INTRODUCTION

India, though unique in being multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic, has also inherited many social problems, the most worrisome among them is the problem of communalism, as actively evident especially in the periodic violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims. However, cutting across all diversity, the religions have occupied an important position in determining the social atmospheres as they have become an inseparable dimension of social life, permeating all activities including politics.

The perception of the ingroup and the outgroups of the groups involved in the socio-economic-cultural interactions, constituting the socio-psychological dynamics of the interacting milieu, would play a very crucial role in determining the social harmony or conflict operating in a social system. In the multi-cultural, multi-religious socio-cultural system like the Indian, social perception has an all pervasive, critical role in shaping all the dimensions of interaction, intra- and inter, between the culturally diverse groups.

Indian culture being basically multi-religious has many dimensions of inter-religious prejudices, stereotypes which are operative in the inter-religious social perception. Religious bigotry is a powerful dividing factor
leading to misunderstanding, hatred, social ostracism etc.

Historically viewed India as a single national entity has emerged relatively recently but with unhindered religious tension. The partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan based on religion witnessing half-a-million people being killed and many millions being rendered homeless, was very crucial in shaping the religious prejudices between Hindus and Muslims.

The prejudices, social tensions and notes of discord which emanated from the violence witnessed during partitions are being transmitted which perpetuate the cycle of prejudice. Religious chauvinism is communicated across generations. The prejudiced social constructs articulated during the troubled historical moment of partition have been active in to-day's intercultural interactions and are causing intercultural schisms.

It may be noted in the context of exploring the dimensions of social perception that India, being multi-religious and multi-cultural, has experienced social tensions of adjustment of varied degrees: from the simple expression of prejudice to maintaining social distance to violent conflicts, especially between Hindus and Muslims. India's multiculturalism is reflected, therefore, not only as its strength but also as its weakness.

The nature of social interactional processes in terms of intimacy or
distance is crucially dependent on the perceptual content of the interacting parties, i.e. the perceptions of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, in the present context, towards each other and their self-perception would also be the major dimension of the operative social dynamics.

Among the various factors which influence and structure the nature of social perception of the interacting groups, we may note the following as playing an important role: the differential accessibility to the socio-economic resources, the historical experiences as conditioned to view by the different interacting groups and, in the modern era, the impact of international events and their perceived fallout on the different interacting groups. As also the conditioning of the attribution process by the interested parties for their own gain would be playing an important role as it would be converting religious sentiments into exclusivist, narrow identity easily exploitable by the interested groups for self-interests.

Apart from the socio-economic factors and the crucial socio-cultural-historical events to which these diverse groups are exposed, it would be a matter of great curiosity to investigate whether the Emotional Quotient, which is an important dimension of the personality, would play any determinative role in structuring the social perception of these diverse cultural groups.

Explaining the importance of the concept of emotional intelligence,
Mayer and Salovey (p.15) write: "Without the concept of emotional intelligence, teaching about emotion must be geared toward the institutionally sanctioned requirement of behaving "well" or "nicely". Emotional intelligence provides a more flexible (if less easily defined) criterion for emotional competence: One increases one's emotional abilities to an agreed-upon level. Emotional intelligences is a good goal for democratic culture. It does not dictate outcome of a person's emotional behaviour but rather encourages a process of personal investigation that can occur in the context of the person's own politics, ethnicity, religion and other characteristics." (P.15, 16) (What is Emotional Intelligence)

Since EQ involves the recognition and utilization of one's own and others' emotional states to solving problems and reflective regulation of behaviour, the logic of the above extended to understanding the positivity-negativity in the perception of the ingroup and the perception of the out-groups, is permissive of the prediction that, if the historically, socially transmitted stereotypes, prejudices and the practical experiences of conflicts of these groups, are overcome by the operation of EQ dimension, then the higher the EQ, the more positive is its inter-group perception; as far as the intra-group perception: each group perceives its own-group as more positive than the outgroups. However, since the intercultural prejudices and stereotypes, long-standing as also getting reinforced in the
day-to-day interactions because of the inbuilt pre-dispositions of the interacting groups, EQ may be sidelined into neutral role as far as these interpersonal perceptions are concerned. However, the role of Emotional Quotient in the context of India's multi-religiosity and multi-culturalism practiced with all the historically tragic and violent experiences, needs to be explored for evolving the strategies to promote intercultural harmony. Hence the present study.

Commenting on the existing state of conceptual status of the emotional intelligence Salovey and Mayer (1990) write: “There is an exciting body of research that, for lack of a theoretical concept, is dismembered and scattered over a diversity of journals, books, and subfields of psychology.”

Further “the mental processes (in emotional intelligence) include:

a) Appraising and expressing emotions in the self and others, (b) regulating emotions in the self and others, and (c) using emotion in adaptive ways.” (p.189-190).
An outline of these processes is presented in the following figure: (p.190)

Figure 1. Conceptualization of emotional intelligence.
People appraise and communicate emotion, and how they use that emotion in solving problems. It is different from research on the interaction of cognition and affect, traditionally conceived [e.g., 37-41] because it concentrates not on memory or judgment, *per se*, but on more general contributions of emotionality to personality. As long as this research remains scattered without a guiding framework, its contribution to psychology will be minimal. But by integrating this research conceptually, its contribution to psychology will be readily grasped.

Much of the research to be studied is descriptive in nature. And the descriptive qualities of the work have been developed through the agency of scale development and measurement. For this reason, some sections of the current review will integrate a number of instances of scale development, such as those concerning alexithymia, emotional expression, and empathy. Although we are not interested in the scales per se, we are interested in the constructs that underlie them and the means by which they operationalize portions of what we will call emotional intelligence.

The explanation of Emotional Intelligence given by Mayer and Salovey (1990): “Emotional Intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or general feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to
promote emotional and intellectual growth”.

According to Gardner (1993), Emotional Intelligence as a concept refers to 'inter-personal' and 'intra-personal' intelligence. As a form of social intelligence it involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action.

Emotional Intelligence involves the operation of the following processes:

1. **Identifying emotions**: The ability to recognize how you and those around you are feeling.

2. **Using emotions**: The ability to generate emotions and then reason with those emotions.

3. **Understanding emotions**: the ability to understand complex emotions and their transition from one stage to another.

4. **Managing emotions**: The ability permissive of managing emotions in yourself and in others.

According to Daniel Goleman (1999), Emotional Intelligence consists of four clusters:

a) **Self-awareness**: The capacity for understanding one's emotions, one's strength and one's weakness.

b) **Self-management**: The capacity for effectively managing one's
motives and regulating one's behaviour.

c) Social awareness: The capacity for understanding what others do and feel and why they feel and act as they do.

d) Social Skills: The capacity for acting in such a way that one is able to obtain the desired results from others and reach personal goals.

Also: Inter-personal dimension of EI involves, among other things, the ability to monitor others' moods and temperaments and to enlist such knowledge into the service of predicting their future behaviour. It focuses on the recognition and use of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviour.

Some of the definitions of EI are as follows: Robert Cooper (1996): "Emotional Intelligence is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power of and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity and influence."

Reuven Bar-on (1997): "Emotional intelligence reflects one's ability to deal with daily environmental challenges and helps predict one's success in life including professional and personal pursuits."

Daniel Golemon (1998): "Emotional intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. Emotional intelligence describes abilities distinct from, but complementary
to, academic intelligences or the purely cognitive capacities measured by IQ.”

J. Freedman (1998): “Emotional intelligence is a way of recognizing, understanding and choosing how we think, feel and act. It shapes our interaction with others and our understanding of ourselves. It defines how and what we learn, it allows us to set priorities, it determines the majority of our daily actions.”

From the explanations of emotional intelligence, the following qualities or dimensions of emotional intelligence emerge:

❖ Self-awareness
❖ Mood Management
❖ Self motivation
❖ Impulse Control
❖ Interpersonal skills

Here, the first four classifiable under intra-personal dimensional category of emotional intelligence, monitor the development of one's courage, perseverance, enthusiasm and passion. They play an important role in competitive sports, inventions, entrepreneurship and extraordinary achievements.

Self-awareness makes our feelings conscious and therefore we can deal with them more effectively. Mood management helps us to overcome
any negative psychological state e.g. depression which may hinder our progress. Also, it helps us to think and feel positively so that the setbacks are marginalized. Self motivation as an internal drive helps the individual to reach new heights, overcome obstacles, frustrations and search proactively for new opportunities. Impulse control prevents us to yield to temptation and helps to delay gratification.

The interpersonal dimension of emotional intelligence is the ability to understand other people: What motivates them, their mode of working and also how to work co-operatively with them. It is based on the fundamental skill of empathy - i.e. identifying oneself mentally with a person and understanding the feelings of the person identified with. Empathy is a quality which enables empathic listening; the listener identifies himself with the speaker and experiences the feelings etc., of the speaker.

In other words: Emotional Intelligence involves the conscious reflective regulation of emotion.

It is very clear from the theoretical exploration of the contents of the processes operative in emotional intelligence, that it is bound to play a crucial role in the processes of perception. But at the same time it should be taken into account that while the perceptual processes involved are also crucially shaped by many socially transmitted prejudices, stereotypes
especially when the perceptual process are concerned with the socially important groups such as religious groups. In the Indian context of multi-religiosity, multi-culturalism, social history of conflicts between Hindus and Muslims may be crucial in determining their intergroup perception. However, since emotional intelligence also is an important factor in perceptual processes, with what degree of effectiveness it plays its role in determining the intergroup perception is an important question.

Hence, in the present study, an attempt is made to assess the impact of Emotional Quotient (EQ) on the intra- and inter-group perception of each of the three religio-cultural groups, the Hindus, Muslims and Christians in the framework of : with what degree of positivity each religio-cultural group perceives its own group vis-à-vis its perception of the outgroups?

The present study addresses this problem:

The Impact of Emotional Quotient on the Intra- and Inter-religious Social Perception with the objective of assessing the operation of EQ in influencing the intra- and intergroup perception of the three religio-cultural groups : the Hindus, Muslims and Christians.