The present thesis seeks to examine Gandhi's approach to Hindu-Muslim problem (1915-1936) during a crucial period of India's struggle for freedom when the widening gulf between the two communities clogged her political progress. Undoubtedly conflicting views have been expressed on this subject as Gandhi's method of tackling the communal problem has been a matter of controversy. But these views are mostly based on a partial or piecemeal study of Gandhi's efforts towards communal unity, for Gandhi's admirers endorsed whatever he said or did in this connection, while his political opponents found fault with all his moves in this direction. Consequently, our assessment of Gandhi's handling of the communal situation lacks objectivity. In order to understand and appreciate the full purport of his efforts in this direction, an attempt has been made to study them in a broader perspective relying not only on his utterances or writings or those of his contemporaries but also on the efforts that he made to tackle the problem at various levels i.e. religious, moral and political and the difficulties that he encountered in implementing his programme of communal unity.

The availability of Gandhi's correspondence with Indian leaders as well as all his writings and speeches, the private papers of his associates and opponents, biographies, autobiographies and reminiscences, both
published and unpublished, of those who were in touch with political developments during this period, and the Reports of the Intelligence and confidential files of the Government has made the task easier and fruitful.

Selection of the period of this study may demand some explanation. Gandhi started making efforts towards communal unity on his return to India in 1915 and consequently the subsequent two decades witnessed several moves made by him in this direction. So the study has been limited to this period in order to examine all aspects of the subject by making an intensive study of the material available. The period after the election of 1936-37 started moving in the direction of a situation that eroded, one by one, all channels of communication between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress and thus destroyed all hopes of finding a solution of the communal problem within the framework of one Indian nation. Hence the close of the year 1936 marks a watershed in the history of communal relations in India.

The first chapter is devoted to the study of causes of the rise and growth of this problem and the moves made by the Indian leadership in finding its solution before the rise of Gandhi in Indian politics. The second chapter bearing the title 'Religion of the Mahatma' examines Gandhi's approach to religion in order to
understand his religious and moral equipment necessary for seeking a solution of a problem that could not be separated from the religious beliefs and prejudices of the Hindus and the Muslims. The third chapter studies his experiment with communal unity in South Africa and India till the withdrawal of Non-co-operation movement. The fourth chapter evaluates his analysis of the causes of the communal problem. The fifth examines moral and psychological remedies suggested by him of the communal malady. Chapter sixth studies his moves to solve it through some constitutional and legal settlement while chapters seventh and eighth examine his efforts to tackle the problem at the political level and the difficulties confronted by him. The policy of the Government towards his efforts in this direction is discussed in the ninth chapter.

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