



STUDY ON MAHATMA GANDHI & MUSLIM'S OF INDIA

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi possessed a sound knowledge of Islam and of the life and teachings of Prophet Mohammed. Gandhiji himself had declared that he had read the holy Quran and the life of Prophet Mohammed many times. Muslim friends and clients of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa as well as his Muslims friends in India provided him some literatures on Islam and on the life of Prophet Mohammed. Mahatma Gandhi had claimed to read all those literatures very carefully. In addition, he also claimed to have understood those literatures to a great extent. Mahatma Gandhi had read the translation of the Holy Quran and other Islamic literatures produced by Thomas Carlyle, Maulana Shibli Numani, Maulana Syed Amir Ali, Abdullah Suhrawardy, Dr. Mohammed, and Sir Ross Massod. Also, Mahatma Gandhi regularly carried on sympathetic debates with eminent Islamic scholars like Maulana Mohammed Ali, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. M.A. Ansari, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mohammed Mujeeb, Syed Abid Hussain, Dr. Zakir Hussain and others. Gandhiji believed that Prophet Mohammed was a seeker of truth. He was God fearing and he suffered endless persecution. Time and again, Mahatma Gandhi had asserted that Islam has not been kept alive by the sword, but by the many sufi saints and scholars with high sense of honour whom it has produced. Therefore, he firmly believed that the Holy Quran stresses mercy and patience as the essential human virtues. Keeping in view his understanding of Islam and the Holy Quran, it appears that Mahatma Gandhi, more or less, lived an Islamic life.

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Introduction: Gandhiji has never cherished the achievement of the Independence of India along with the emergence of communal passions and communal holocaust between the Hindus and the Muslims. The frail old man went from place to place, seeking to establish peace and goodwill while there were European Scientific Journal April 2017 /SPECIAL/ edition ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431 284 enmity and strife. He went to Noakhali to soothe the Hindus who had suffered from Muslim atrocities. He went to Patna to heal the sufferings of the Muslims who had suffered from the hands of Hindus. He went to Delhi and he proposed to visit Pakistan. Everywhere and each day, he preached love and communal amity. 6 Lastly, Mahatma Gandhi had to sacrifice his life at the altar of the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity when he was shot dead by a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse, in the evening of January 30, 1948. This seventy-eight year old man took three bullets in his chest while standing. This he did in order to shun hostility and establish love, peace, and harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims. In this research paper, I have made a humble attempt to study the efforts made by Mahatma Gandhi for the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity right from the days of the Khilafat Conference up to the last day of his life. Based on my understanding, this entire period may be divided into five phases. During the first phase

i.e. from 1919 to 1924, Mahatma Gandhi was successful enough to achieve the Hindu-Muslim unity to a larger extent. It was the phase when thousands of Hindus and Muslims marched together for the courses of Khilafat Movement and Non-Cooperation Movement. From 1925 to 1936, which may be called the second phase, the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi for the course of the Hindu-Muslim unity were hampered. Thus, this is because of the new founded agenda of the Provincial Muslim Political Organizations and of the All India Muslim League. During the third phase, i.e. from 1937 to 1942, while Mahatma Gandhi was more concerned with the war issues and the Quit India Movement, the All India Muslim League and M.A. Jinnah had further weakened his mission regarding the maintenance of the communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims. From 1943 to the middle of 1946, which may be called the fourth phase, Mahatma Gandhi reached out in every possible measure and every possible negotiations with M.A. Jinnah. Thus, this was done with the All India Muslims League and with the British in order to achieve his life long mission of Hindu-Muslim unity. However, he could not succeed. During the last phase, Mahatma Gandhi was the most sadden and unfortunate person on the earth. Hence, he had to witness a serious communal holocaust between the Hindus and the Muslims.7

Mahatma Gandhi lived and worked out his social and political philosophy in the 20th century although his long stay in South Africa began already in the end of the 19th century. He faced discrimination and racism in that British colony and later developed novel methods of challenging the abuse of power and authority. Among those methods the most famous is Satyagraha, or non-violent civil disobedience and resistance. It not only influenced the Indian freedom struggle but also struggles for national liberation and social emancipation in many other parts of the world. These days one hears quite so often that the 21st century is going to be an Asian century. Such optimism is justified because after several centuries we find Asian societies exuding great dynamism and progress. East Asia, South East Asia, China and now India are emerging as engines of great economic growth and many hope that this contagion will spread westwards into the mainly Muslim-majority countries of west and central Asia. But a 21st Asian century characterised by economic growth and rapid industrialisation and urbanisation will be very different from Gandhiji's worldview of a good society constituted by self-sufficient villages based mainly on a natural economy. Rather his idyllic good society will be a sure casualty of the 21st century market economy Juggernaut impacting Asia. But one can wonder if it will suffice to pursue economic growth and become successful consumers of ever increasing gadgetry? In that case will this not be a century of extremes too or perhaps of contrasts between the successful and the failed; the haves and the have-nots; the powerful and the weak? Will it not then be a continuation of the Western century but with some Asian trappings?

Mahatma Gandhi & Hindu-Muslim Relations

Given the challenges of cultural and religious diversity and the threats of terrorism that the 21st century will face, there are good reasons to believe that Gandhian social and political ethics will witness a revival and would need a new interpretation because massive injustices and grievances continue to haunt the destiny of humankind. Gandhi would probably define civilisation as the ability of people to live in peace in a just and fair social order, notwithstanding their differences in beliefs and cultural affiliations. On the other hand, barbarism to him would be a celebration of tribalism in its various garbs. All this can be verified by having a close and dispassionate look at how he approached Hindu-Muslim relations. He employed a number of regular practices to enhance Hindu-Muslim understanding. He also took part in some political events to create better understanding between the two communities. It would be fair to say that his practices and efforts were motivated by two primary objectives: to bring British colonial rule to an end and to keep India united.

Equal Respect for All Religions

The most important idea and practice that he introduced in his daily public interaction with people was to declare that all religions deserve equal respect. The correct wording for it is Sarva Dharma Samabhava. In its original Sanskrit meaning this Vedic adage stood for 'all religions are equal and harmonious to each other' and one can consider it the most original principle emanating from the Indic civilisation. In contrast, Middle Eastern monotheism has had great difficulty in accepting such an outlook. However, in the increasingly pluralist societies of the contemporary era equal respect for all religions is an imperative so as to create a sufficiently stable basis for social harmony. In the deeply religious and communitarian cultures of Asia Sarva Dharma Sahabhava needs very special emphasis since it corresponds more readily to the fact of strong religious affiliations and associations among individuals. However, as already noted, Gandhi did not imply by respect for all religions a dogmatic or uncritical approach to how established religion impacts on society and social relations. His struggle against untouchability as alien to the spirit of what he believed was Vedic Hinduism is ample testimony of his efforts at reform from within. When he spoke about religion he had in mind the deepest moral and spiritual values such as truth and kindness within religious systems that he emphasised. With regard to Hindu-Muslim relations his morning sessions of public prayers are particularly significant. He began the day with recitations from the Bhagwad Gita, Quran, Bible and other sacred scriptures. Doing this was an exceptional way to demonstrate that all paths lead to the same God. Many Muslims who witnessed the morning prayers have admitted to the present author that they were deeply touched by the sanctity Gandhiji accorded to the Quran. Thus Gandhi elevated Sarva Dharma Sahabhava the leitmotif of his social philosophy and gave it a dignity in his daily actions that did not exist in the past.

The Quit India Movement

Whereas Gandhi attached the greatest importance to the unity of India and to Hindu-Muslim unity as a prerequisite for it to happen it is a great irony of history that it was because of his colossal miscalculation in launching the Quit India Movement on August 9, 1942 that facilitated the partition of India. Gandhi believed that the British were about to be defeated by the Japanese who were advancing rapidly towards eastern India from Burma. Under the circumstances power should be handed over to Indians by the British and they should leave. The mass agitation that he launched was met with a firm and resolution response by the colonial government. The Viceroy Lord Linlithgow ordered the arrest of Congress leaders from top to bottom and not until the end of World War II were they released. During this period the Muslim League, which had decided to support the war effort was able to disseminate its message of Pakistan

among the Muslims. It was able to make breakthroughs in the key province of Punjab as well as in other Muslim majority provinces. The Muslim voters were convinced by the Muslim League that they would escape the humiliation of caste oppression as well as the economic tyranny of Hindu and Sikh moneylenders if they supported the creation of Pakistan.

The 1946 Election

The provincial elections held in 1946 were fought by the Congress and Muslim League from two diametrically opposite platforms: the former wanted a mandate to keep India united while the latter stood for a separate and independent, sovereign Pakistan. The election results vindicated the contradictory claims of both parties. Congress secured 905 general seats out of a total of 1585 while the gains of the Muslim League were even more impressive. It won 440 seats out of a total of 495 reserved for Muslims. It is to be noted that Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces also voted massively in favour of the Muslim League. The post-war Labour Government of Clement Atlee sent a high-powered mission to probe the possibility of a rapprochement between the two adversaries. The Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946 recommended a loose federation and overruled the demand for Pakistan. The Muslim League reluctantly accepted the Plan, but the Congress rejected it. The factor that sealed the fate of unity was the eruption of large-scale communal violence following Jawaharlal Nehru's ill-considered press statement of 10 July 1946 in Bombay declaring that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly 'completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise'.

The Assassination of Gandhi

The partition of India shattered Gandhi's ideal of Hindu-Muslim unity. But that did not deter him from continuing to hope that the relations between the two communities can become friendly once again. He even declared that he will spend one month in India and one in Pakistan. However, relations between the two states became even more hostile when both made claims to the princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. A war between the armies of the two countries broke out in Kashmir. Consequently India refused to pay to Pakistan a sum of Rs.550 million that was due to the latter as its share of the treasury of the former colonial government. On 13 January 1948, Mahatma Gandhi commenced his fast to persuade the Indian government to release the assets due to Pakistan. That was considered treason by the rightwing Hindus and on 30 January 1948, Nathuram Godse, a Maharashtrian Brahmin, shot him dead in Delhi. Not only in India did that assassination result in great outpouring of grief but also in Pakistan. In the famous first person account of the partition of India, *Freedom at Midnight*, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre observe: In

Pakistan, millions of women shattered their baubles and trinkets in a traditional gesture of grief. In Lahore, now almost entirely Moslem, newspaper offices were swarmed with people clamouring for news (p. 512).

Patriotism versus Nationalism

An important distinction needs to be made between nationalism and patriotism although the two words are often used as interchangeables and in some situations the two can coincide. Patriotism is love for the land of birth and is an inclusive term. It is perhaps one of the most universal sentiments. It does not mean hatred of others. Gandhi was committed to such an understanding of the love for India. Thus he wanted an end to British rule but did not hate the British as a people. He could even envisage Englishmen settling in India and becoming a part of South Asian society, enriching its already very diverse pluralist social and cultural order. On the other hand, nationalism in its strong sense is essentially an ethnic term. It divides the world into different nations or tribes and assumes tension and conflict between them as inevitable. In the milder sense of course nationalism means the right of a people to exercise sovereignty and that can coincide with patriotism. When it comes to Muslims, as argued above, Gandhi wanted to bring the Muslims into the patriotic anti-colonial struggle against the British. He recognised that Indian Muslims were in an emotional and religious sense affiliated with a universal community, but rather than hold this against them he tried to win them over by coming out openly in favour of the Khilafat Movement. The Khilafat movement (1919-24) originated in India in the aftermath of Ottoman Turkey's defeat in the First World War. The institution of Khilafat or caliphate was established in 632 following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Thereafter, it symbolised continuity of Islamic political sovereignty. Sunni Muslims all over the world recognised the Ottoman sultan as their caliph – more in a symbolic and emotional rather than political sense. Thus, when the war broke out, Indian Muslims were confronted with a veritable moral and religious crisis: how to continue associating themselves religiously with the caliphate while simultaneously maintaining good relations with their British rulers. A way out was found by agreeing to remain loyal to the British on the understanding that the caliphate will be spared and suzerainty over the Muslim holy places in the Middle East continue to be vested in the Ottoman sultan. However, an Arab revolt in 1916, masterminded by British agents, under the leadership of Sharif Hussain of Mecca hastened the defeat of the Turks. The victorious allies now wanted to penalise the Ottomans severely by depriving them of their remaining non-Turkish areas. Among them, British Prime Minister Lloyd George was the most vengeful. Most crucially, the allies wanted to confer

sovereignty over the holy lands on their Arab protégés. The Treaty of Sevres aimed virtually at reducing Turkey to an Anatolian rump state. 5 Indian Muslims felt cheated. They suspected that a sinister conspiracy against Islam and Muslims existed. Consequently many stalwarts stepped forward to mobilise support for Turkey. In 1919 some Western-educated Muslims as well as many ulama and some Sindhi pirs (spiritual divines) came together to establish the Khilafat Committee. The Muslim realised that without the support of Hindu leaders and masses they could not challenge British authority. They were therefore greatly pleased when Gandhi declared the Khilafat cause just and offered his support. He was invited to join the All-India Khilafat Committee that was set up in 1919. He served for a while as its president. Consequently, a genuine patriotic upsurge took place in which Muslims and Hindus joined ranks at all levels against colonial rule. Muhammad Ali Johar and his brother Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal, Mahmud Hasan of Deoband, Zafar Ali Khan and Abul Kalam Azad were some of the leading Muslims who took part in the movement. Some of them were incarcerated or confined to remote areas. Civil disobedience, boycott of foreign goods, rejection of government grants, titles and employment were some of the tactics employed. However, Gandhi suddenly called off the support when in some areas violence was used by the protestors. From 1922 onwards the Muslim-Hindu alliance began to crumble and instead rioting took place in many places. The most well-known being the uprising of Muslim peasants called Moplahs against their Hindu landlords. Gandhi was attacked by liberal Muslims such as Jinnah who were opposed to mass politics and mixing of religion and politics, while rightwing Hindu leaders felt that Gandhi provided a popular forum to the ulema and thus conferred legitimacy on their radical type of Islamism.

Gandhi on theory and practice of Islam

The word Islam means peace but today it invokes images of violence, totalitarianism and irrationality. (Afkhami, 1995, 33) Islam is one religion which of late has been associated with terrorism and fundamentalism worldwide. Names like ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, Taliban, Al-Shabaab, have become synonym with fundamentalism and terrorism. (Times of India, 2015, 10) The troubled spots in the world today such as Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan where violence and fundamentalism have disturbed peace are mostly associated with Islam. (The Hindu, 2015, 12) This raises the question whether Islam is a peaceful religion or not? However this is not a new question for a country like India which had a huge Muslim population living with people of other

religions at times peacefully but at others not so peacefully. Even in pre independence era leaders like Gandhi had to deal with this issue.

Gandhi claimed that he had read the Quran more than once and also many books on Quran and the Prophet. (Gandhi, 1949, 235) He claimed he had read Maulana sahib's *Life of the Prophet* and also *Usva-e-Sahaba* and insisted that Islam never sanctioned destroying places of worship of other religions. (Gandhi, 1949, 139) He also claimed that the Prophet often fasted and prayed and that the Prophet had revelations not in moments of ease and luxurious living. Gandhi claimed that he had cultivated respect for Islam. (Gandhi, 1949, 94) He clearly saw the difference between teaching and practice of Islam. He regarded Islam to be a religion of peace. He claimed that there is nothing in the Quran to warrant the use of force for conversion. He also claimed that the holy book says in the clearest language possible that there is no compulsion in religion. To him the Prophets whole life was a repudiation of compulsion in religion. He argued that Islam would cease to be a world religion if it were to rely upon force for its propagation. (Gandhi, 1949, 19) He had the view that Islam in the days of Harun-al- Rashid and Mamun was the most tolerant amongst the world's religions but there was a reaction against the liberalism of the teachers of their times. The reactionaries had many learned, able and influential men amongst them and they nearly overwhelmed the liberal and tolerant teachers and philosophers of Islam. He believed that Muslims are still suffering from the effect of that reaction, but he believed that Islam has sufficient in it to become purged of illiberalism and intolerance. (Gandhi, 1949, 99)

Muslims argued with Gandhi claiming that he is wrong in saying that Islam enjoins non-violence upon its followers and that the Prophet himself met force with force at Badr. Muslims even argued that use of force is allowed on the particular occasions specified by Islam and especially against the non Muslim Government Islam prescribes only sword, protracted battle and the cutting of throat. (Gandhi, 1949, 261) Gandhi accepted that being a non Muslim he can always be challenged and hence is at a disadvantage while interpreting the Quran. However he argued that he was aware of the battle of Badr and similar incidents in the Prophet's life and also of the verses in the Quran that contradicted his claim of Islam being a peaceful religion. He asserted that it was possible that the teaching of a book or a man's life may be different from isolated texts in a book or incidents in a life. (Gandhi, 1949, 262) Same goes for the Quran and the Prophet and to Gandhi the central teaching of the Quran remained that of peace. (Gandhi, 1949, 263) Gandhi acknowledged that some passages can be quoted from Quran which are contrary to peace. But he argued that same can be found in Christianity and

Hinduism as well. He reasoned that we are all growing along with various religions. He acknowledged that the followers of Islam are too free with the sword, but in his opinion that was not because of teaching of Islam but due to the environment in which Islam was born. He argued that Islam is a comparatively new religion and is yet in the course of being interpreted. He rejected the claim of Maulvis to give a final interpretation to the message of the Mohamed. (Gandhi, 1949, 134)

He found Muslims to be brave, generous and trusting if their suspicions were disarmed. (Gandhi, 1949, 62) He however acknowledged that in his experience he has found that Muslims are as a rule bully. (Gandhi, 1949, 48) However he tried to explain this behavior by stating that although non-violence has a predominant place in Quran, the 1300 years of imperialistic expansion has made the Muslims fighter as a body. They are therefore aggressive. Bullying is the natural excrement of an aggressive spirit. Hence they have become bullies. (Gandhi, 1949, 66) He claimed to have read Quran and to him it did not sanction or enjoin murder. (Gandhi, 1949, 125) He believed that Muslims have an ordeal to pass through. He felt that they were too free with the knife and the pistol. He cautioned that the sword is not an emblem of Islam, but clarified that Islam was born in an environment where the sword was and remains the supreme law. He lamented that the sword is too much in evidence among the Muslims despite the message of the Prophet. He advised that it must be sheathed if Islam is to be what it means - peace. (Gandhi, 1949, 131).

He clarified that however good Islam may be in abstract the only way it can be judged is by the effect produced by each of its votaries considered as a whole. (Gandhi, 1949, 63) He told the Muslims that they cannot protect Islam with the lathi (stick) or sword. The age of lathi (stick) is gone. A religion will be tested by the purity of its adherents. He argued that if a religion is left to the *goondas* (criminals) to defend it, it will do serious harm to that religion including Islam. Islam will in that case no longer remain the faith of *fakirs* (mendicant monks) and worshippers of Allah. (Gandhi, 1949, 78).

He objected to destruction of Hindu temples by Muslims. (Gandhi, 1949, 71) He acknowledged that he had found difficulty in the Muslim circles about invoking reverence for Hindu Vedas and incarnation. (Gandhi, 1949, 98) He expected Muslims to tolerate other religions. He reminded Muslims that Islam is judged by their conduct. (Gandhi, 1949, 72) However he also argued that when a person of any religion does evil, it is an evil done by one person against another and each one should personally try to remove the evil because we are persons first and our religious identity is secondary. One should not blame the Muslims as a

whole for some evil committed by a person or a group of persons. (Gandhi, 1949, 22) He explained that when blood boils, prejudice reigns supreme; man whether he labels himself a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or what not becomes a beast. (Gandhi, 1949, 44)

He advised that it is no use becoming angry with all Muslims in general. (Gandhi, 1949, 24) He sought to gain Muslim friendship by right of love. (Gandhi, 1949, 26) In his characteristic non-violent arguments, he argued that if only one party were to continue its guilt and the other consistently remained patient and suffering the guilty party would be exhausted in the effort. If there is no reaction following the action the world would attain salvation. (Gandhi, 1949, 37) But if we answer an abuse with a slap a slap is returned with a kick, the kick than is returned by a bullet and so the circle of sin widens. But generally those who believe in taking a tooth for a tooth after a time forgive one another and become friends. So let us recognize this rule of mutual forgiveness and forget one another's wrongs. The easiest method of achieving peace is to give up the idea of complaining against one another and to concentrate our attention upon taking preventive measures so that there is no recurrence of madness. (Gandhi, 1949, 38)

He argued that religion is being interpreted in the lives of those who are living these messages in silence and in perfect self dedication. The seat of religion is in the heart. We have to write the interpretation of our respective faiths with our blood. (Gandhi, 1949, 135) He advised everyone to not force their views on one another. He argued that those who force others to respect their religious wishes are irreligious savages. (Gandhi, 1949, 46) He argued that an attitude of non violence in mutual relations is an indispensable condition. People must not break each other's head in respect of religious matters. (Gandhi, 1949, 47)

He believed that Muslims alone are not to be blamed for everything in every place. (Gandhi, 1949, 84) When he received reports of acts of violence by Muslims he investigated the facts before passing judgments. (Gandhi, 1949, 55) He had to deal with cases in pre-independent India where Muslims had abducted Hindu boys and girls who were forced to embrace Islam. The remedy he suggested was non-violent resistance and if that is not possible than through most violent self-defense. (Gandhi, 1949, 119) He received complaints that Muslim men invade Hindu quarters and insult Hindu women. They also take forcible gifts from Hindu shopkeepers. (Gandhi, 1949, 152) Gandhi termed such men who let their women be abused and their goods be taken by force cowards. He said where there are cowards there are going to be bullies. Hence the cowards need to be taught how to be brave. (Gandhi, 1949, 152) But at hearing about murders of Hindus he asked out loud if Muslims are

practicing terrorism. (Gandhi, 1949, 282) He declared the Khaksar organisation to be a militant organization in 1940. (Gandhi, 1949, 301)

However he claimed that he can never be an enemy of Muslims no matter what any one or more of them may do to him. (Gandhi, 1949, 163) His ultimate remedy was to deal with the wrong but not to hurt the wrong doer. (Gandhi, 1949, 163) Thus to him the ultimate answer lay in the concept of 'Live and Let Live' or mutual forbearance and toleration in life. He claimed that this is the lesson he had learnt from the Quran. (Gandhi, 1949, 236) In his opinion, religion binds man to God and man to man and hence Islam binds not only Muslim to Muslim; but also Muslim to non-Muslims. The message of the Prophet was not just for Muslims and if anyone claims to the contrary he does greatest disservice to Islam and is poisoning the minds of Muslims. (Gandhi, 1949, 310)

In fact when he was travelling to quell Hindu-Muslim riots in Bengal, he always carried the Gita, the *Quran* and the *Bible*. (Gandhi, 1949, 500) He appealed to Muslims to do away with *pardah* system. (Gandhi, 1949, 502) When some Muslims objected to this and said that Gandhi had no right to speak on Islamic Law, Gandhi countered by saying that this is a narrow view of religion. He hoped that this narrow view was not shared by other Muslims. He claimed the right to study and interpret the message of Islam. He said that Islam was not a creed to be preserved in a box. It was open to mankind to examine it and accept or reject its tenets. (Gandhi, 1949, 523) He also appealed that women folk should be rescued from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition. (Gandhi, 1949, 506)

He considered himself to be as good a Muslim as he was a Hindu and an equally good Christian and Parsi. (Gandhi, 1949, 538) During his prayer meetings, he always included verses from the *Quran Sharif*. He reminded people of folly of looking upon one religion as better than another. (Gandhi, 1949, 585) Some people at times objected to recitation from the *Quran* when prayer meeting was being held in the Valmiki Temple. He preferred not to hold the prayer meeting without the recitations from the *Quran*. (Gandhi, 1949, 584) When some Muslims objected to his reading of Arabic verses from the *Quran*, he refused to accept the objection. He asked why cannot he acclaim Mohammed as his Prophet. (Gandhi, 1949, 589)

He advised both Hindus and Muslims to not look towards leaders for solutions but to look towards themselves and if they did than their desire for peace would be reflected by the leaders. (Gandhi, 1949, 505) He quoted from the Prophet that, "A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe. No man is true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself. The most excellent *jihad* is that for the conquest of self.

Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim." (Gandhi, 1949, 509)

He welcomed inter-religious marriages with mutual friendship and respect for religion of each other. (Gandhi, 1949, 542) He did not believe in state religion and opposed state aid to religious bodies. He only wanted schools to give ethical teachings as fundamental ethics were common to all religions. (Gandhi, 1949, 543).

Conclusion

A revival of the Gandhian legacy on Hindu-Muslim relations is an imperative to save South Asia from the disaster of an armed confrontation between India and Pakistan that could involve the use of nuclear weapons. Such a war will render this region unfit for human habitation for centuries. But his message of peace and peaceful resistance to injustice is for all humanity and all societies can learn a lot from his idea of equal respect for all religions. Therefore, the Gandhian legacy on inter-communal relations deserves to be studied once again.

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