CONCLUSION

When Gandhi started making efforts towards Hindu-Muslim unity on his return to India he had behind him his experiences of South Africa where he had learnt that the two communities could be brought together provided a genuine effort was made to remove mutual distrust. This motivated him to seek the friendship of influential Indian Muslim leaders and drove him towards the Khilafat movement. Though conscious of the fact that it was a communal issue involving only the Muslim community, he hoped that Hindus' identification with it at a time of Muslims' distress would serve the cause of Indian unity by removing latter's distrust of the former. As already noted this experiment did succeed for a short time and according to a Congress leader, "it was a very correct thing on the part of Gandhi to have done at that particular time,..." and he "succeeded to a large extent in the objective he had in view...." 1 But the movement had its own limitations, for, the withdrawal of

the Non-co-operation movement left the orthodox Muslim leadership participating in it high and dry and the abolition of the institution of Khilafat by Turkey a few years later further added to the distance between them and Hindu leadership pursuing communal unity. No doubt, the character of the Muslim leadership upholding the cause of Khilafat was partly responsible for their drift away from Gandhian programme since most of them were religious fanatics and it was not possible for any Hindu leader to involve them in any non-religious movement. Gandhi's omission of this fact, it is argued, was responsible for his bitter experiences at the hands of some of his erstwhile Muslim colleagues after the Khilafat fiasco. Whether he was aware of this or not, he had very limited choice in selecting his colleagues among Muslims mostly because of the nature of his own technique which required for its success the support of the leaders who could move masses. In such a situation he had to rely on leaders like Ali Brothers, Zafar Ali Khan etc. who held appeal for orthodox sections among the Muslims. The character of the people to some extent determine the character of leadership. Gandhi's critics, both Hindu and Muslim, who denounce him for trusting wrong persons for the implementation of his programmes fail to take into account his limitations at a particular moment and attribute his selection only to his childlike faith in human nature.
However, the Khilafat experiment did not fail entirely as it enabled him to put a section of the Muslim elite in the mainstream of national movement and win for the Congress the support of important Muslim leaders who could serve as a link between it and Muslim masses, though they did not prove strong enough to measure swords with the separatist Muslim leadership supported by British bureaucracy.

Gandhi's early experiences of the communal problem also reveal that he was not fully conscious of the multifarious interests of the various sections in the two communities that had frustrated all attempts at settlements. It was only gradually he became aware of the problem demanding tactful handling of its various aspects. His analysis of its causes in 1924 was the first attempt to understand it in proper perspective though, according to his well-known biographer Louis Fischer, "it was more an "advocacy rather than analysis" as it "ignored the socio-economic reasons for the exacerbation of inter-community relations." No doubt, in this article Gandhi made fervent appeals to the members of both the communities to close up their ranks in view of the explosive situation which the country was confronted with. But the remedies that he suggested were not merely based on pious sentiments.

but had grown out of his understanding of social, political and economic forces underlying the tension between the two communities in various parts of the country and this understanding continued growing as he grappled with every new situation arisen out of this tension. The very fact that he tried to tackle the situation at various levels reveals his awareness of the complexity of the problem. If he could not succeed in his mission, it was because of the odds that he faced. He could neither disentangle it from the meshes of power politics nor could he create strong sources of power that could attract a large number of Muslim elite towards his programme. His failure in this regard mostly followed from the pressure of the Hindu elite, both from inside the Congress and outside, and the moves of the British who had an edge over him in keeping a section of the Muslim elite with them through more attractive proposals. The success of the alien Government in frustrating his attempts to unite the two communities led him, like all nationalists, to attribute the responsibility of keeping the two communities divided solely to its designs and moves. But Congress ambivalence over certain demands of Muslims helped the rulers, for they yielded to these demands much before the Hindu leadership in the Congress started thinking on such lines. It was not possible for any individual to remove all the deep-seated prejudices of all the Hindus in the Congress against the Muslims in such a short time.
Gandhi had certain advantages in South Africa which he missed in India when he embarked upon his struggle against the British. Firstly, all Indians in South Africa were recognised and despised as Indians and not as Hindus or Muslims. They suffered indignities at the hands of the White Government simply because they were Indians and not because they were Hindus and Muslims. This bond of common suffering strengthened Gandhi's hands in uniting them. But in India social and political processes distinguished the Muslims from the Hindus and therefore deepened the lines dividing them. Secondly, there was hardly any political organisation in South Africa before he started making attempts to unite all Indian communities against the policy of racial discrimination of the South African Government. Consequently, he had a better opportunity to give shape to an organisation according to his own ideals and techniques to implement his programme. Power politics, though not completely absent, had not yet raised any serious problems for him there. But the situation was entirely different in India where struggle for power among the elite had taken deep roots in practically all the political organisations. Communal demands and communal pressures were partly the manifestation of this phenomenon. Gandhi did not realize its import in Indian politics on his arrival in India but became conscious of it only a few years after dealing with Indian problems.
He tried to give a new direction to elite behaviour in correspondence with his approach. But he did not fully succeed in his attempt as the mental make-up of the majority of articulate sections of the political elite could not be easily adjusted to his political style. However, this lacuna could be offset by his ability to tame the masses so far as the Hindu elite were concerned since most of them yielded to him whenever they needed the support of the masses for the fulfilment of their ambitions. But this edge over the elite he missed in the Muslim community. Undoubtedly, he had a liberal approach to religion and unlike most of the Hindus of the time he highlighted the attainments and high qualities of Islam. But the Mohammedan masses were not familiar with the language that he used to communicate his message of communal unity. His was the language of a Hindu saint whose mental make-up and expression had been shaped by Hindu experiences and traditions. Some of his programmes, too, such as the eradication of untouchability not only concerned the Hindus alone but could be made to appear by his opponents as anti-Muslim. For instance, Muslim proselytisers could not take kindly to his movement for the rehabilitation of the untouchables in the Hindu community as the former constituted a rich field for their proselytising drives. The absence of the Muslims, from his programme of eradication of untouchability was not surprising.
The Muslim Press in the Punjab was not only critical of him on his visit to the province for the promotion of the Harijan cause, but even suggested in protest that "conversion to Islam would be readiest method of effecting the uplift of the Harijans." Consequently, as a result of the propaganda of his Muslim opponents, he could not command as much hold over the Muslim masses as he did over the Hindus. He, therefore, had to depend upon the Muslim elite for any political or constitutional settlement. It was here he was at a disadvantage, for, no scheme or formula could be thrashed out satisfactory to all the political groups. His opponents deliberately created misgivings among the masses about his intentions and policies and, therefore, their charges against him need to be examined afresh in the light of their vested interests. For instance, all such charges as being "a pro-Muslim or pro-Hindu" levelled against him by his Muslim or Hindu political opponents quite often lose weight when examined in the light of all the forces that shaped a political decision with which Gandhi was associated. Furthur, this study reveals that Gandhi did not rely solely on appeal to the conscience of the individuals in both the communities for the settlement of the dispute.

4. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 50/1/34.
between them. Contrary to the common belief, he did strain his nerves to hammer out schemes or formulae to meet the political aspirations of the elite in both the communities, though he was conscious that the nationalist stronghold was most vulnerable on this point because of the superior position of the British in this sphere.