PREFACE

India is the Bhäratha-Sakti, 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 *Sarvadharma 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.

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