Gandhi traced his passion for Hindu-Muslim unity to the days of his youth. Since then, according to him, he never "missed a single opportunity to remove obstacles in the way of unity." During his Satyagrah in South Africa he had come to realise that without communal unity Indians would not succeed in securing their due rights in South Africa. Consequently, Hindu-Muslim Unity became the constant theme of his lectures and articles in the 'Indian Opinion' as his struggle against the hostile Government in South Africa grew in intensity. It became his mission to create conditions for bringing them together on a common platform since he believed that his success in this experiment in the South African Political Laboratory would be of great significance to his mother country in resolving the communal problem.

2. Ibid., Vol. IX, p.152.
He took the following measures to tackle this problem. Firstly, experience in South Africa revealed to him that religious diversity among the Indians did not prevent them from uniting for a common cause since all of them had a common heritage. So he hammered into their heads repeatedly that all of them belonged to one Indian community, whether they were Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Parsis.

Secondly, he tried to impress upon them that if each community acted in accordance with the spirit of its own religion, it would find it easier to understand and get closer to other religions. "If every community", he said, "follows its religion diligently, it will come to have faith in and consequently to cherish nothing but truth. If we practise our own religion in proper spirit, we shall not squabble among ourselves, but remain united." He himself practised this principle in the two settlements that he founded in South Africa. At the Phoenix settlement hymns from the Bible were sung besides Gujarati Bhajans and verses of the Bhagavadgita at the prayer meetings. At the Tolstoy Farm arrangements were made for Muslims to read the Koran, and Parsis the Avesta. This experiment, in the opinion of Gandhi, had its own

4. Ibid., Vol. XLIV, p.189.
reward. "The Children", he recounted, "were saved from the infection of intolerance, and learnt to view one another's religions and customs with a large-hearted charity. They learnt how to live together like blood-brothers. They imbibed the lessons of mutual service, courtesy and industry". For him it was quite illogical for Indians to fight over religious matters since all worshipped the same Being — a single entity as Allah or Ishwar. It did not matter how one worshipped, nor was there any reason to bear enmity on that account. For "we all belong to the human race; we all wear the same skin; we hail from the same land. When the facts are as simple as that, it will be nothing but folly and short-sightedness to bear implacable enmity towards one another."7

Thirdly, he laid emphasis on the importance of mutual help for breaking barriers between the two communities. He argued, "if Muslims came forward to sympathise with Hindus in what concerns the latter alone, if Hindus do the same and if both these communities act in this manner towards Parsis, will there be anyone so bereft of reason as to seek to come in the way of affection developing among them."8

8. Ibid.
Fourthly, he sought the transformation of the attitudes of the individuals towards other religions, for he believed, that if each community tried to understand the religion of others, it would automatically generate an atmosphere of religious toleration. With this end in view he tried to remove certain misunderstandings about Islam through press and platform in South Africa. As already stated he planned to translate some important works on Islam for the benefit of both the Hindus and the Muslims in South Africa.  

He considered joint endeavours for the realisation of a common goal as the best solvent of all communal and sectarian differences. With this end in view he sought to create a sense of awareness in the Indians in South Africa about their rights as members of human community which was far more important than their membership of a religious community. He was sure that the involvement of the elite of the two communities in his struggle against the South African Government would pave the way for communal unity.

Undoubtedly, Gandhi was successful in involving a number of Muslim leaders in his struggle against the South African Government. Some of them constituted the backbone of his movement. He claimed in 1908 that his

campaign in South Africa chiefly became a businessmen's campaign on account of the involvement of a large number of affluent leaders. The massive support that his movement received from the Hamidia Islamic Society as well as from a large number of Muslim workers, he explained, was one of the major causes of his success in South Africa.  

Recollecting in later years the happy experiences of harmonious relations between the two communities, he wrote, "I do not remember that there ever was a quarrel, much less a split, between the Hindu and the Mussalman boys on the score of religion. On the other hand, I know that although staunch in their beliefs, they all treated one another with respect and assisted one another in their respective religious observances."  

The picture of communal harmony in South Africa, however, appears to have been drawn only in contrast to the enormity of the problem in India. His struggle in South Africa was not completely free from tensions ensuing from communal prejudices that strained his nerves and caused him embarrassments. Sometimes his Muslim co-workers did not trust him merely because he was a Hindu. For instance, when he entered into a compromise with General Smuts over the issue of registration, most

10. C.W. Vol, VIII, p.100;  
of the condemnatory letters that he received were from the Muslims. His old colleague in South Africa H.O. Ally, the founder President of Hamidia Islamic Society, who accompanied him to England in 1906 as member of Transval Indian Deputation, lost faith in him because of certain differences, which, in the opinion of Gandhi, issued merely from religious prejudices of the former.  

Ally even wrote a letter to Ameer Ali (1849-1928) member, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, protesting against Gandhi's continued campaign against the Asiatic Registration Act, which, according to its author, ruined thousands of his co-religionists who were all traders while the Hindus were mostly hawkers. Similarly, a leading Muslim of Durban M.C. Anglia, Joint Secretary of the National Indian Congress, who suffered deportation and imprisonment as a result of Satyagrah campaign against the Transval Asiatic Registration Act, raised some objections in the course of the movement which, according to Gandhi, stemmed from religious differences between the Hindus and the Muslims there. He held the Hindus equally responsible for creating this situation as they were in a debased state and had fallen into complete disorder.

13. Ibid., F.N., p. 100.
15. Ibid,
An eyewitness account corroborates this seamy side of the Satyagrah in South Africa. In his history of Satyagrah published in 1916, Bhiwani Dayal, on the basis of his own experiences, writes that some Mohammedans in Johnesburg and Durban condemned the Hindus including Gandhi as 'Kaffirs' or 'infidels'. As a result of their propaganda, it is added, the Muslim sentiments were so much aroused that they were prepared to use physical violence against Gandhi and his followers.16

Nevertheless, such tendencies among the Muslim leaders in South Africa, as Gandhi sometimes felt, could not be solely attributed to the religious prejudices against the Hindus. Economic differences between the two communities in South Africa were equally responsible in making some Muslims raise their voice against Gandhi's decisions and policies. This is evident from the letter of Ally to Ameer Ali. All the same, these differences did not reach such heights as to paralyse all joint actions of the Indians in South Africa against the hostile Government. Fortunately, their peculiar political situation in that country prevented the rise of a class of political elite among them that subordinated every other ideal or interest to their goal of political power. Consequently,

all problems arising out of the exploitation of religious differences for political ends, that added to the communal complexities in India, were mostly absent in South Africa.

Contrasting the communal situation in South Africa with that of India, Gandhi pointed out during his pre-occupation with Indian problem that differences did not exist in South Africa between the two communities "and if these differences never assumed an acute form, that may have been to some extent due to the peculiar conditions in South Africa, but was largely and definitely due to the leaders having worked with devotion and frankness and thus given a fine lead to the community."\textsuperscript{18} He felt that both the communities realised that the one could not do without the other.\textsuperscript{19}

Besides, Gandhi's tactful handling of the situation and his selfless devotion to the good of all his fellow countrymen in South Africa created an atmosphere of trust between the two communities. For instance, when there was a question of selecting members for a deputation to England to seek the help of the Imperial Government against the Black Act, Gandhi solved the problem by brushing aside narrow sectional claims

\textsuperscript{18} M.K.Gandhi, \textit{Satyagrah in South Africa}, op.cit., p.117.  
\textsuperscript{19} C.W., Vol.IX, p.507.
of Konkanis, Patidars and Memans. He advised that the delegation should include only two persons, and beside him, there should be only one Mohammedan gentleman. Consequently, he and H.O. Ali were elected to represent their case. 20

Armed with such experiences, Gandhi on his return to India in 1915, began to find out good Mohammedan leaders, who would sacrifice for a good cause. 21 He met the Ali Brothers at Delhi in 1915 and later at Aligarh and was so much impressed by them that he even surmised that the two would be "among the Mohammedans what Gokhale was among the Hindus." 22 On the internment of Mohammed Ali, he wrote to him, "It was during the Congress sessions that I was able to get your address. I wanted to write to you to say how my heart went out to you in your troubles. Pray let me know if I can be of any service to you." 23 He planned to see Mohammed Ali when he was interned at Chhindwara but the Government did not allow this meeting as they suspected a political motive behind it. 24 Similarly, he established contacts with

22. Ibid., Vol. XVIII, p. 110.
Abdul Bari during this period. It is reported that he first heard about the Muslim leader from his disciple, Mushir Hussain Kidwai and was introduced to him during the Lucknow Congress Session of 1916. Again he visited on 3 March 1916 a Sind Muslim leader, a Mohammedan priest of great sanctity. The police took some interest in the visit but it produced no political result as they, later on, found that it has no political motive behind.

He attended the Muslim League meeting at Lucknow in December 1916, which was presided by Jinnah. Addressing the meeting he urged the Muslims to take interest in Hindu religious scriptures which would enable them to arrive at a permanent rapprochement with the Hindus. He reminded them that in the colonies "Hindus and Mussalmans had always co-operated in taking concerted measures and, if that example was followed in India, the coveted prize would soon be theirs." Similarly, he made contacts with Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari who later on became his close companions for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. He earned the gratitude of the Indian Muslim community by protesting against the internment of Ali Brothers and by urging the Government to release them. But it was his identification with the cause of Khilafat that drew him close even to the most orthodox Muslims elite.

The Sultan of Turkey was looked upon by the Muslims as the spiritual leader of Islam popularly called the Khalifa. Some Indian Muslims demanded that he should be left with the control of Jamirat-ul-Arab. Arabians desired by Muslim authorities and the holy places, Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and the Holy Shrines at Najab Kerbella, Summeria, Kazimand, and Bagdad must remain in his hands. The Indian Muslims, therefore, protested whenever there were threats to the authority of the Khalifa. The agitations of 1911 and 1915 were issued from such sentiments of the Indian Muslims. By 1918 Turkey had been occupied by the Allies and by the Treaty of Sevres, signed in August 1920, the power of the Sultan was substantially reduced. The Ottoman Empire was cut into pieces and was shared by Britain, France, Greece, Italy and the Arabs. This arrangement raised a great hue and cry among the Indian Muslims as it injured their religious susceptibilities. Gandhi took up the cause of the Muslims mostly to promote Hindu-Muslim unity as he had been convinced that mutual help in the hour of need would go a long way in promoting communal understanding in India. He, therefore, did not keep any secret about his motives underlying his support to the Khilafat movement. He expressed his inability to the Viceroy in 1918 to remain indifferent to the cause of the Muslims on the ground that "their sorrow must be our
Similarly, he said in 1920, "I hope by 'alliance' with the Mohammedans to achieve a threefold end - to obtain justice in the face of odds with the method of Satyagrah and to show its efficacy over all other methods, to secure Mohammedan friendship for the Hindus and thereby internal peace also, and last but not least to transform illwill into affection for the British and their constitution which in spite of its imperfections has weathered many a storm."29

Again, expressing the intensity of his commitment to the Khilafat, he wrote to a close associate, "If I had not joined Khilafat movement, I think, I would have lost everything. In joining it I have followed what I especially regard my Dharma. I am trying through this movement to show the real nature of non-violence. I am uniting Hindus and Muslims. I am coming to know one and all and, if Non-co-operation goes well, a great power based on brute force will have to submit to a simple-looking thing .... I cannot leave any field in which I have cultivated some strength. My Moksha lies through them. If I refuse to work in these fields, I shall not succeed in giving anything through the Ashram either."30

Gandhi's support to the Khilafat issue resulted in a rapprochement between leaders of the two communities during the period from the close of the first World War to the withdrawal of the Non-Co-operation in February 1922. Gandhi himself addressed several conferences of Muslims convened in connection with the Khilafat and it was his programme of Non-co-operation that was ultimately accepted by the leaders of the Khilafat. According to the Intelligence Report Shaukat Ali said in a speech at Budaun that "Gandhi is the Chief of India, therefore, obey his orders." In fact, Gandhi had emerged as a connecting link between the Hindus and the Muslims. The fraternisation between the two communities that followed from this policy was unprecedented in the history of this country. This could make it possible even for an Arya Samaj leader Swami Shraddhanand to address the Muslims from the pulpit of Jama Masjid. Giving an account of that meeting the Swami recorded "It was a sight for the gods to see. Pandit Ramchandra Mahopadeshak of the Arya Samaj and Maulvi Ahmad Sayed Waiz (Preacher) of the Mohammedan Church — both redoubtable champions of their several faiths — sitting side by side and supporting each

31. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 11/1921.
other in their tirades against the British bureaucracy. Similarly, an Arya Samaj leader Rambhuj Dutt and Harkrishan Lal delivered speeches in the Badshahi Mosque. On the Ram Navami day, which is a Hindu religious festival, the Hindus and the Muslims freely participated in the procession at Lahore and Amritsar. The distinction between the two communities, it was observed, was very much obliterated. The Muslims, according to an eye witness 'were vying with their Hindu brethren for promoting the success of the procession.'

Similarly, a resolution was passed at the Muslim League session at Amritsar in December 1919, prohibiting the slaughter of cows on the occasion of the Bakrid. Members of both the communities drank water from the same cups and exchanged head-gears. It was observed by some leaders that Muslim enthusiasm was, in no way, less. Those Muslims who did not participate in the Non-co-operation movement or the Khilafat movement were boycotted socially. For instance, "the Imam of the Juma Masjid at Delhi was beaten and a distinguished Muslim who was opposed to Khilafat and Non-co-operation was refused burial in a Muslim crematory."

A devoted disciple of Gandhi

35. Ibid., p. 117.
narrated that the unity between the two communities was evident from the fact that fewer cows were slaughtered and more peace was visible on the festival of Bakrid in 1921.³⁷ The Intelligence Bureau also observed that the Bakrid which took place in September 1919, passed without any disturbance and Abdu'l Bari wired to Gandhi that in order to remove all causes of friction between the two communities, no cow-sacrifice would take place in the Firanghi Mahal, Lucknow.³⁸ The mood of the Muslim leadership can be judged by the following speeches of Mohammed Ali and Hakim Ajmal Khan. In a speech at Allahabad on 16 November 1920, the former said, "that these two assemblies which they called the National Congress and the Muslim League would not be like two Wrestling Yards sending men to fight or creating dissensions but they would find them flowing like the two rivers the Ganges and the Jamuna which would unite at the Sangam with a third voluminous river Tribeni following underneath them.³⁹ Similarly, the latter in his speech as the President of All-India Muslim League said, "The question of Government appointments is no longer capable of engaging our attention to any appreciable degree, and although political rights were the subject of much controversy between them before, the Congress-League Compact of 1916 went a very long way to settle that matter."⁴⁰

Another striking feature of this unity was that there developed mutual understanding between the leaders of the two communities to participate in the deliberations of the annual sessions and conferences of their sectional or communal organisations. While in 1921, Hakim Ajmal Khan was elected Chairman of the Reception Committee, at the annual session of Hindu Mahasabha. Pandit Deep Narain Singh was elected to do the same job at the session of the Khilafat Conference in 1922.41

The enthusiasm for joint action put to shade the separatist organisations such as the Muslim League. It was generally said, "Let us decide such and such matter in the Congress and not wait for the decision of the League, as it is sure to wag its tail."42

One doubts if ever any Hindu leader received Muslim response to such an extent in his drive towards communal unity. Even Government of the day had to admit that Hindu-Muslim unity was 'more than a phrase'.43

Nevertheless, the detente between the two communities did not remove all points of friction between them. The Government Intelligence noted that

41. Swami Shraddhanand, op.cit., p.142.
42. Azim Husain, op.cit., p.243.
43. P.C. Bamford, op.cit., p.75.
Muslim leadership was not always successful in persuading their co-religionists to refrain from cow-slaughter. It was reported that an attempt to secure abstinence from the cow-slaughter in Delhi on the occasion of Bakrid in 1919 did not succeed.44

The Hindu leadership in the Congress had been all the time feeling disconcertedly, even during the period of rapprochement, that Muslim leadership was more concerned about the Khilafat movement than any other programme of the Congress. Lajpat Rai observed that in the Punjab where the Mohammedans were in majority and in the North-West Frontier Province, where they constituted 90% of the population, most of them identified themselves with the Khilafat issue and felt little for the main object of the Non-co-operation movement. They were prepared to undergo any sacrifice for the Khilafat but were not much concerned about the programmes of Non-co-operation. Consequently, while the appeal for the Tilak Swaraj Fund received little response from them, appeals for Khilafat and Angora Fund created great enthusiasm in them.45 Gandhi himself told Shaukat Ali in a letter dated 30 November 1928 that out of more than one crore of rupees collected for

44. P.C. Bamford, op.cit., p.143.
the Tilak Swaraj Fund, not even two lakhs were received from the Muslims. The former made this assertion on the basis of the audited accounts of the Tilak Swaraj Fund. At the Ahmedabad Session in December 1921, Gandhi experienced the opposition of Muslim leaders like Maulana Hasrat Mohani who complained that the brunt of the Non-co-operation was being borne by the Mohammedans and Hindus were showing lukewarm support to this movement. Similarly, he was aware that his movement had not been able to remove completely the mutual distrust between the Hindus and the Muslims. Lamenting over this situation, he wrote in Young India on 11 May 1921: "I know that there is much, too much distrust of one another as yet. Many Hindus distrust Mussalman honesty. They believe that Swaraj means Mussalman raj, for they argue that without the British, Mussalmans of India will aid Mussalman powers to build a Mussalman empire in India. Mussalmans on the other hand fear that the Hindus, being in an overwhelming majority, will smoother them." Consequently, the interest of some of the Khilafat leaders in the Congress programme started declining as soon as the Non-co-operation movement was

47. Infra. Chapter VII, p.205
withdrawn in February 1922. The Intelligence Bureau observed that subsequent to the Bardoli resolutions, indications of Hindu-Muslim friction were increasingly visible. The bureaucracy was amused to find a common joke in the Punjab that Swaraj meant 'Swah' (Ashes) for the Muslims and 'Raj' for the Hindus. Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years simple imprisonment on 18 March 1922, but he did not undergo the full term of his confinement as he had to be released in February 1924, even before the expiry of two years, on account of ill-health.

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50. Ibid., F.N., p.191; For more reflections on Gandhi and Khilafat, India, Conclusion, pp. 281-3.