith, which is thoroughly a syncretic outlook with a universal worldview, comprised the values of *Satya*, *Ahimsa* self determination, autonomy, self knowledge, self discipline, social co-operation and community relationship of Universal brotherhood and fatherhood. Gandhi believes that the above worldviews, value system and community relationship would bring a new culture and civilization. It is a synthesis of different cultures that have come to stay in India, and influenced Indian life; and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil. As Sadiq Ali Says, 'Indian culture is therefore Indian. It is neither Hindu nor Islamic nor any other wholly. It is a fusion of all and essentially Eastern. And everyone who calls himself or herself an Indian is bound to treasure that culture.'⁹¹ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan very rightly named Indian culture as 'rain bow culture'. There are no totalitarian claims but only tolerance, compassion, acceptance and rationality. Hence recently the Supreme Court has described this culture as '*Hindutva*' synonym of 'Indianisation', namely the development of a uniform culture by peaceful adaptation and change. Unity out of diversity is its goal Hence Ram Jethmalani says this '*Hindutva*' culture is the powerful shield, which protects our minorities, their religious beliefs and cultures. This synthetic culture promote Nationalism, National pride, National identity, National loyalty and Social obligation in the place of group egoism, ethnic pride, sectarian religious identity and loyalty. Gandhian interpretation of *Advaita* promotes *Sarvadharmā*

Samabhāva, which was one of the fundamental principles that guided him to work for an egalitarian community towards an alternative cultural paradigm.

2. GANDHIAN INTERPRETATION OF ANEKĀNTAVĀDA

It has been noted that Gandhi, as a synthesizer of *Āstika* and *Nāstika* religions, has taken the *Advaita* concept of *Āstika* religion and gave a new hermeneutic to have a pluralistic inclusivism, so that it can accommodate all religions of lower and higher. This interpretation also gave emphasize to love, compassion, forgiveness, justice and respect for other religions and people hoping to create a new paradigmatic society devoid of communalism. Gandhi also finds *Nāstika* literature pointing to a pluralistic approach; which not only tolerate other religions but give equal respect for other religions. Jaina concept of *Anekāntavāda* is one such. This part is intended to discuss Gandhian interpretation of Jaina concept of *Anekāntavāda*, and analyse, how far it will be a paradigmatic significance to a religiously plural context for peaceful co-existence.

Gandhi by his own confession subscribed to the Jaina concept of *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda*. In a couple of significant statement he affirms his faith in the *Anekāntavāda* of Jainism.

He affirms:

“I am an *anekāntavādi*. This is the most important thing that I have learnt from Jain Philosophy. It is implicit in *Vedānta* Philosophy, while in Jain Philosophy it is explicitly stated...”⁹²

In 5 March 1922, he used the same word ‘*Anekāntavādi*’, when he wrote letter to Devadas Gandhi.

This raises some importance questions (i) What is *Anekāntavāda*? (ii) Though Gandhi was a *Sanātani* Hindu, why did he take and affirm the Jaina

concept of *Anekāntavāda*? (iii) Jainism is a *Nāstika* religion, which neither accepts the authority of the *Vedas* and nor has faith in any God, i.e., it is not a theistic religion. Gandhi as a true believer in God and in the *Prasthānatrayas*, why did he give importance to the Jaina concept? (iv) Gandhi explicitly said *Anekāntavāda* is implicit in the *Vedānta*. Then what is the relation between *Anekāntavāda* and *Vedānta*. (v) And How did he utilize *Anekāntavāda* concept in a religiously plural context and how far this is relevant for an alternative paradigm to counter the contemporary communalism in India?

(a) Emerging Paradigms from the Theory of *Anekāntavāda*

In a religiously plural context, where conflicting truth claims compete with each other for superiority and identity and religious diversity raises number of issues. But the theory of *Anekāntavāda* seems to offer paradigmatic significance. It provides axiom that, truth is many sided and relative. No group or proposition can claim monopoly of truth. Not only does it de-absolutise truth, it offers a relational view of reality and provides an epistemology for dialogue. It employs *anekānta drishti* perspective for an integral approach to religious diversity.

(i) Non-Absolutist StandPoint

The emergence of this *Anekāntavāda* theory is in the context of two contrary philosophical systems, represented by *Vedāntic Advaitism* on the one hand and the Buddhist Philosophy on the other. Jainism here attempts to bridge the two views by affirming both identity and difference in the Real. How did Jainism attempt to reconcile the *Āstika* and *Nāstika* philosophies?

In Indian Philosophy there are two main currents of thought. One has its source in the *ātma* doctrine of Upaniṣads of *Āstika* religion.⁹³ The other is the

anātma doctrine of Buddhism of *Nāstika* religion. The Upaniṣads and *Brahmanical* tradition conceive reality on the pattern of inner core or soul (*ātman*) immutable and identical amidst an outer region of impermanence and change. This is known as the substance view of reality (*ātma Vada*). Its radical form is *Advaita Vedanta*. It accepts only *Ātman* as real. It denies all other reality as impermanent. On the other hand the Buddhists, there is nothing called immutable. Everything is in a state of flux.

Existence for Buddhist is momentary (*Kṣanika*). They advocate a Model view of reality. The substance was rejected as illusory.⁹⁴ It is in this context, where one holds identity and permanence and the other holding difference and change that the Jains apparently reconciles both these opposed views. TRV Murthy further opines that the Jains accord equality to substance and its modes. There is no substance without modes and no modes without substance. According to Jainism Reality is manifold (*anekāntātmakam*). It is not of one nature. It is unity and difference, universal and particular, permanent and yet changing.

According to Jainism, a substance is characterized by *Utpāda* (coming in to being). *Vyaya* (going out of being). Therefore a substance is always infected with its non-being (*Utpāda* and *Vyaya*). Without accepting the identity of being (*dhrauvya*) and non-being (*Utpāda* and *Vyaya*), the empirical world of daily life will become inexplicable. In *Āstika* religion both *Sāṃkhya* and *Advaita* of Sankara accept the principle of A is A and regard 'A is not A' as self-contradictory. But indirectly they bring in the principle of change or non-being. For *Sāṃkhya Prakṛiti* alone is active, but it posits also an extraneous reality of *Puruṣa*, and the relation between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛiti* becomes inexplicable. In the same way Sankara brings the principle of *Māya* which alone accounts for changes.

But what is the result? The world as *Māya* is neither *Sat* or *asat*. It becomes inexplicable *Sadāsat-Vilakṣana*, a mystery. Hence in contrast with the principle of pure identity of Sankara and pure difference according to the Buddhist theory of momentariness, i.e., discrete moments, Jainism accepts the principle of identity cum-difference, which explains the world much more satisfactorily.⁹⁵

It is seen that the Jaina doctrine of reals which are multi-dimensional in their ever-changing spatio-temporal events, a thing has many aspects. As man in his bondage is extremely restricted in knowing all aspects, so our judgement is relative to a few aspects only. Hence, there are two things here, namely the various perspectives or standpoints from which a thing can be viewed, and, the various possible judgements about a thing in its various perspectives. This way of analysing the various perspectives is known as *nayavāda* (*naya* means stand points or views or perspectives).

According to Sankara the world is an illusory manifestation of Brahman, His theory is known as *Vivartavāda*, because the world is an illusory super-imposition on Brahman is, predicate (P) is not identical with subject (S). P is an illusory projection of S (Brahman).

As against this, for Buddhist P is more significant than S. A thing is only an aggregate of passing moments. According to Buddhist passing events (differences) alone are real.

But for Jaina S (subject) and P (predicate) both are important because a thing is what it is through its changes. Hence, the Jaina denies both the *Śankarite* doctrine of Brahman and the Buddhistic doctrine of soullessness (*anātmavāda*)

Nobody can remain in the Parmenidean Being. Even Sankara has to devise a way out of the following dilemma:

“If the world were real, then the *jīva* would never be able to extricate himself, and if the world were unreal, then it would not be able to bind the *jīva*”.⁹⁶

Therefore, Sankara the world is not absolutely unreal (*asat*) or *tuccha* (non-significant). The world belongs to a third kind of reality, namely, *Sadāsadvilakṣaṇa* i.e. it has both being and non-being in a peculiar way. Does not Sankara then commit himself in self contradiction ?

Against this the Jainism accepts the view of the world is real and it can bind soul under the influence of *aviद्या* (nescience). The individual *jīva* in bondage, which means the intermixing of spirit and matter, can work out his Salvation by getting rid of his *kārmic* matter.

This world contains reals in their mutual inter-relatedness, which means that each thing is in some way, positively and negatively, in all the rest. This theory of cosmic immanence is implicitly contained in Hegelian Idealism, where to know a thing is to know the whole world. Therefore according to Jainism the full knowledge of any thing is inextricably bound up with the complete knowledge of every thing else and vice versa. Since *Jīva* is bound up with restrictions, has only a finite range of perception and knowledge. Hence any perception and knowledge can only be partial and relative. This relativism is expressed by the theory of *Nayavāda* therefore any judgement can be made only conditionally.

Since a thing is multifaceted (*anekāntavāda*), what is true from one perspective is true only relatively and partially. It admits at the same time the possibilities of other viewpoints with regard to that very thing.

Hence Jainism represents the stream of Indian philosophy lying mid way between the two extremes of *ātmavāda* and *anātmavāda*. It synthesizes their view and emerges as a third view. Hence C.D Sharma argues Jainism becomes a theological *mean* between Brahmanism and early Buddhism.⁹⁷

The most important feature of Jaina Philosophy is its respect for all opinions. This attitude of Jainism, i.e., forging conciliatory approach in the midst of conflicting philosophical disputes is what make Jainism significant for Gandhi. According to Jaina metaphysics, Reality is a key concept, which primarily means 'theory of Reality.' It also includes in it a general philosophy of life and a definite worldview.

Jainism identifies Reality with existence. Jainism does not accent for a transcendental Being as Reality.⁹⁸ S. Gopalan observes that, for Jainism, Reality is existence and Existence is Real.⁹⁹ M.L. Mehta contends that Jains do not make any distinction among substance, reality and existence etc.¹⁰⁰ P.S. Jaini, too maintains that the term for 'existent' is sat (literally Being) in Jaina thought. This term designates an entity comprising of three aspects: Substance (*dravya*) quality (*guṇa*) and mode (*Paryaya*).¹⁰¹

The Jaina theory of *Anekantavada* is nothing but the explanation of the Jaina theory of Reality. They hold that Reality is a complex Phenomenon having Pluriformity. The Jain employs the theory of *Anekāntavāda* to explain the manyness or manifoldness of Reality. It is precisely because of this that Jaina metaphysics has been characterized by scholars as realistic relativistic pluralism and pluralistic realism.¹⁰²

The doctrine of *Anekāntavāda* holds that the Reality is many sided and can be looked at from different standpoints. This many-sided approach to Reality enables *Anekāntavāda* to present a synthetic view of Reality. It is this character which enables M. Hiriyanna to observe that the nature of Reality cannot be expressed by one aspect alone because in its concrete richness it admits all predicates.¹⁰³ The theory of *Anekāntavāda* can be considered as the foundation of the Jaina Philosophy. Jaina metaphysics can thus be called also *Anekāntavāda*.

(b) Etymology of Anekantavada

Anekāntavāda consists of three different Sanskrit words. Those are *aneka*, *anta* and *vāda*. *Aneka* means many, *anta* is used in the sense of attribute view point or aspect. *Vāda* means statement or a proposition. According to Jainism a real or thing is not one fixed nature. It is multifaceted; it has more than one feature. To possess many features means to be *anekānta*.¹⁰⁴ The opposite of this is to view from only one point of view, i.e. *ekāntadr̥ṣṭi*. The basic argument of Jains to reject Vedantic and early Buddhistic conception of Reality is because they affirm only one point of view. B.K. Khadabadi thus maintains that philosophically speaking *anekanta* is the name of Reality. Complexity is characteristic mark of Reality. Every object possess infinite aspects of characteristics.¹⁰⁵

Hence *Anekānta* is a more synthetic and broader outlook of viewing things. It aims to synthesize the *Vedantic* and Buddhistic view of Reality. According to *Vedantic* understanding (Chand. U.P. VI) in all changes the clay matter remained permanent. Hence that alone was true. The form and state that change are but appearances. They are mere *nāma-rūpa* characterization.

On the other hand Buddhist hold that changing qualities alone are true which can be perceived. There is no unchanging or permanent substance. Every thing is in a flux. The Jains say that both these strands contain partial truths. They would say that experience teaches us that when a jug is made, it means that the clay lump has been destroyed, a jug has taken origination and the clay is permanent substance in it. We hold that, production implies the destruction of old qualities, some new ones brought in and some part of it is permanent.¹⁰⁶ S.N. Dasgupta observes that:

“The nature of being (*sat*) then is neither the absolutely unchangeable, nor the momentary changing qualities or existences, but involves them both...”¹⁰⁷

The Jains accommodate change and origination in the midst of permanence. This common sense experience enables Jains to reconcile the two extremes of *Vedāntic* and Buddhistic conception of Reality. The Jains argue that, viewing Being (*sat*) as only a single aspect (*ekānta*) either as eternal (*nitya*) or non-eternal (*anitya*) is a defective proposition.

Y. Padmarajiah thus observes that, this theory not only postulates the multiplicity of ultimate reals constituting the cosmos, but also that manifoldness or inherent complexity within each of the reals in universe is there.

In other words

Reality is not merely multiple but each real, in its turn, is manifold or complex to its core. Reality is thus a complex web of manyness (*Aneka*) and manifoldness (*Anekānta*).¹⁰⁸

It is thus affirmed in Jainism that a thing has got an infinite number of characteristics of its own.

(c) Identity and Difference

In comprehending Reality, Jaina Philosophers accept both identity and difference as equally significant. Y. Padmarajiah contends that identity in difference is the most fundamental ontological pre-supposition of *Anekānta* ontology.¹⁰⁹

The Jaina view is that identity and difference are necessarily co-ordinate or equal elements in Reality. Here one can perceive conflict with *Vedantic* and *Buddhistic* view. The *Vedantist* accepts the continuity of things and dismisses changes to be an illusion. Buddhist accepts change without continuity. The Jains accept both continuity and change as essential notes in the constitution of Reality.¹¹⁰ The *Vedantic* objection is put forward by Sankara commenting on the aphorism of Badarayana .

It is as follows:

Naikasminnasam bhavat (Brahma Sutra 2:2:33).

On account of the impossibility (of contrary attributes) in one and the same thing (the Jaina doctrine is) not true.¹¹¹

Sankara makes a scathing attack on Jaina Philosophers for holding both being and non-being belonging to one and the same thing. But for Buddhism identity of objects is an unreality, which may be grounded on the basic truth of the fundamental Buddhist dictum:

“It cannot be right to affirm and deny a thing at once, affirmation and denial being mutually contradictory.”¹¹²

Jaina Philosophers by maintaining identity and difference purports to grasp the polarity of truth.

C.D. Sharma maintains that, *Anekāntavāda* asserts that the Real has infinite attributes because it is identity and difference. The very nature of Reality is infinitely complex. It being an identity and difference, admits of contradictory attributes from different points of view which are all partial and relative.¹¹³

M.L. Mehta makes note that, Reality is considered by the Jains as a synthesis of opposites – identity and difference, permanence and change, describability and indescribability, oneness and manyness,¹¹⁴

Y. Padmarajah observes that while *Anekāntavāda* is the heart of Jaina Metaphysics, then *Nayavāda* and *Syādvāda* are its main arteries. He further observes that, the bird of *Anekantavada* flies on its two wings, which can be called *Nayavāda* and *Syādvāda*.¹¹⁵

K.P. Sinha notes that:

Nayavada is the analytical method by which a thing is ascertained from a particular point of view, while *Syādvāda* is the synthetic method by which different view point arrived by *Nayavāda* are harmonised.¹¹⁶

Hence the Jaina Philosophy of *Anekāntavāda* has the faculty to *amalgamate* contradictory attributes of the very nature of Reality perceived from different standpoints. It holds manyness of Reality and complexity. Since Reality is multiform and ever changing nothing can be considered to be existing everywhere and at all times. What Jainism wants to say is that Reality cannot be defined absolutely. It affirms the relational aspect of a real. A real is a unity and diversity in one, and the relation involved is neither one of absolute identity nor one of absolute otherness, but something different from both. It is *suigeneris*. Hence it is determed by Absolute criteria.

C. ANEKĀNTAVĀDA AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN ĀSTIKA AND NĀSTIKA RELIGIONS

Gandhi's affirmation that he has no objection to being called an *Anekāntavādi* expresses his hermeneutical approach to other religions. It has been noted that Gandhi preached the doctrine of equality of all religions of the world as a viable solution to the problems of religious pluralism. His whole life he devoted to bring about harmony and peace among the followers of different faiths. He firmly believed that exclusive claims of each religion are the main causes for hatred and rivalry in the nation. In order to make a harmonious living, Gandhi believes, all religions should come closer, accept one another and assimilate eternal values. For this he finds a need for having a pluralistic hermeneutics of different scriptures. Hence Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* is a methodology to counter exclusivism or absolutism propounded by many religions, which promote communalism in India. Gandhi believes the theory of *Anekāntavāda* may offer a paradigmatic significance by providing an axiom that truth is many sided and relative, and would reconcile the *Āstika* (orthodox) and *Nāstika* (heterodox) religions.

Āstika and *Nāstika* rivalries were a continuous predicament since the arrival of Aryans in the Indian sub-continent. Many of the *Rig Vedic* hymns also present the struggle between the Āryan god Indra and non-Āryan gods (*asuras*). The struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism was very strong from the period of the Buddha. *Pāli* texts express the hostile attitude of the Brahmanas towards Buddha and his followers.¹¹⁷ *Baudhāyana Dharma Sutra* denounced Buddha as an *asura* (demon) and advocated that "the wise should not honour his name."¹¹⁸ *Kumārila Bhatta* accused Buddha as one who "transgressed *dharma* laid down for

ksatriyas and he took himself to the profession of a religious teacher”, one who “deceives himself” and act contrary to the *Vedas*.¹¹⁹ The laws of Manu ordain that the *pāsāṅdins*, *haitukas* and such should never be honoured “even by greeting” (4:30).

The *Puranas* and other works branded Jains and Buddhists with contemptuous names such as *pāsāṅdins* (*heretics*), *nagnas* (*naked*), *atipāpīh* (*wretched sinners*). The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (3:18) and *Brhannārādiya Purāṇa* (11:17, 24-25) and 14: 69-71 warn people against talking to, looking at or having any contact with the Buddhists:

One who enters the house of a Boudha, even in great distress has no escape (from sin) even by (practicing) hundreds of penances.... A twice born man, if he has any regard for the *Vedas*, must not look at them. (One acquires sin), in case one enters the house of a Boudha knowing or unknowing. There is no escape (from sin if one does so) knowingly. This is the decision of the *Sastras*.

The *Smṛiti Candrika* of *Devanabhata* quotes from *Sathrimsanmata* says:

A man should bathe with all his clothes on if he chances to touch the Boudhas, the *Pasupatas*, the Jains,... and those Brahmanas who have taken up the duties not meant for them...¹²⁰

The passages quoted above reveal the strong *Brāhmaṇic* hostility and antagonism towards Buddhists and Jains. Also the following three passages from Swami Vivekananda reveal the hostile relation between Brahmanism and Buddhism

- i. The Hindus strongly attached to their Brahmanical tradition, do not acknowledge their debts to Buddhist ideas and ideals... that is the Orthodox Hindus, because to them the Buddhists are heretics.¹²¹
- ii. Hinduism threw away Buddhism after taking its sap.¹²²
- iii. Buddhism and Vaisnavism are not two different things. During the decline of Buddhism in India, Hinduism took from her a few cardinal

tenets of conduct and made them her own, and these have now come to be known as Vaisnavism.¹²³

Later S.W. Bakhle cited from Swami Vivekananda refers to the Hindu religious tradition as a synthesis of Sankaras *advaitism*, Ramanuja's Bhakti-Marga and the humanism of the Buddhists.¹²⁴ Gandhi also followed the same line with Swami Vivekananda on the Synthetic aspect. It has been noted that the Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda* attempts to bridge the *Vedantic advaitism* and the Buddhistic Philosophy of non-existence. Hence it seems Gandhi has taken this concept of Jainism as a tool to reconcile the *Āstika* and *Nāstika* religions.

Further many scholars argue that Jainism holds its origin goes beyond the *Āryan* invasion, thus to the *Pre-Āryan* period. Sir Sanmukham Chetty notes succinctly that:

Jainism was the religion of the Dravidian people who were the Pre-Aryan inhabitants of India. I am tempted to believe that Jainism was probably the earliest religion prevalent in India and that it was the flourishing religion when the Aryan migration came in India and when the religion of the *Vedas* being evolved in the Punjab.¹²⁵

M.L. Mehta too notes in the same manner that Jaina culture represents the Brahmanic culture in India. It is *non-Vedic*, *non-Āryan* and non-Brahmanic.¹²⁶ At the time of Gandhi, he finds the 'extremists' glorified Hindu culture and encouraged a revivalism of *Vedic* spirituality. They reflected a worldview, value system, symbols, myths and behaviour pattern of a *Kṣatriya* culture. Then there arose an alternative cultural vision represented by the depressed class. They argue that *Shudras* and *āti-shudras* were the original inhabitants of the country and claim that the original Indian spirituality goes beyond the religion and culture of the *Vedas*. Hence the Subaltern leaders want to a revive the values of the *non-Āryan*

religion and culture. This they say is not exclusive, but inclusive and adaptive. There are no totalitarian claims in this culture but tolerance, love and compassion to other religions. It seems Gandhi was profoundly influenced by the moral values propagated by Jainism, especially the virtues of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *asteya*, *Brahmacharya*, and *aparigraha*. These are the five great vows of Jainism. Gandhi understands non-violence was central to the Indian civilization¹²⁷, firstly because it cherished the ideal of non-violence and gave it a pride of place in its hierarchy of moral virtues. Secondly a small group of sages and seers had experimented with and successfully practiced it in all rigour and left behind examples of truly non-violent lives. Thirdly in ancient India non-violence was widely practiced and formed the basis of its social structure: fourthly non-violence was the virtue of the brave. Gandhi finds this non-violent virtue has its profound expression in Jainism, Buddhism and in Upanisads and especially in the *Gītā*.¹²⁸

At the time of Gandhi, the Indian civilization, although fundamentally sound in non-violence, had become degenerated and needed urgent attention. Gandhi thought Hindu fundamentalists as Dayananda Saraswati and Savarkar who were all in his view 'Europeanizing' Hinduism and destroying it in the name of affirming it'. Thus they subverted the very basis of Indian civilization.¹²⁹ Gandhi wanted to revive the age-old spirituality of Indian civilization. This non-violent (*ahimsa*) civilization has a coherent character. It was capable of 'absorbing' and 'assimilating' values. He believed that Indian civilization is the best and no culture has treasures so rich as ours has.¹³⁰ He finds the 'absorbing' and 'assimilating' character has suffered erosion. By reviving these characters, Gandhi wanted to synthesize both *Āstika* and *Nāstika* religions, by elevating the spiritual values of truth, non-violence, renunciation and other moral values. Thus

he wanted to present Indian culture perfect without any ills, with a solid basis of *non-Āryan* and *Āryan* religious values. Hence Gandhi finds his interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* of Jaina concept would be a solution to the widening gulf between the increasing religious nationalism in the hands of the ruling elite (*Hindutva*) and the Subaltern revivalism of self consciousness of basic communities in India namely *Dalits* and tribals (untouchables). Therefore Gandhi finds *Anekāntavāda* concept can be employed as an antidote to fight against the social evils of Indian society especially to the one sided or absolutistic interpretation of scriptures.

For Gandhi the Indian civilization was essentially plural and non –dogmatic. From the very beginning it had realized that the ultimate reality was infinite and inexhaustible and that different individuals grasped different aspects of it. None was wholly wrong and none was wholly right. Every one was therefore allowed- and even encouraged to live out the truth as he saw it and discover for himself its limits and possibilities. This is why Hinduism did not believe in one and definitive divine self-revelation and allowed its adherents freedom of choice between the different religious texts. It did not regard its religious texts as incorrigible and final but open to new interpretations in the light of new experiences.

It has been observed that the concept of *Anekāntavāda* or its corollary *Syādvāda* is a theological mean between Brahmanism and Buddhism because it affirms any perception on reality and knowledge can only be partial and relative. Hence it has the capability to synthesis different perceptions on reality. In Gandhi's view Indian civilization was essentially dominated by the spirit of 'Synthesis' in nature. Since it held, men perceived ultimate reality differently, that they must live by the truth as they saw it, and that a richer view could only be

attained by encouraging a 'dialogue' between them. It welcomed and showed utmost tolerance to different cultures, religions and races. It was an open civilization with permeable boundaries allowing new influences to flow in and vitalize the old. Thus the whole civilization renewed itself. The Indian civilization has the capability to blend with one another with the utmost freedom and made India a microcosm of the world.¹³¹

Gandhian period increasingly experienced the emphasis in the exclusive arguments of ethnic and racial bond. The *Hindutva* proponent Savarkar argued for a typical Brahmanical Hinduism, in which the untouchables and other ethnic groups have no place. His emphasis on the identity consciousness of Hindus placed the non-Hindus under a disturbing cloud of suspicion and hostility. The spirit that he introduced to the Hindus 'that they alone are the true sons of the soil' gave strong impetus to reject all other cultures especially of Islamic and Christian. The cultural nationalism promoted by the *Hindutvavādīs* negated even the values of enlightenment brought by the migrated religions. But Gandhi was against the approach of *Hindutvāvādīs*. Gandhi finds Indian civilization was a 'Synthesis' of different cultures that have come to stay in India that have influenced Indian life and that, in turn have themselves been influenced by spirit of the soil.¹³² The spirit of the soil is absorption, assimilation, co-existence and Synthesis. Absoluteness and finality cannot claim by this spirit. This energetising spirit of accommodation and adaptability. Gandhi finds in the concept of Anekantavada or *Syadvada*, which directly promote a mingling of the cultures represented by the different faiths and influenced by the geographic and other environment in which the cultures have met. It was not 'wholly Hindu, Muslim or Christian, but a fusion of all of them. He observes that India has a history of tolerance and synthesis; a

unique spirit had grown up in India and become an integral part of its way of life. Indeed India has developed an unusual faculty, the faculty of assimilation and an amazing tolerance of opposite ideas.¹³³ Gandhi firmly believed that every individual is liable to error, every proposition is true but it is fragmentary. This is same as the thinking of *Syādvāda* or *Anekāntavāda*. Hence Gandhi says, "I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekāntavādi* or *Syādvādi*. But my *Syādvāda* is not the *Syādvāda* of the learned, it is peculiarly my own. I cannot engage in debate with them."¹³⁴ From this Gandhi proposes an individual should ready to admit the truth of other's views from their standpoints. This spontaneously leads to tolerance for the views of other persons and this is one of the salient features of non-violence. Thus Jaladhar Pal says that *Anekāntavāda* or *syādvāda* had a far reaching effect in the movements led by Gandhi.¹³⁵ More over Gandhi's humanitarian out look urged him to interpret the traditional concepts in his own way through which he tried to redress the suffering millions.

(1) Organic Inter-relatedness of Religions

In *Advaita* concept it has been noted that, since all human being are emanated from the 'Sat' or Reality, there is an organic inter-relation among them and with the Ultimate reality. Hence Gandhi finds a universal brotherhood and fatherhood in the *Advaita* concept. Though in Jaina Philosophy there is no such teaching on God as such, but it's teaching on the doctrine of manyness of reality (*anekāntavāda*) vividly express a reality. Universe is seen as an integral organism of spatio – temporal processes. A.N. Whitehead categorically asserts:

Connectedness is the essence of all things of all types. ...Abstraction from connectedness involves omission of an essential factor in the fact considered. No fact is merely itself.¹³⁶

This worldview re-iterates the point that humans become humans only in and through integrative relationship with each other and environment. Such a worldview offers a radical approach to inter religious relations. This organic view of reality becomes an alternative paradigm in our search for viable theology of religions. This calls each religion to view their beliefs, convictions as organically interrelated and inter dependent to other religious traditions. Each tradition gets enriched by assimilating elements from others. The pluralistic inclusivistic approach comes close to fulfilling this aim. It affirms that, there is a possibility of the fulfilment of the theological and spiritual content of one's faith in and through the contributions of other faiths.¹³⁷

This view envisages a relational convergence of religions. It promotes a spirit of mutual transformation in inter-religious relations. Gandhian interpretation of religions and his ideas are derived from his basic metaphysical pre-supposition of the unknowability of the Absolute by finite beings with a view of organic inter dependent to other religious traditions. It is out of this premise that he developed the idea that all religions are partial imperfect and relative. It was Gandhi's firm conviction and faith that Truth has infinite facets and what man knows of it is necessarily partial and relative. "As for Truth", Gandhi says "we can know only a fraction of it. Perfect knowledge of Truth is difficult of attainment for man", so long as he is imprisoned in his mortal body.¹³⁸ In this view he was very much influenced by the Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda*. Hence Gandhi said all religions are true but none is perfect. Therefore Gandhi finds an organically interrelatedness among religions.

In Gandhian period he finds the Extreme nationalists increasingly tried to mould the Indian culture based on one religion i.e. Hinduism. To build a national

culture in a pluralistic society based on any one religion is a serious mistake. This fascist tendency is described by Kappen as an expression of the ideology of hegemonic racism aiming to recast Indian society according to racial categories.¹³⁹ Gandhi was against any type hegemony based on religion especially by Hinduism because Hinduism is not a religion, since it does not have any well defined creed or cult binding on all. But it is *dharma* and a way of life and a civilization of cultures. Hinduism has many *darśanas* for salvation. Hinduism has many ways to reach the goal and accepts *Anekānta darśana*. It is an ideal or principle to combine divergent cultures into one organic whole. Therefore Gandhi rejects the hegemonic nationalism by the extremists, which characterized by the hegemony of the Hindu community over the minority communities. Gandhi wanted to synthesis all the communities of India, i.e. *Āastika*, *Nāstika* and *Semitic* communities for a national culture. Therefore, he said:

The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen.”¹⁴⁰

Hence Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* envisages a relational convergence of all religions *Āastika*, *Nāstika* and the *Semitic* religions like Islam and Christianity. Gandhi finds Jaina view of *anekāntavāda* promotes reconciliation of all the conflicting views. It aims to harmonize the conflicting viewpoints and to synthesis them into an organic whole. Gandhi wanted to cultivate this synoptic and many-sided outlook of Jainism in interpreting the existing religious scriptures in India to have a synthetic culture, for a harmonious and peaceful living.

(2) **Anekāntavāda Interpretation an Answer to the Problem of Conversion**

One of the major issues in the context of religious Pluralism is the problem of conversion in the sense of change from one religion to another. It has been noted that Gandhi was against all forms of conversions whether it is known as *Śuddhi* by Hindus, *Tabliq* by Muslims or proselytizing by Christians. He had many reasons for his objections, especially based on his Philosophical or Theological, practical or pragmatic principles. Here the discussion is intended to concentrate only based on his Philosophical principles. His doctrine of equality of religions tended him to oppose all forms of conversion from one religion to another. He firmly believed that truth is perspectival and truth cannot be absolutised and monopolised. The multiplicity of truth claims envisages each response valid, based on experience. If all we have is but a fragmentary view of truth, we have no right to impose our fragment on others. The Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* concept also maintains that the reality can be seen from limitless number of perspectives, and any religious claims from one perspective is erroneous. Therefore proselytizing activities certainly violate the right of a person to follow the truth, as he understands it. Further Gandhi sees a good amount of co-ercion is used in attempting to convert which is contrary to the principle of *ahimsa* by which alone one can reach truth.

Therefore Gandhi's says:

“... I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality... My *anekāntavāda* is the result of the twin doctrine of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*”.¹⁴¹

According to Gandhi conversion assumes the exclusive possession of truth by one religion, and all other religions are false. This is against the doctrines of

manyness of reality of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*, which he professed in his doctrine of equality of religions. Conversion also assumes that God can be approached through only one way. It maintains that other faiths are inadequate and insufficient in realizing the supreme goal in human life, Gandhi challenged all such assumptions and asked to eradicate the arrogance and “the secret pride that our religion is more true and another is less so.”¹⁴² He maintained that since all religions are true but imperfect, there is no meaning in converting from one religion to another.

Then there arise a question that since all religions are true and equal, what harm is there in changing from one religion to another. The answer according to Gandhi is, that the equality of religions does not mean, that all religions are equally effective and valid for all. What he maintains is that each religion is effective and sufficient only for its adherents and it is in this sense that all religions are equal. That is why Gandhi insists that one should firmly adhere to one’s own faith. The religion in which a person is born is the most effective one for him. This is what the principle of *swadeshi* applied to religion means, and it asks every one not to change his ancestral faith, but worship God according to his *svadharma*. Gandhi proposed the essential unity of all religions and he clarified his position thus:

God has created different faiths just as he has votaries thereof. How can I even secretly harbour the thought that my neighbour’s faith is inferior to mine? As a true and loyal friend, I can only wish and pray that he may live and grow perfect in his own faith. In God’s house there are many mansions and they are equally holy.¹⁴³

Hence the Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda*, clearly envisages an essential unity of all religions and insists one should firmly adhere to one’s own faith, and opposed any form of conversion.

In a religiously plural context of India, the work of conversion means intolerance, mutual decrying of rival faiths, exclusive claims for one faith or for the other, all of which give rise to mutual hatred and conflicts. Gandhi saw the danger very clearly. In course of discussion with C.F. Andrews he expressed his fear thus: "This proselytization will mean no peace in the world."¹⁴⁴ So Gandhi found it necessary for the peaceful co-existence of people that the proselytizing activities of all religions should be discouraged, on the basis of his philosophical/theological principles. Further he said:

"...Looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think it our duty, to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths".¹⁴⁵

Hence Gandhi in his interpretation of *Anekāntavāda*, is he not only opposes conversion but also enunciates integration of other faiths.

(3) Anekāntavāda Epistemology as a Paradigm for 'Dialogue'

The Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda* affirms that every object has innumerable characters. Hence it is called *anantādharmakam vastu*. *Nayavāda* holds that our knowledge concerning the object is only partial and relative. *Syādvāda* holds that absolute affirmation and negation is impossible.

These theories make Jaina position to Catholic in its outlook. *Syādvāda* in particular holds that, one part of a pair opposites cannot be taken into account. Each proposition should be balanced by the simultaneous acknowledgement of its counter statement. Hence according to it, Truth can only be gathered by *saṃvāda* i.e., gathering of conclusions from different aspects.¹⁴⁶ In inter-religious circle the term *Samvāda* is called "dialogue."

Dialogue may be described as, that encounter where people holding different claims about ultimate reality can meet and explore those claims in a context of mutual respect. Over against isolation, hostility and competition dialogue establishes relationships between people of different faith traditions. This dialogical relationship is imperative for better relations among religions. As David Loch head maintains, a truly dialogical relationship has no other purpose than itself. Dialogue is the end of dialogue.¹⁴⁷

In a dialogical relationship differences are not narrowed down but finding scope for mutual enrichment. It follows with the concept of 'unity with diversity.' Those who hold the pluralistic position argue that dialogical approach fosters better relationship among religions. Paul F. Knitter calls inter-religious dialogue as a 'hermeneutics of Praxis.' John Hick encourages truth seeking dialogue where different religions can be mutually criticized, enriched and transformed.¹⁴⁸

The dialogical relationship is an appropriative relationship among religions. It is a two-way encounter. On the one hand, there is a deepening of one's own religious commitment as one seeks to share one's faith experience; on the other hand, one maintains a profound respect and reverence for other person's religion. Such an attitude fosters a spirit of acceptance for a worldview different from one's own.

Martin Buber expounds the importance of dialogical relationship in human existence in his famous book *I and Thou*. According to him "relation is reciprocity" and "we live in the currents of universal reciprocity."¹⁴⁹ In inter-religious dialogue there is this reciprocity of action, a simultaneous accomplishment of teaching others and learning from others. It is this inter-facing of religions that spells out the aim of inter-religious dialogue. The focus is neither

on the commonality nor particularity as such but emphasizes the possibility of mutual learning and teaching. But in this process the diversity or many sidedness is emphasized out rightly. It is because of that dialogue does not become superficial. Mark Heim rightly points out the primary goal of inter-faith dialogue as:

To lay bare the fundamental differences between different religions so that people of different faiths can realize that they are seeking after different things rather than competitors for the same thing. Such realization makes it possible for different religions to tolerate each other.¹⁵⁰

The dialogical relationship will enable each religion to be illumined by the other. Mutual interaction and enrichment on equal footing is inevitable reality for today. Then pluralistic inclusivistic standpoint too argues for a relational convergence of religions and emphasize more specifically for a dialogical theology. It is only in a dialogical relationship that there is scope for enrichment.

It has been noted that *Anekāntavāda* epistemology affirms a synoptic and many sided out look and acknowledge that truth can only be gathered by *Samvāda* or dialogue. Thus the *Anekāntavāda* epistemology offers the possibility of not only gathers the truth, it also de-absolutises and relativises truth. It also acknowledges that the religious resources are the common property of the whole humanity on an equal footing because the essence of religions is the same.

Though Gandhi does not use the word dialogue, it seems he firmly believes in the importance of dialogical relationship for a peaceful living. Therefore, he said:

“For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.”¹⁵¹

In his dialogical approach he emphasizes the necessity of learning from other religious scriptures. Therefore he says:

“I hold that it is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect other’s religions as we would have them to respect our own, a friendly study of the world’s religions is a sacred duty.”¹⁵²

He also believes that this enables people to keep their religion pure and rid it of blemishes.

The *Anekāntavāda* interpretation proposes truth is relative to our standpoints and one-sided view of reality is bound to be parochial in nature. This emphasizes, truth is perspectival but also pluralistic. Hence on the basis of this pluralistic standpoint Gandhi says, that the spiritual progress of humanity depends on the capacity to assimilate or synthesis the spiritual values from other religions and cultures.

Therefore Gandhi expounds:

“For me all principal religions are equal in the sense that they are all true. They are supplying a felt want in the spiritual progress of humanity...”¹⁵³

He also emphasizes the importance of dialogical relationship among religions in order to perpetuate lasting peace on earth. Hence Gandhi affirms:

I am a believer in the truth of all great religions of the world. There will be no lasting peace on earth unless we learn not merely to tolerate but even to respect the other faiths as our own. A reverent study of the sayings of different teachers of mankind is a step in the direction of such mutual respect.”¹⁵⁴

Further, Gandhi does not foresee a time when there would be only One Religion on earth in practice. He says :

“In theory since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different

religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But I can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. I think that we have to find unity in diversity... We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal."¹⁵⁵

Hence Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda*, and its emphasis on *Samvāda* or dialogue expresses the pluralistic epistemology of Indian spirituality.

It is 'Religion', which moulds the mind, and 'Religion' is the matrix of culture and the essence of all religions are one. Gandhi says fellowship between religious people would help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Musalman to become a better Musalman, and a Christian a better Christian.

Indian spirituality and culture was open to the influence of every new culture that came its way and learnt from it whatever it had to teach. It encouraged it to enter into a relaxed conversation with the other, helped it overcome its dogmatism and rigidity, and found a place for it within its hospitable framework. No culture or religion that came to India ever remained exclusive and dogmatic for long. The 'dominant spirit' of Indian civilization, that is the 'faculty for assimilation' and an amazing tolerance of opposite ideas' subtly and imperfectly loosened its rigidity, smoothed its sharp edges and brought it in harmony with the rest.¹⁵⁶ Gandhi did not explain how India had developed its synthetic or pluralistic spirit. More often, however, he attributed it to India's pluralistic epistemology. Since it sincerely believed that truth was infinite, all human perceptions were necessarily limited and partial, and that his moral integrity required that every individual should live by the truth as he saw it. Thus India developed a spirit of not just tolerance but also mutual respect, curiosity and dialogue. Therefore, Bhikhu Parekh opines India's

epistemological pluralism led to social pluralism and formed the basis of its social structure.¹⁵⁷

Anekāntavāda and its corollary *Syadvada* epistemology moulded the Indian culture with a spirit of cultural democracy, which always opened platform to enter into a sympathetic dialogue with other cultures. This spirit of 'dialogical' cultural encounter is the main force that foment for the Indian renaissance started from Raja Ram Mohan Roy. It seems through these interpretations, Gandhi wanted to revive the ancient spirituality of religions, which was always hospitable to criticism and reform. It has tried to imbibe whatever was good in each of those religions. The key to the survival of Hinduism is its manner of self-renewal. But in the Gandhian period age-old spirituality and culture was hidden under an entrustment of crudeness'. The dialogical and synthetic spirit of Indian civilization was hidden under the crude monolithic claims of both *Āstika* and *Semitic* religions. Gandhi wanted to revive the age-old spirituality of co-existence of religions and respect for other religions with a view to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past and enriched by the experience of later times. This synthesis, he wishes will naturally be of the *swadeshi* type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place.¹⁵⁸ Hence his interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* provides a new paradigm for dialogue to mould a synthetic culture in India.

In the stage of mutual dialogue one religion tries to listen and learn about the other, thus removing prejudices and pre-conceived ideas and paving the way to mutual recognition and respect. This also promotes a principle of complementarity. This does not mean one religion becomes another religion. But it accepts and unitedly holding together the basic values in different religions such as love, non-violence, truth, peace, etc. This trans-religious spirituality should

complementarity. This does not mean one religion becomes another religion. But it accepts and unitedly holding together the basic values in different religions such as love, non-violence, truth, peace, etc. This trans-religious spirituality should help one religion to hold divine values, which are very much present in every religion, because the soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms. Gandhian Ashram life style is a model of this synthetic culture.

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62. C.W.S.V. II. 290
63. See, *Sutrabhasya II*, of Sankara
64. *Sah api matprasadat mama Isvarasya prasada avapnoti sasvatam nityam vaisnavam padam avyayam.* See Gita-bhasya xvii. 62,
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Creator. (b) Law of Karma is applicable on human destiny. Any one who escapes the cycle of births, become enlightened souls, whom they venerate.

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CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

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CONCLUSION

This concluding Chapter is an attempt to gather various aspects of the subjects raised, discussed, and analysed in the previous chapters. This is also a summary of the major points and indicating their implications in the relation between religions.

In a context where religion plays a very decisive role in moulding the worldview of people, the question of an appropriate approach to religion is crucially important. Social thinkers, social scientists and religionists have increasingly realized the inter-relatedness of religion to social structures. In the Indian context particularly where religio-cultural values and socio-economic and political power structures are so closely intertwined, the question of an effective approach to religion and its interpretations is of great relevance. The most important question in the multi-religious context of India is how can people of different faiths live together in harmony and peace. The study has been analysing some of the crucial issues that arise from the contemporary context of India.

In the second chapter the researcher has made an attempt to survey of Hindu scriptures. This reveals how these different religious traditions responded and related to each other. The analysis shows that there were plural and complex responses. However, these responses categorized into three strands. The first kind of response was exclusive in maintaining that one's own religion is true while all others are false. There were hostility and intolerance exhibited in the scriptures not only between Brahmanic

Hinduism and non-Hindu traditions like Buddhism and Jainism, but also between the different traditions or *Sampradayas* within Hinduism.

The second type of response admits that there are elements of truth in other religions, but the truth in them are partial, imperfect and incomplete, while perfect truth is in one's own religion. Other religions are tolerated and accommodated within one's own faith accepting them as preparation for one's own faith in which they need to find their fulfilment. This attitude does not promote harmony and concord among religions.

The third kind of response noted is the one, which regards all religions as equally valid and true. It affirms that all religions are equally different manifestations of the same Divine Truth. The difference is only in names and forms. In essence they are one. This position not only tolerates but accepts other traditions as genuine paths to the Divine Reality.

The modern responses are in a sense re-statements or re-interpretations of the past Hindu responses to similar situations, Swami Dayananda Saraswati is clearly an exclusivist, who seriously relied on the Orientalist interpretation of Indian History, and held that *Vedic dharma* alone is true. He affirmed that all other religions are dangerous and therefore they are to be replaced by the *Vedic* religion. The *Ārya Samāj*, which he founded, is clearly militant and not conducive to religious harmony.

Though one can find in Swami Vivekananda a passionate appeal for mutual tolerance and respect on the basis of the acceptance of the view that

all religions are true and valid in leading people to the supreme goal, one cannot fail to overlook, the exclusive claim he made for the absoluteness of *Advaita Vedanta*. He placed different religions in different grades, where he placed '*Advaita*' at the top and claim it is final and absolute. He did not reject other religions but gave them only a subordinate position to *Advaita*, which he considered as the fulfilment of all religions. Therefore, other faiths are only preliminary stages or stepping-stones or preparation for *Advaita*. Thus, he looks down upon other faiths as inadequate and insufficient in themselves. However his apologetic and exclusive statements have to be evaluated on the context he was facing in India from the Christian missionary policy of conversion and their extra-ordinary claims that Christianity as the only true religion, universally valid, perfectly scientific and absolutely moral. His approach was to defend Hinduism from the attacks of other religions especially Christianity and Islam.

It has been noted that often *Vivekananda* inclined to exclusivism he envisaged a synthesis of *Āstika*, *Nāstika* and *Semitic* religions. He appreciated the values of all religions and stands for religious harmony which he maintained even while he was convinced of the superiority of *Vedanta*.

The study has been shown that the ideological stands of both Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda gave momentum to generate a religio-cultural renaissance in the Indian sub-continent. The militant Hindu organizations like V.H.P, R.S.S. *Bajrang Dal* derive their inspirations from Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Savarkar and

Golwalkar. The goal of R.S.S. to make India a Hindu *Rāṣṭra* (Nation) is certainly not different from Dayananda's slogan "India is for Hindus". The writings and speeches of Savarkar and Golwalkar also gave impetus to the policy of *Hinduising* Indian statehood. According to Golwalkar non-Hindus should be wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, not even citizen's right. The present promoters of '*Hindutva*' by B.J.P. and *Sangh parivar* seek their roots in the traditions of late nineteenth century Hindu nationalism based on the assumption that India has a glorious Hindu past. They have rejected the composite culture of India and deemed the concept of cultural diversity. They are skillfully working for a cultural exclusivism by re-interpreting the History on the line of Orientalist thinking. They rejected the secular principles in the Parliamentary democracy by mailing that the present secularism as pseudo-secularism on the basis of minority rights. This has created suspicion, ill will and antagonistic feeling among the minority communities. Thus it is vivid that the present day communalism gives rise to a cultural exclusivism and climate of anti-minoritism resulting in increasing intolerance.

All through the history of Christianity different responses to other faiths can be noted, and the New Testament itself provides the basis for them. Thus there are exclusive positions that there is salvation in no other name but in the name of Jesus (Acts. 4:12). Though the early Christians absolutely committed to Jesus Christ as the only saviour of humankind, they never persecuted others, but themselves were persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. While they witnessed Jesus Christ as the only saviour, and

invited all people to Christ, they never resorted to force for converting others to Christianity. It must be noted that it is not the early Christians, especially the later religious leaders, who make religion militant and aggressive.

Different religions have responded to the religious pluralism at least in three attitudes, which generally seem to be held in the Christian theological circles also. They are namely exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. From the above responses, absolutistic and inclusivistic standpoints affirm Christ is supreme, definitive and normative in the soteriological considerations. Thus for developing a genuine dialogical relationship both the exclusivist and inclusivist paradigm fall short in perspective. Further these approaches motivated Christian missionaries to plant Churches through personal and mass conversions.

The present turmoil in the Indian subcontinent is mainly centred on the issue of conversion and Christian missions. The missionary policy has been vehemently criticized by Hindu organizations.

The Pluralistic standpoint of Christianity has opened way to have a synoptic view of things to foster healthy relations among religions. It seeks to build bridges between religions by accepting the truth claims of each religion as valid response to the 'Ultimate Concern'. It has been noted that this approach holds all great religious traditions on an equal foundation. Hence this has opened way for inter-religious dialogue for co-operation and co-existence. Inter-religious dialogue is an imperative for our times. Recently A.B. Vajpayee has re-iterated the importance of dialogue for settling the problems we face in the Indian sub-continent

especially in the issues like Kashmir, and *Bābri-Mazjid – Rāma-Jañma Bhūmi* conflicts¹.

Islam entered India predominantly as a faith of ruling class with a well-defined worldview, values and ethos. During the course of their rule in India for centuries, they could not totally Islamize Hindus nor it was absorbed in the Hindu religious tradition as well. It has been noted that cultural uprooting or assimilation by any one group will create conflicts and tensions among such groups. Further when politics entered into religion, then the religious cleavages turn into political cleavages, and tension increase with acute forms. The imperialist rule in India further aggravated these cleavages and divided the country into communal line.

Since religion determines the sole source of values to the culture, and values are basic to culture, religion delimitates the culture of a community. From this premise it has been noted that the Islamic response to religious pluralism through theological, cultural and psychological standpoints is not cordial or congenial.

The absolutistic and inclusivistic interpretation of the Quran, Islamic concept of Holy War (*Jihād*) and the policy of Islamization could naturally generate hostility and violence among religions.

The ideology 'Theodemocracy' by Maulana Syed Abdul Ala Mawdudi emphasizes both absolutism and inclusivism in shaping Islamic politics in Indian sub-continent. This was an antithesis to secular democracy. *Jama-at-e-Islami* also advocates an exclusive religious nationalism in the Indian sub-continent. Any religion that does not accept nationalism,

democracy and secularism in a multi-religious society like India the co-existence of religions will not be possible. Theological and cultural exclusive claims of any one religion introduces an element of theological injustice to God's creation.² It makes co-operation between different religious communities difficult, if not impossible to tackle common human problems in society. Since Christianity and Islam have worldwide connections with affluent nations, tensions within a country get easily internationalized and may threaten not only with internal problems like terrorism but also easily may affect world peace.

Though the Muslim elites have been successfully established the idea that Islam is alien to India and that it is absolutely contrary to Indian culture, yet there were instances of communal harmony propagated by Islamic thinkers especially from *Sūfism*. They interpreted the Quran and its tradition with a view to promote a composite culture in the Indian sub-continent, by combining Indian *Bhakti* (love) tradition, *Vedanta* (renunciation) and *Sūfi* mysticism.

It has been noted that *Sufism* incorporated the religious and cultural values existing in the other communities and it became the bearer of social and cultural revolution of that time. Sufism provided the key, necessary for opening the door to a true encounter with other religions. Sufism influenced great personalities of both Hindus and Muslims. Many scholars agreed that Guru Nanak, Ramanand and Kabir were influenced by *Sūfism*.³ *Sufism* considered the adherents of other faiths are spiritual neighbours. It emphasizes that inner spirit in all religions is the same, though there may be variations outwardly. *Sūfism's* approach to the Reality and its

consideration on the various view points of Reality seems very near to the Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda*. What is important, therefore is, how the authoritative texts of a religion is interpreted by its adherents and it is that determines the nature of the response of those people to other faiths.

Gandhian approach to communalism in Contemporary India is the core part of this research. When Gandhi entered in the national scene, it has been noted that, he had to face four kinds of defiant forces competing one another in the National Movement. They are: (a) Indian National Movement (b) Hindu National Movement (c) Muslim National Movement (d) Subaltern Movement.

Among the Hindu National Movements, the Extremists glorified the *Vedic culture* and presented Indian culture as exclusively Hindu culture and encouraged the growth of militant nationalism in India. The British policy also widened the breach between Muslims and Hindus. Savarkar's treatise of '*Hindutva*' influenced the Extremists and established R.S.S. Their demand for a Hindu *Rashtra* and maintenance of racial unity of Hindus created an atmosphere to demand for a Muslim nation by the Muslims.

The Subaltern leaders were against the upper caste Hindus and their interpretation of scriptures and Indian History. The Subaltern leaders provided a vision for an alternative cultural identity of the people based on *non-Āryan* and low caste perspectives. They were against the theory of *Vedic culture* as the basis of Indian culture. Hence their movement was for a revival of the values of the *non-Āryan* religion and culture of the

pre-Vedic period, which has been distorted by the illegitimate interpretation of upper caste Hindus.

Gandhi observed that the concept of nationalism, national identity and national loyalty has turned into group egoism, sectarian identity and religions loyalty consecutively. Religion has become a divisive force through its exclusive dogmatic interpretation rather than a spiritual force for synthesis of various cultures and faiths. Gandhi firmly believed that since religion is the matrix of culture, providing values, religion gives impetus to cultural change and subsequently dispenses room for a social revolution. Hence Gandhian approach to communalism in contemporary India is for a cultural transformation by providing religious base in the real sense of the term 'religion' through new hermeneutics of scriptures. Hence he preached the doctrine of equality of religions.

Gandhi was a synthesizer of *Āstika*, *Nāstika* and *semitic* religions. In order to synthesize these religions Gandhi has taken religious literature from these religions supporting for a pluralistic approach to religions and cultural diversity. Thus for example the researcher has taken two concepts, i.e., '*Advaita*' from *Āstika* religion and '*Anekāntavāda*' from *Nāstika* religion from a couple of significant statements, Gandhi made in Young India.

Gandhi interpreted '*Advaita*' as a universal religion (*dharma*) not as a customary religion. In '*Advaita*' he could see a universal religion, all comprehensive, all embracing and all-inclusive rather than exclusive. *Advaita* holds that the entire universe has been emanated out of a single divine source. Therefore there is a spiritual unity of mankind. Hence there

is no room for any kind of discrimination on the basis of religion. Further it has been discussed that according to '*Advaita*' there is no individual salvation is possible, but that one has to wait until the whole world is ready for salvation. Therefore '*Advaita*' promotes the doctrine of the greatest good of all, i.e., Sarvodaya or the doctrine of Universal Welfare, which is also implicit in the first verse of the *Iśovāsyopanīṣad* i.e., '*Iśavāsyam idam Sarvam*'. What attracted Gandhi to '*Advaita*' was not its religious prescriptions or the mystic experience, but its propensity to accommodate the positives and eliminates the negatives of different religious persuasions. Hence Gandhi finds the Hindu concept '*Advaita*' has unique qualities of tolerance and synthesis. Gandhi firmly believes that the Indian civilization built on the *Advaitic* worldview and value system was always receptive to every new culture and was prepared to shed its dogmatism and rigidity in order to work out a new synthesis.

Gandhi believes along with Gaudapada and Vivekananda that the conventional theism is exclusive, which will create conflict in the society. Gandhi believes that in order to see the unity of religions one should go beyond the conventional theism, and at least conceptually or intuitively have a vision of *Advaita*. *Advaita* educated all a technique of 'looking at all religions with an equal eye.'

Gandhi preached universal brotherhood and fatherhood on the basis of his interpretation of the *Advaitic* principle. Hence Gandhi finds *Advaita* could accommodate not only the religions proposed by Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Savarkar, Hedgewar and Golwalkar, but the religions of antiquity of the Subaltern leaders. This religion has a

universal worldview comprised the values of *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, self determination autonomy, self-knowledge, self-discipline, social co-operation and community relationship of universal brotherhood and fatherhood. Gandhi believes that the above worldview, value system, and community relationship would bring a new culture and civilization. It is a synthesis of different cultures. This '*Hindutva*' culture also provides equal opportunities and equal rights to all citizens of India. This is same as Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee spoke during his recent visit in Kerala: "India belongs equally to all her citizens and communities not more to some and less to others."⁴ Only this synthetic culture of '*Hindutva*' promote secularism enshrined in the Constitution, which is appropriate to our tradition of religious harmony and inter-religious co-existence.

It has been discussed that religions often make different truth claims, combined with different historical cultural back grounds shape different identities which not only make it often difficult for people to understand each other, but also contradict and exclude each other, so that it is difficult to create a common worldview with common structures and goals acceptable to all. Thus religious and ethnic differences have been the source of many divisions and conflicts, of blood shed and war. But Gandhi affirms his position with the Jaina Philosophy of *Anekāntavāda* pointing to its relevance for an alternative paradigm to counter the absolutistic truth claims of certain religions. Gandhi believes that the theory of *Anekāntavāda* has the capability to synthesis different perceptions on reality; it may be an alternative to counter exclusivistic and inclusivistic interpretations of religious leaders.

Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* may be looked as a shift from unawareness and insouciance to the new recognition of our global interdependence in spiritual matters. Hence, Gandhi finds, religious plurality can become an important source for mutual enrichment rather than a cause for communal tension. Therefore, Ursula King rightly says that if we honestly seek to answer the contemporary challenging questions of how we can meaningfully recognize and learn from each other in mutuality and trust, we must begin to explore together the specific insights, moments of revelation, spiritual treasures and teachings which our respective cultures and faith traditions have accumulated and handed down from one generation to the next.⁵ It is by religious faith that the lives of countless people in the past have been nourished, sustained, and transformed. Further Gandhi finds Indian civilization has been dominated by the spirit of synthesis, absorption, assimilation and co-existence. In *Young India* Gandhi says that Indian civilization was a 'synthesis of different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life and that, in turn have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil.'⁶ It was not wholly Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, but a fusion of all of them. Therefore, Gandhi firmly believed that India has the heritage of a "unique spirit" of tolerance, synthesis, and co-existence which has received from the religions of antiquity promoted to develop a 'faculty for assimilation' and 'amazing tolerance of opposite ideas.'⁷ Thus if the adherents of any religion imbibe and follow this 'spirit' in the interpretation of religious literature, the existing experiences of division, strife and violence would be swept away.

Gandhi also finds a synoptic and many-sided outlook in *Anekāntavāda* epistemology. Therefore, he acknowledged that truth could be gathered by *Samvāda* or dialogue. It offers the possibility of not only gathering the truth, it also de-absolutises and relativises truth. Gandhi firmly believes in the importance of dialogical relationship for a peaceful living. More often, he attributed the synthetic culture of India to India's pluralistic epistemology. Since it sincerely believed that truth was infinite, all human perceptions of it were necessarily limited and partial, and that every individual should live by the truth as he saw it. From this pluralistic epistemology India developed the spirit of not just tolerance but also mutual respect, curiosity and dialogue. Therefore, the Gandhian interpretation of *Anekāntavāda* of Jainism offers a paradigmatic significance in a pluralistic context. Since this concept comes to us from one of the oldest living religions of India, which developed, outside the pale of *Vedic* religion, it seemingly accommodates the position of *Vedantic* (*Āstika*) and *Buddhistic* (*Nāstika*) conceptions of reality in a harmonious synthesis. Therefore, Jaina concept of *Anekāntavāda* epistemology can promote a non-violent culture in the Indian sub-continent, for culture signifies cultivation of mind, body and spirit.

Values are the dynamic forces that control and guide human actions. Mankind is passing today through an all-encompassing crisis, which is in true sense a cultural crisis, i.e., crisis in values in human life or some call it as the crisis of the conflict or struggle of values between different civilizations. But Gandhi affirms that since religious resources are common property of the whole humanity, *Anekāntavāda* interpretation

encourages gathering values from all religions to have a spiritual progress of humanity, which is the principle of synthesis for a true civilization. Gandhi so well articulates this in his idea of “cultural rootedness” or the principle of *Swadeshi*. He is well aware that ‘no civilization can live and flourish in exclusion. No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.

Therefore, Gandhi proposed a synthetic culture to curtail contemporary communalism in India. In order to have a synthetic culture, Gandhi adopted a methodology of dialogical approach among religions. Gandhian *āshram* atmosphere clearly depicts a synthetic culture. Some of the *āshram* vows are dialogical nature. *Āshram* prayers are settled to have a growing experience of inter-religious relations. Further he firmly believes that any hermeneutics of religious scriptures and concepts within the cultural context is essential to have a dialogical approach. This is a sign of growth in maturity.

The life of people in India has been nourished for thousands of years not only by one scripture of a religion but also by different scriptures, i.e., for Hindus have their *Prasthāna traya* of *Upaniṣads*, *Brahma Sūtra* and *Bhagavad Gītā*. The Buddhists have *Tripitaka*, Christians have *Bible* and Muslims have *Quran*. Over and over again in the history of Indian people, powerful renewal movements emerged; somehow they have been nourished by profound re-interpretations of scriptures. It is *bhāṣyas* (commentaries) that have pointed out new directions to the movements in India. Gandhi firmly believes that, only through a non-violent movement, supported by the pluralistic interpretations of scriptures, India can be freed from the communal clutches of religious legitimation. Therefore, Gandhi whole-

heartedly worked for rescuing society from the religious legitimation through a pluralistic interpretation of scriptures, thus provides religious values, and is sources of inspiration and encouragement to people who wish to transform the communal culture.

Gandhi finds, *Anekāntavāda* proposes that reality is complex in nature and consists of innumerable characteristics. Therefore, different scriptures are the responses of the one reality in different existential questions and aspirations of people in different situations. One cannot therefore, approach the scriptures of our neighbours with absolute notions of the 'exclusive' inspiration from reality. Therefore, Gandhi firmly believes that the scriptures of other religions should not be subordinated to any scripture but regarded as valid and authoritative to those who accept them because they are based on their own particular 'faith experience'. Hence no hermeneutics by itself will yield Truth in its fullness. Therefore, in a pluralistic context, Gandhi finds the theory of *Anekāntavāda* offers a standpoint, which ushers healthy reciprocity among religions to assimilate and adopt whatever may be good and capable of assimilation. This views well across with the Indian spirit of synthesis, that is, the principle of unity in diversity. In the words of Ashis Nandy "permeability of boundary which allows new influences to flow in and be integrated – one may call the process of traditionalization – and for some cultural elements as it were to flow out and get detraditionalised ..."⁸ This process of synthesis in Indian culture is described by Dr. Radhakrishnan as "Conservative liberalism."⁹ Gandhi does not want his house to be closed without windows. He wants the cultures of all the land to be flown about his house

as freely as possible. He wants to build a new culture with the values of all religions and traditions. Therefore, Gandhi preached all religions are equal and they all lead to the same goal.

Today movements are launched with communal violence and quelled with more violence. Bloodshed is continuously unabated, communal riots erupt on the flimsiest of provocations. This is more important in the sense that, we have been unable to overcome or stop violence-by-violence or forcible methods. Gandhi had opposed and rejected the theory of return-a-blow-for-a-blow or bullet for a bullet, which was not the solution of any of our problems. Communal violence does not see or escape a Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh or Christian or anybody else. Communal virus creates undesirable and unethical values such as anger, hatred, suspicion and spirit of revenge. Therefore, communalism cannot be removed until and unless we all, irrespective of our caste, colour and creed, cultivate in us higher values and virtues such as liberal attitude, truthfulness, humanity, compassion, tolerance and love in kindness, which Gandhi preached through out his life. Culture is the symbolic system that people construct to make their world, life and society meaningful. Gandhi believes since religion is affirmed as the sole source of values, it is tantamount to affirm that religion determines the whole culture of a community.

Gandhi as a staunch man of religion firmly believes that religion has an identity and autonomy within culture. It is the perspective of the ultimate that provides values that not only governs action but also challenges some aspects of the worldview and value system.

We have to go further for glorious future, not by negating other religions and cultures but by recognizing, accepting and imbibing eternal values from different religions with a synoptic view as Gandhi had shown.

Thus Gandhian approach to communalism is a meaningful step in the proper direction, but this single step should not be considered as a panacea or a single pill or tablet course for the eradication of serious disease of communalism. However, this one step of humility, tolerance, liberal attitude of self-restraint, self-purification, love, compassion and kindness can show as the proper way to go ahead for the second step **to reach our destination – communal harmony, peace and amity.**

In the **new millennium** if we follow **the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi**, we may sure that this country of ours will survive as it has survived for centuries, for many more centuries and his philosophy will make a healing of nations and bringing of people together.

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