CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION
A. Spiritual Foundations of Gandhian Philosophy

The study of comparative religion is one of the most important enterprises of our time. Of all the factors that account for the peculiar shape of a culture and the outlook of its people upon themselves and upon the world around them, religion must be taken as among the most primary. It occupies an important place in almost every age and society in human history down to the present. It relates to the wellsprings of individual and social life and raises central questions regarding human life and destiny. Religion is an extraordinarily interesting side of humanity, and one neglects it at the risk of failing to understand human life, society, and history.

Gandhi believed that education without the study of religions is incomplete. Religion, in its varied forms, is not only a legitimate intellectual pursuit but a vital aspect of human culture and civilization. Reminiscing about his early life, Gandhi regretted very much the lack of facilities to study religion at school. But he made this up later by devoting a good measure of his time and energy to the study of comparative religion. This study exercised a profound impact on the course of his life. In the first chapter of the present work, I have discussed the diverse religious influences that shaped Gandhi's life.
The study of religions, for Gandhi, was not a purely theoretical or academic matter; it was also a practical and existential necessity. He was, therefore, interested in living religions, not dead ones. Whether in England or South Africa or India, he was invariably involved with the question of religious diversity and the problem of forging unity among the followers of different religions through inter-religious understanding. His own life was dedicated to the search for Truth, and the different ways through which human beings pursued Truth interested him exceedingly. And in the course of his "experiments with Truth", he developed an enlightened and constructive approach to the study of all religions. The second chapter analyzes his critical and constructive study of our major, living religions with which he was confronted, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

The lack of sensitive understanding of one another's faith has often led the practitioners of religions to mutual recrimination and even bloodshed. People quarrel about religion when they lose sight of the human dimension of all religions. This situation is, in no small measure, due to the fact that religious believers have generally insufficient opportunities for and interest in knowing about the values and insights in world religions; indeed, there is pervasive ignorance of the creative principles of all faiths. Whatever the reason, for such a state of affairs in the past, Gandhi felt that it cannot be allowed to continue. Modern men and women need to
expand their religious consciousness by understanding in depth the spiritual truths revealed in other faiths. Gandhi's own study of the fundamentals of different religions made him better understand his fellow men and women and enabled him to develop a universal and integrated view of religion and its significance in the history of humanity. This theme is explored in the chapter entitled "Principles of Creative religion".

The study of comparative religion enabled Gandhi to cooperate with the followers of other religions in realizing the higher ideals of life. It showed that all religions have a common objective, namely, the disciplining of human beings so that they may attain self-transcendence and fulfillment. He discovered for himself that all religions have elements of truth, and none is in exclusive possession of the whole truth. Therefore, he accepted all great religions as necessary and essentially true. He considered the uniqueness of each religious tradition as something precious, and therefore, to be cherished by the followers of all religions. He believed that the study of religions would contribute to healthy religions pluralism, which would respect genuine religious differences. In this connection, he formulated the concept of "reverence for dharma", which is expanded in the chapter on "Inter-religious relations."

Gandhi reflected deeply on some persisting problems of all religions and suggested ways and means of dealing with them.
These have been discussed in a separate chapter. And the last chapter presents the conclusions of the study.

B. The Diverse Religious influences on Gandhiji

No thinker in modern times has perhaps experienced so keen a struggle within himself regarding the momentous issues of religious faith as has Mahatma Gandhi. His whole life was one unceasing quest for anchorage of faith in a "living God." His was a personality in which the deepest strand was the religious. It was the religious motivation that made his life a compelling example and the center of attention of people throughout the world. For him the best kind of life was the life of good deeds and selfless service to humanity. Though he did not yield himself to the persistent efforts made to convert him to a religion other than his own, he could incorporate the insights of other religions into his in an endeavor to realize the inner truths of all religions. Faith and reason, the spiritual and the ethical, had so blended in him that he was able to steer clear of the irrational superstition that smother what is of inestimable value in religion.

Further, though he opened his mind to the powerful influences of modern thought currents, he never gave up his roots in his religious faith and held on to them valiantly in his life-long pilgrimage toward the realization of truth. He focused his attention on the necessity of living religiously. His religious consciousness was both mystical and prophetic; he made social life his field of research. He insisted on truth and non-violence in every sphere of
life. For him, religion and truth were so coequal that his religion may be said to be the religion of truth; and the way to it was *ahimsa*, non-violence. Thus, truth and non-violence constituted "the essence of his faith: twin suns around which all the lesser planets of his faith revolved"¹. It is therefore not by accident that Gandhi called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

The environment into which the child Mohandas Gandhi was born had certain elements that moulded and shaped his life and mind. He belonged to a highly respected Vaisya family; he was a Vaisnava by faith. The members of his family were noted more for piety and honest living than for wealth or scholarship. Kaba Gandhi, the father of Mohandas has no education save that of experience;² he was truthful, brave, and generous, but short-tempered³. He rose to be Dewan of Rajkot and later of Vankaner in Kathiawar.

Mohandas' mother was a deeply religious woman who went to the temple daily, never took a meal before prayer, and frequently undertook fasts, which she kept faithfully. Gandhi had a deep and steadfast love for his mother. The gentleness of her character and her deep piety made a profound impression on him from his

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earliest years. Throughout his life, he was concerned with the cultivation and appreciation of at least three virtues of the Hindu faith in which he was brought up by his mother; ahimsa (non-violence), brahmacharya (celibacy), and aparigraha (non-acquisition). It was in such a background that his early years were spent. The roots of his emotional makeup and intellectual creativity lay in Hindu religious texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Bhagavadgita, the Upanishads, and the Vaisnava lyrics. G.F. Andrews observes, "The more we study Mahatma Gandhi's own life and teaching, the more certain it becomes that the Hindu religion has been the greatest of all influences in shaping his idea and actions. He is in no sense a literalist or a fundamentalist in his adherence to the Hindu scriptures. His extraordinary tolerance and sympathy with other faiths colours his whole outlook on human life, and makes him at times seem nearer to the acceptance of an indeterminate position than he really is. But his mother's influence as a devout and gentle Hindu saint perpetually returns to his mind and conscience, making the fragrance of the ancient Hindu texts so sweet that nothing else in the world can compare with them, to his own imagination, in beauty and truth and sweetness."

At school, he was shy and kept himself aloof from his classmates. He liked to go to plays. The play Harischandra, based

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on a story from the epic Mahabharata, had aroused his imagination in his early years. The ordeals undergone by Harischandra for his devotion to truth made a deep impression on him. He asked himself, "Why should not all be truthful like Harischandra?".5

In the life of the Gandhi family, religion played a vital part. In Kathiawar, Jainism exercised an enduring influence along with Vaisnavism. Gandhi's non-violence, vegetarianism, and many other traits of his religious personality date from his very early years. His father had friends in all faiths, who visited him frequently for religious discussions. Young Mohandas, while attending on his father, listened to these discussions with Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Jains, and adherents of other religions. During this period, he also read the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, and the Manusmriti from his father's library. All these made him very tolerant in his religious ideas, and unsectarian in nature. He later wrote, "In Rajkot, however, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father and mother would visit the Haveli as also Shiva's and Rama's temples, and would take or send us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father, and would go even out of their way to accept food from us- non-Jains."6 But his earliest

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impressions of Christianity were disturbing. "In those days, Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their Gods," and many Hindus converted to Christianity ate beef and drank liquor.

His old burse, Rambha, advised him to take refuge in Ramanama (repetition of the name of Rama), to be rid of his childhood fears that assailed him at night. In his later days, he found the repetition of Ramanama a source of great strength and solace and it because a part of his daily life. Indeed it was Rama that he called upon when his should take flight to God.

In his teens, Gandhi was for some time drawn towards atheism. His doubts were not adequately answered by the religious writings that came his way. He found, for instance, that Manu approved of meat-eating. But even then, he had a regard for morality as the basis of all things, and for truth as the substance of morality. "Truth became my sole objective," he wrote. "It began to grow in magnitude every day, and my definition of it also has been ever widening."*

Before he left for England in 1888, to qualify himself as a barrister, his mother made him take three solemn oaths; "not to

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* Ibid., p. 34
touch wine, woman, and meat." This vow he kept religiously despite many temptations to break it.

Because of his journey to a foreign land, his own caste people excommunicated him. And even though, later, he performed purificatory rites, orthodox prejudice kept him out of the caste fold. This caste denial caused no resentment in him. It rather taught him how artificial the barriers of caste were, and he came to realize intensely the cruelty of seeking to restrict human fellowship.

If Gandhiji is used to found himself entirely absorbed in the service of community, the reason behind it was his desire for self realization. He had made the religion of service his own. As he has felt that God could be realized only through service. And service for him was the service of India, because it came to him without his seeking because he had an aptitude for it. He had gone to South Africa for travel, for finding as escape from Kathiawad intrigues and for gaining his own livelihood. But as he said, he used to find himself in search of God and striving for self-realization.

Christian friends had whetted him appetite for knowledge, which had became almost insatiable, and they would not leave him in peace, even if he desired to be indifferent. In Durban Spencer Walton, the head of the South African General Mission, found him

out. He became almost a member of his family. At the back of this acquaintance was of course his contact with Christians in Pretoria. Walton had a manner all his own. He did not encourage Gandhiji to embrace Christianity. But he placed his life as an open book before him, and let him watch all his movements. Mrs. Walton was a very gentle and talented woman. He liked the attitude of this couple. They knew the fundamental differences between them. Any amount of discussion could not efface them. Yet even differences prove helpful, where there are tolerance, charity and truth. He liked Mr. and Mrs. Walton's humility, preservance and devotion to work, and they met very frequently.

This friendship kept alive Gandhiji's interest in religion. He confessed that it was impossible for him to get the leisure that he used to have in Pretoria for his religious studies. But that little time he could spare he turned to good account. His religious correspondence continued. Raychandbai was guiding him. Some friend sent him Narmada Spankar's book Dharmavichar. Its preface provided very helpful for him. He had heard about the Bohemian way in which the poet had lived, and description in the preface of the revolution effected in his life by his religious studies captivated Gandhiji. Then he came to like the book, and read it from cover to cover with attention. He had read with interest Max Muller's book, "India-What can It Teach Us"? and the translation of the Upanishads published by the theosophical society. All this
enhanced his regard for Hinduism, and its beauties began to grow upon him. It did not, however, prejudice him against other religions. He had read Washington Irving's "Life of Mahamed and His successors and Carlyle's Panegyric on the prophet. These books raised Muhammad in his estimation. He had also read a book called the savings of Zarathustra.

Thus he had gained more knowledge of the different religions. The study stimulated him self-introspection and fostered in him the habit of putting into practice whatever appealed to him in his studies. Thus he begun some of the yogic practices, as well as, he could understand them from a reading of the Hindu books. But he could not get on very far, and decided to follow them with the help of some expert when he returned to India. The desire has never been fulfilled.

He made too an intensive study of Tolstoy's books The Gospel in Belief, what to do? And other books made a deep impression on him. He began to realize more and more the finite possibilities of universal love. About the same time he came in contact with another Christian family. At their suggestion he attended the Wesleyan Church every Sunday. For these days he also had their standing invitation on him. The sermons seemed to be uninspiring for him. The congregation did not strike Gandhiji as being particularly religious. There were not an assembly goes devout souls; they appeared rather to be wordly minded people,
going to church for recreation and in conformity to custom. Here, at times, he would involuntarily alone. He was ashamed, but some of his neighbours, who were in no better case, lightened the shame. He could not go on long like this, and soon gave up attending the service.

Gandhi’s connection with the family, he used to visit every Sunday was abruptly broken. In fact, it may be said that he was warned to visit no more. It happened thus his hostess was a good and simple woman, but somewhat narrow-minded. They always discussed religious subjects. He was then re-reading Arnold’s ‘Light of Asia’. Once they began to compare the life of Jesus with that of Buddha. He said, look at Gautama’s compassion. It was not confined to mankind, it was intended to all living beings.

In studying the early years of Gandhi’s life, one can easily see in them the seeds that later flowered into full bloom. “His innate love of truth, desire for the freedom of his Motherland, love of simple things and simple people, passion for purity, even to austerity, tried courage and quiet moral strength- all these qualities were struggling within him to find suitable expression in a field of labour big enough to call them to paly.”

In England, he spent a large part of his time cultivating the personal acquaintance of several men who had made their mark in

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the fields of religion and ethics—theosophists, Christians, even atheists. He joined the Vegetarian Society of England and started a Vegetarian club in his locality (Bayswater) and became its secretary, and was an ardent propagandist for vegetarianism. The literature of the theosophists introduced him to the religious movement for the unity of religions. Edwin Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, about the life of the Buddha, made a lasting impression on him, and his English version of the Bhagavad-Gita, *The Song Celestial*, stirred him so deeply that for the rest of his life it became his constant guide. He was also much moved by the teachings of the New Testament and especially the Sermon on the Mount. The verses, “But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,” went straight to his heart. Gandhi wrote later about this experience, “My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.”¹¹ Further, from Carlyle’s *Heroes and hero Worship* he learned of Muhammad’s “greatness, bravery and austere living.”¹² He also read Washington Irving’s *Life of Mahamet and His Successors*. These books raised Muhammad in his estimation. He also gained more and more knowledge of different religious traditions. From the, he received

some of the basic principles of his life, and he became inclined towards a life in which East and West could meet.

Gandhi's life in South Africa presented to him direct experience of the bad as well as the good aspects of religion. He had hardly set foot in South Africa, in the spring of 1891, when he became involved in the racial and color conflict. One experience in South Africa changed the course of his life. He was traveling in a train with a first-class ticket, and he was turned out of his compartment to make way for a white passenger. In the midnight cold of Maritzburg, he was not allowed even to enter a waiting room, because of the color of his skin. Then the moment of decision came: should he go back to India or stay in South Africa and start a life-long struggle for human justice? He decided to stay and fight injustice, and not to flee. Once, when he was kicked by a policeman off a footpath near President Kruger's house without the slightest warning, he said to himself, "The hardship to which I am subjected is superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of color prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process."¹³

In South Africa, Gandhi met adherents of a variety of Christian sects; a Quaker who wanted to rescue him from ignorance, a Plymouth Brother, for whom religion was not necessarily related to morality, and so forth. But Gandhi was

looking for the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount in modern Christianity.

He developed a passion for serving the poor. He wrote, "If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it was my desire for self-realization. I had made the religion of service my own as I felt that God could be realized only through service.... I had gone to South Africa for travel, for finding an escape from Kathiawad intrigues and for gaining my livelihood. But, as I have said, I found myself in search of God and striving for self-realization." I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love."

When the Boer War began in 1899, Gandhi organized an Indian Ambulance Corps and offered its services to the authorities. In 1904, when plague broke out in Johannesburg, he closed his law office and devoted himself to sanitary work and the evacuation and nursing of the victims. In 1906, when the Zulu rebellion occurred in Natal, he organized from among the Indian community a stretcher-bearer company and offered its services to the Government, which accepted it with Gandhi as the Sergeant Major.

At Johannesburg Gandhi had a flourishing law practice. He gained increasing influence. His words were heeded by a large portion of Indians in South Africa. One would perhaps expect such

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15 Ibid., p. 160
a person to be satisfied with such achievements, but Gandhi was not. There was a deep hunger in him that could not be satisfied by worldly success. He could find no abiding satisfaction in material gain.

John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (which Gandhi summarized later in Gujarati under the title *Sarvodaya*) makes a critical study of modern civilization and pleads passionately for new social values. It made a decisive impression on him. A Mr. Polak had lent him a copy of the book to read during one of his journeys from Johannesburg to Durban. "The book was impossible to lay aside; once I had begun it, it gripped me. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of that book I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life."16 He realized "that a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living."17 It was an important event in Gandhi's life. He got up at dawn that morning and resolved to give up his career as a successful lawyer in order to become an Indian peasant; he decided to transform his whole mode of existence, his profession, and even his private life.

To realize the new way of life, he established an ashram, the Phoenix Settlement, near Durban. It was a little colony consisting of Indian and European friends and colleagues who lived and worked happily together in public service. While carrying on his public work, he was slowly revolutionizing his private life. A passion for simplicity and service took hold of him. He cut down the expenditure of his household, became his own barber and washerman, and taught his children at home without sending them to any school. He volunteered to become a compounder and a nurse in a charitable hospital and gave two hours of his time in the morning to this work. It was at this time that Gandhi took his vow for brahmacharya (celibacy) for life, to be able to devote himself solely to the love and service of his fellow men.

Possibly, one of the persons who exercised a most decisive influence during this period was Tolstoy, Gandhi read The Kingdom of God Is within You during his first year in Africa while he lived in Pretoria. The teaching of the book that the Sermon on the Mount was a sufficient guide to life, along with its profound sorrow concerning war, conscription, injustice, and oppression—was as if written for Gandhi. In Durban, he read some other later works of Tolstoy. The Gospels in Brief and What to Do made a deep impression on him. In answering an American correspondent, he later refers, to this and some other influences, “You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the
'Duty of Civil-disobedience' scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa. Great Britain gave me Ruskin, whose *Unto this Last* transformed me overnight from a lawyer and city dweller into a rustic living away from Durban on a farm, three miles from the nearest railway station; and Russia gave me in Tolstoy a teacher who furnished a reasoned basis for my non-violence. Tolstoy blessed my movement in South Africa when it was still in its infancy and of whose wonderful possibilities I had yet to learn. It was he who has prophesied in his letter to me that I was leading a movement which was destined to bring a message of hope to the downtrodden people of the earth.⁴¹⁸

Gandhi shaped a new political tool for the masses, *satyagraha*. The South African Indians under the leadership of Gandhi launched a non-violent struggle against the discrimination to which the Transvaal Government was subjecting them. Gandhi was arrested on the orders of General Smuts. This was his first experience of prison life (1908). After a protracted struggle for the rights of the Indians in South Africa, he achieved his first great victory. It is during this eventful period of his life that the basic outline of his religious and moral philosophy was drawn in the light of his spiritual and practical experience.

On returning to India, he founded another ashram at Sabarmati, Satyagraha Ashram, with some of his fellow workers from Phoenix. All the members of the ashram were pledged to non-violence, vegetarianism, non-possession, etc. He conducted experiments, on a vast scale, for the realization of truth through love and service of men. He started, one after another, a number of movements: hand-spinning, basic education, a campaign for Hindustani as the national language of India, a movement for the uplift of untouchables, and one for the training of women in village service. Gandhi invited an untouchable family to the ashram and its members were accepted as equals by the colony. This admission of untouchables to the ashram caused a good deal of opposition in the country against Gandhi. But in all these things he was undaunted, because he was prompted by religious longing. He wrote, "What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end."\(^{19}\)

Even while Gandhi was engaged in struggles that were not apparently religious in character (like the "Salt Satyagraha" or the "Quit India Programme"), his dominant motive was a religious one;

\(^{19}\) Gandhi, M.K., Op.Cit., p. XII.
of doing everything in a spirit of dedication to God. He wrote, 'Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavor, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbors. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate myself on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I could find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately, but I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.'

C. The promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity

Gandhi, all through his life, devoted much time and energy to the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity. He once fasted for three weeks for this cause. He said, "My penance is the prayer of a bleeding heart... it is a warning to Hindus and Muslims who have professed to love me." He wrote, "If not during my lifetime, I know after my death both Hindus and Muslims will bear witness that I had never ceased to yearn after communal peace." Earlier, he had supported the Muslims in the Khilafat Movement and agitated for the release of the Ali brothers. C.F. Andrews observes, "During one

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20 Haryan, 29-8-1936
21 Haryan, 12-10-1935
period of the Non-co-operation Movement, he made the nearest approach to Islam that has ever been made by Hinduism in recent times. He found that the devout followers of Islam, who revered the Caliph at Constantinople as the Head of their religion, had been outraged by the ignominious terms of surrender imposed upon the Command of the Faithful at the end of the war; for the victorious destroyed much of the Caliph's temporal authority, thus threatening it at its very center." He adds, "At this point, Mahatma Gandhi, whose one intense longing had always been to unite Hindus and Mussalmans together, in one common Indian nation, seized the psychological opportunity of supporting the Mussalmans in what he held to be a righteous cause. He promised them his entire devotion on behalf of their Caliph and gave himself whole-heartedly to them. Thus, this Khilafat question, which was agitating Islam, in India became for a time the direct means of a cordial reconciliation."²²

Thanks to Gandhi's efforts, India achieved political freedom in August 1947 through non-violent means. India became a friend on equal terms with England. Thanks also to the statesmanship of the British Labour Party, a great imperial power surrendered its domain smoothly and peacefully to the people it had governed for nearly two centuries. But Gandhi was then not in Delhi to celebrate the coming of Independence. He was in Noakhali in Bengal giving strength and hope to those who were sorrow-laden.

endeavoring to eliminate the distress of those who were victims of religious hatred.

In the wake of the partition of the country, hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims were killed in the Punjab, Bengal, and Bihar. Gandhi threw himself into the struggle to heal the breach between the two communities. He toured in the riot-affected areas preaching the need for peace and good will. The mob attacked Gandhi himself in Calcutta. He has become the symbol of the Hindu intransigence to angry Muslims, while his efforts to protect Muslims infuriated the suffering Hindus. He began a fast in Calcutta and worked a miracle. Lord Mountbatten, then the Governor-General of India, wrote to Gandhi, "In the Punjab, we have 55,000 soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting."\(^{23}\)

Then he traveled to Delhi, the capital was ringed with violence and shaken by murders. He spoke to the crowds, he explained that a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Christian were all brothers, sons of the same God. And he started another fast the eighteenth and the last of his life. He had reached the age of 78. He broke the fast only when he received definite assurances from Hindu and Muslim leaders that they would do their utmost to stop

violence, and when India paid over Pakistan's share in the assets of the undivided State (about 40 million pounds).

On Friday, January 30, 1948, at five o'clock in the evening, when he went out for his daily prayer meeting, a Hindu moved towards Gandhi and fired three shots with a revolver. The first shot hit Gandhi in his abdomen. He muttered "He Ram, He Ram,"; blood gushed from his abdomen and then from his heart. As he was brought into the house he lost consciousness.

It was a Hindu that had killed the Mahatma, a radical Hindu who could not bear Gandhi's insistence that violence and force should not be used against Muslims living in India. A saint had been killed by his own people.

Gandhi was not unaware of the magnitude of the problem with which he was dealing. He had to face religious fanaticism and bigotry, superstition and ignorance, selfishness and hypocrisy, even atheism and indifferentism. Many a time his was a voice crying in the wilderness. His plea for tolerance (non-violence) and reverence towards the faith of other men often fell on deaf ears. It is difficult to say how far Gandhi succeeded in establishing the relationship of love and reverence between Hindus and Muslims in India. Obviously, much more remains to be done. As he often used to say, he was only beginning the experiment with non-violence. He was just trying to put people on the road.
Gandhi wanted harmony and peace to be established not merely between Hindus and Muslims, but among the adherents of all the great religions of the world. He once wrote, "Hindu-Muslim unity means not only unity between Hindus and Muslimans, but between all those who believe India to be their home—no matter to what faith they belong." In fact, the problem that faced Gandhi in India is a world problem. With the annihilation of distance by modern science and technology, the world has become a single unit. The meeting of religions, therefore, is not confined to India only; it is now a universal encounter. The problem of the mutual relationships of the religions can no more be postponed or sidestepped. In the interests of lasting peace and harmony among the peoples of the world, the problem has to be successfully tackled. This demands a sympathetic study and understanding, on the part of believers of all faiths, of the different religions of the world. In this connection, Gandhi's life and example throw some fresh light on the problem and bring a new and sensitive approach to its solution based on mutual understanding. An attempt will be made in the following pages to spell-out and critically examine Gandhi's approach to comparative religion and inter-religious relations.

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24 Young India, 16-4-1931.