



FAITH,POLITICS AND SOME LESSONS FROM HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Hellenic Greece and Imperial Rome had laid foundation of European civilisation and latter Christianity guided it through blind alleys of faith. Science came to the rescue of man kind and scientific temper resulted in reformation. Thus, European society was saved from the tyrrany of religious intolerance,.However ,briefly in Germany, under the Nazis in the fourth decade of twentieth century, mankind was shamed by the progrom against the Jews. That chapter in the history was an aberration. No such reform or renaissance took place in the Islamic world and Islam still continues with the teachings of Quran that was intended to civilize the savage Arab tribes. That holy book is theology, law and politics combined. Because of their orthodoxy, followers of Islam often come into conflict with democratic socieities and institutions. In sharp contrast is Hindu and other Indic religons that are not dogmatic. The canonic part of Hindu Dharma i.e. Smruthi is changeable land have undergone many changes right from Manusmriti to Yajnavalka smriti to the current Constitution of India.

KEYWORDS

PAN ISLAMISM,SECULARISM,TOLERANCE,CONFLICT OF SECTS WITHIN RELIGION

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Absence of genuine data on educational, econmic, cultural standards of India prior to colonial interlude is actually a problem. Indians, especially Hindus never bothered whther he is being ruled by a Hindu or a Mlecha. He expects only Rah-Dharma from the ruler and himself is satisfied, if observance of his own Dharma is not hindered. Therefore there is hardly any scitical analysis left by our ancestors. We are therefore compelled to rely on the observations of foreigners.

METHODOLOGY

Consulting books and publications

Quite often than not, religions overawe the faithful and instigate them to do acts of violence, leaving black spots in the history of nations. We can recall the gruesome Bartolomeo massacre in Paris in Aug 1526, pogroms against the Jews in Europe and several armed conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in northern and eastern Europe. Blind faith in a creed lead humanity to conflicts that were avoidable. Each group believed that their belief is infallible and refused to accept the views of the other side. Quite often the conflicts are on minor issues, as between Protestants and Catholics. They agree on the essentials of Christianity and the disagreement is only on details. All Christians whether Catholic or Protestant, believe in the divine origin of Christ and his martyrdom on the cross to save the mankind from the accumulated sin. These beliefs are logically not defensible. However, faith is always blind and a strong motivating force to the laity to undertake any acts, whether malevolent or benevolent as prompted by the clergy. Religions are also a strong bond like other emotive factors such as, caste, language and nationality. However as told by Sister Nivedita “sects as a rule unite us to the few but separate us from the many.” (Sister Nivedita, *Footfalls of Indian History*, P/148). Note that she used the word “Sect”, probably to distinguish them from religions that are broader at the level of basic tenets. Their vision and principles being universal at the fundamental level can eliminate dissensions. She was perhaps reflecting on the visions of her Guru on “universal religion”¹.

RELIGIONS AND THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT

2 The Hindu religion or Sanatana Dharma is an evolution and not a prophesised religion like Christianity or Islam. Other Indian religions like Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism are reformations, as demanded by the time, and were not intended to undo the existing systems of belief. Therefore, Indic religions are a class distinct from those of semitic origins. The social or historical context is also relevant. Judea lies in the precincts of Babylonia and Mesopotamia. The Babylonian ruler Hammurabi was the most ancient codifier of law. His laws as per historian A L Basham was cruel unlike the Hindu scripture notably Manu smriti. “The ghastly sadism of the kings of Assyria, who flayed their captives alive, is completely without parallel in ancient India. There was sporadic cruelty and oppression no doubt, but in comparison with conditions in other early cultures, it was mild. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity”. Basham AL, *The Wonder that was India*, 3RE, P/9). That inherited character is reflected in the laws of Judea that say “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. Christ tampered it with his advice “turn the other cheek”. Mohammed targeted the savage Arabian tribes who were in need of a vista to civilized way of life. Hence Quran is theology, statecraft and law combined.

3 Of course, Judea was culturally ready to accept the teachings of the Christ, though the well-entrenched clergy resented and conspired to eliminate him. His evangelical followers, centuries later, targeted the northern and east European population and converted them. They were barbarians as per the Greek reckoning, especially the Germanic Gothic tribes of Visigoths and Ostrogoths. Germans were sandwiched between the marsh lands of the northern plains and insurmountable Alpine ranges. Their climate was unsuitable for cultivation and therefore they survived in the forests hunting and enjoying the nomadic life style. Ostrogoths on the northern bank of the black sea and occupying the western tract of the river Don, penetrated into the Balkan through the Ukrainian plains. Visigoths who were on the other bank of the Danube, when pressed by the Huns found their way to southern Europe and northern Italy. The evangelists targeted them for conversion. They had just begun to settle down and to live on the fruits of labour on the mother earth. By nature, like all savages they were innocent and blindly followed the clergy. Those were the days of sun-set of Imperial Rome, who permitted the Goths to cross the Rhine and Alps only to use them as a bull work against Huns whose vandalism had devastated East Europe. They quickly absorbed the Roman principles of political institutions and also the Latin language that provided them a vista of civilization, albeit dominated by Biblical doctrines. As all faiths originated

in the semitic region are doctrinally intolerant the new European converts also were intolerant in as much as they hated and looked down on the pagan rites and rituals. Thus, the Europeans stepped into the blind alley of faith, only to be rescued by science in the sixteenth century. Christianity soon organised the Church with graded episcopal jurisdiction for the provinces and a Pope at the apex, resembling the imperial Rome. Organisation, that too on the political line, when authoritarianism was the rule, disrobed the clergy of their spiritual inclinations. Politics as a rule is the source of conflict and divisive in its effect. Hence mushrooming of innumerable sects, quite often quarrelling on non-essentials.

Christianity and Judaism

4 Christians recalling the events that lead to crucifixion of Christ, hold Jews responsible for the crime. In the Fourth Lateran Council, Pope Innocent II is said to have stated "all Jews were doomed to perpetual servitude because they crucified Jesus". (Will Durant, *The Age of Faith* P/388). They do not realize that only a microscopic minority of the vast Jewish population of Palestine was responsible for the crime. Jesus himself was a Jew and there is evidence in the Bible itself (Gospel of Luke) that the common man sympathised with the victim. All including women and children accompanied him and were crying when he carried the heavy cross to the hill of Golgotha. Despite this authentic evidence, the half-truth is repeated from the altars cementing the hatred against the Jews. Jews also earned distrust of non-Jews for their deeply entrenched customs. A Jew is prohibited to eat food cooked, even touched or wine pressed by a non-Jew. They can only eat the food that is kosher. They are not to marry outside their faith. Christians list these restrictions as proof of Jewish insolence and intolerance. In fact, these restrictions or customs were in place long before the birth of Christ and is not actually directed against the Christians. Economic and professional jealousies also had a share in this eternal conflict. Jews were not allowed to hold landed property and therefore they cannot cultivate. For a living they took to usuary and medical practice. In these professions they were prosperous and earned wealth and also the wrath of Christians. Christians also alleged that the Jews are practising sorcery with Christian blood. The Church at the higher level had of course prohibited the laity from harassing the Jews. However, this sane counsel was often ignored by the fanatical elements in the clergy who instigated the nobles and the rulers to lead pogroms against the socially isolated Jews. In 1096 AD in Germany and France, crusaders attacked Jews in several cities and forced them to flee, leaving behind all their possessions. There was also mass suicide as Jews refused the alternative of Baptism. In Worms, several Jews were chased by the Christians. A few of them were sheltered by the local Bishop. The rioters gate-crashed into his palace. The bishop also succumbed to their threat and counselled the Jews to accept Baptism and save themselves from the imminent death. Jews asked to be left alone for a while and by the time the bishop returned, he found all of them dead by killing one another to escape forcible conversion. This was not an isolated incident and there were several such happening in Rhine land. In this town more than 800 Jews were either killed or forced to commit suicide. In England, the monarch and nobility fleeced the Jews to finance the crusade. They were heavily taxed for protection. Judicial execution of Jewish creditors on unsubstantiated allegation of witchcraft to avoid repayment of loans also was a norm. During the civil war of 1257 to 1267 AD, the Jews faced another spell of pogroms. By the end of the civil war, almost the entire Jewish population of England was wiped out. Philip the Fair of France expelled one lac Jews, confiscated their property and forced them to migrate to Palestine without even a spare clothe to change. Even the epidemic of plague in the thirteenth century was attributed to the machinations of the Jews. They were harassed on this false accusation to write off the loans pending against the nobles and kings.

Jews and Muslims

5

Muslim resentment against the Jews existed right from the days of the Prophet. Though Mohammed Nabi had acknowledged all the prophets before him including Jesus, Christians and Jews refused to acknowledge the former's claim to prophet-hood. The Jews of Medina had allegedly conspired with the Quraish tribes who were

the inveterate enemies of the Prophet. The Prophet laid siege on Banu-Nadhir Jewish settlement and forced them to flee leaving all their possessions behind. The deep-rooted animosity is clear from the fact that an otherwise common incident of eve-teasing also resulted in expulsion of Banu Kanuka Jews from Medina.

6

There were disgruntled elements amongst the Christians of Syria. Byzantine oppression of Monophysites, Nestorians and other Christian sects who did not subscribe to the theological dictates of the Pope, prompted Arab Christians to approach Khalifa for intervention. This was a god send opportunity for the commander of the faithful as he was unable to maintain an idle force without any campaign and therefore a drain on resources. Because, the Arab way was to loot and appropriate all possession of the defeated, including women and children. It was therefore economical to engage them on war campaigns. By then the internal rebellion within Arabia was over and the force was free to undertake a campaign outside Arabia. The Arab forces easily subjugated the Levant and Palestine. Khalifa Omar gave the Jews and Christians three options i.e., accept Islam or pay protection money to live as Dhimmi under Islamic rule. The Third alternative is death. Jews choose the second alternative and survived by paying Jizya. They were subjected to further harassment during the Turkish rule and the brief regime of Templars in Palestine. Only the regime of Sultan Saladin was an exemption. Thus, whether under Christian or Muslim dispensation, in the Semitic region, minorities suffered the majoritarian acrimony and were the victims of perpetual harassment.

Roman persecutions of Christians

7 The Roman society was indifferent to other faiths, though they zealously followed their own traditional rites. They had even allowed the Jews to follow their religion without any restriction. Still, Roman authorities had been inimical towards Christians and had them subjected to gruesome punishments including death by torture of the worst kind, especially during the reign of Decius, Valerian and other rulers. The only charge against the Christians was that they refused to honour the emperor by burning incense before his image, like other Roman citizens do. Even the emperor Nero after the great fire of AD 64, accused the Christians of having attempted to destroy the city. Christianity had managed to penetrate into the household of the nobles and even the emperor's cousin and his wife were Christian converts. This further infuriated the emperor who beheaded one and expelled the other. One provincial governor Pliny is reportedly written in a letter: "I ask them (Christians brought before him) whether they are Christians and if they say "yes", I repeat the question a second and third time, warning them of death penalty in store for them. If they still persist, I order them to be taken away to prison. For I do not doubt that, whatever may be the character of the crime which they confess, their disobedience and obstinacy ought to be punished" (Webster Hutton, World History P/525)istory,P/525) This implies that a person can be killed just because he is a Christian. However, Christianity triumphed in AD 311 when Galerius permitted rebuilding of Christian churches and finally, two years later, emperor Constantine had for the first time in the history of imperial Rome, decreed the noble principle of religious toleration. The emperor himself was converted to Christianity and thus began the aggressive evangelisation and conversions.

Schisms within Christianity

8 Rome barely escaped destruction by Attila on the saintly intervention of Bishop of Rome. In 476 AD Vandals crossed the Mediterranean and caused total destruction of Rome. The English word "vandalism" had the origin

in the acts of these savage invaders. Catholic Church was confined to the Bishopric of the Rome, whereas the eastern portion of the empire had four great patriarchates in the East i.e., at Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople. The eastern faction became independent of the Bishopric of Rome. Western Church also got some instant relief. The Franks who were also a German tribe had established their own independent kingdom in Gaul (France). They were in complete sympathy with Roman civilization and political organisations. The first ruler Clovis of Merovingian dynasty accepted Christianity and so also the subjects. Charlemagne of Carolingian dynasty who ascended the throne after four centuries, was more successful as a conqueror. He subdued the western and Eastern Europe. His rule extended to all the States in northern Europe except Scandinavian countries. In the south he conquered northern Italy up to Lombardy and Spain. Bishop of Rome very promptly crowned him as the emperor of the Roman Empire on Xmas day in 800 AD. This is a classic example of rulers and the spiritual authorities collaborating to promote their mutual interests. After his death the empire of France could not keep its territorial integrity. However, the Bishop of Rome as pontifex maximus continued to maintain his swell through Europe. He became pope or Mar papa. Eastern faction continued to deny his authority and thus the first schism within Christianity was prompted on political exigencies rather than on doctrinal limitations. Visigoths and Ostragoths who were the settlers on the western and eastern banks of the river Danube had established their own kingdom in the present-day Ukraine. Some of them adopted the Cyrillic alphabet and therefore were members of the Greek Orthodox Church. Others including those who settled down in Poland and present-day Belarus took Roman alphabet and consequently to Roman Catholicism. Thus was the beginning of the endless conflict of faith in the Balkan. By fourteenth century Eastern Roman empire or Byzantine empire had become extinct and the Greek Orthodox Church lost its hold in Asia. On the other hand, Russia was expanding towards east and had subdued the Central Asian countries and had also got Siberia through a deal with Russian outlaws who had established firmly in that region. Therefore, Russian Orthodox Church following the same rites and ritual became independent of the Greek Orthodox Church. Catholic church faced serious challenge on the theological front from Protestants. In the German region the impetus for revolt was from the Lutheran faction. Martin Luther though did not challenge the authority of the Pope in spiritual matters, nor did he neglect the basic tenets of Christianity. He did not accept Canon law and wanted the secular state to exercise control over the ecclesiastical authorities. He also contested the temporal jurisdiction of the Pope or the authority of Ecclesiastical hierarchy to grant indulgences for salvation. He on the other hand argued that salvation ought to be earned by the faithful on merits as well as steadfastly maintaining faith in the lord. It was too much for the Pope to concede. Luther who was a monk was excommunicated. More than half of Germany followed Luther and denounced Roman Church. Lutheran teachings gave an impetus to the peasant revolt (1524-26) that took place in south-western Germany. The peasants even demanded that the parish priests should be within the jurisdiction of the community who can terminate their services at their sweet will. They will pay the teeth that should be collected by the provost and after retaining that much necessary for the maintenance of the priest, should be distributed within parish. These demands were akin to the communist demands in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Even Martin Luther cannot accept these preposterous demands and dissociated himself from the peasant movement. The rulers with the help of the bishops suppressed the revolt. After several years of negotiations European states came to an understanding to restore peace by devising the Augsburg principle².

9 Calvinism was very active in France and Western part of the European continent. It was also active in Scotland under Knox. In England, this rebel movement against the Catholic Church was better known as Puritanism. Whatever may be the nomenclature, they differ from the mother Church only on worshipping images which they termed as idolatry. However, the rulers had their own axe to grind. They were unwilling to subordinate state authority to an ecclesiastic functionary. So, the protestant movements were only an excuse to get out of the temporal authority of Pope. Had the institution of papacy is limited to his spiritual jurisdiction, such a cleavage would not have developed within the Christendom. In short, politics dominated the church and spoiled the intra and inter-faith relationships.

Imperial Islam or Pan-Islamism

10 Islamic State is a theocratic entity under the Caliph or commander of the faithful whose jurisdiction though often theoretical transcends national, geographic, cultural and language boundaries. It is essentially a military organisation and wields absolute political, military as well as spiritual authority over the believers. Dr Ambedkar quotes Rena from his "Nationality and Other Essays": Islam is a close Union of the spiritual and the temporal; it is the reign of a dogma; it is the heaviest chain that humanity has ever borne". (Ambedkar,P/255) Immediately after the demise of the prophet, the four Caliphas reigned over the Muslim community for 29 years in all, were the companions of the prophet and followed his directions in letter and spirit. They are therefore known as Rashidun Khalifate (perfect leaders). After them followed the Umayyad caliphate in Damascus. There were 14 of them followed by Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad. In AD 1258 Mongol Halaku Khan sacked Bagdad and Caliphate was shifted to Egypt which was known as Mamulk Caliphate. He was only a titular head of the believers. So long the Calipha had military might the Khilafat held together and once weakened centripetal tendencies propped up and independent kingdoms like the Islamic State in Cordova and Morocco emerged. Quran does not prescribe any law or procedure for succession to the Khilafat. So, it is free for all and the smartest overcomes others and occupy the seat of power. Soon after the demise of the prophet, conflicts developed and despite Islam reaching the Iberian Peninsula, it could not hold on to its possession in Persia. Persians after Calipha Ali, preferred to follow Hasan and ussain who were descneHussa Hussain who were the direct descendants of the prophet through his daughter. Thus, those who choose hereditary right for "shiasat" (rule), are known as Shias. Sunnis on the other hand were of the opinion that the Khilafat is not a hereditary institution. However, the problem is that the holy book does not prescribe a criterion or procedure to select a successor. Thus, the early history of Islam is full of intrigues, assassinations and armed conflicts. Thus, like Christianity, conflicts within Islam were political and wars of succession were endemic to the Islamic states in the medieval era. By 1058 AD, the Abbasid Khilafat was in trouble. There were several independent kingdoms such as Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Persia and Afghanistan who did not recognise the authority of the Calipha. At that stage, Calipha got unsolicited help from Seljuk Turks who had by then established an independent kingdom in Trans-Oxana. They were late converts to Islam. They accepted the Sunni sect of Islam in 950 AD. They belong to the Oghuz branch of the Central Asian tribes, whose origin is traced to the Mongol tribes. They are essentially Central Asian and their language resemble to Turkmen spoken in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and some part of Uzbekistan. Being tribals they had no strong cultural traditions of their own and they adopted Persian culture and language that was dominant in that region. Initially they were the frontier soldiers of the Persian empire and later established their own empire spanning Mediterranean coast in the west to Afghanistan in the east. They were however defeated by the Mongol invaders and ousted from Trans-Oxana. They wanted to expand and being converts to Sunni Islam intervened in Baghdad on behalf of the Khilafat. Later events proved that their intention was to usurp the khilafat to promote Ottoman empire as an Islamic military state. In AD 1517, Sultan Salim I conquered Egypt and brought the reigning Calipha to Istanbul as a hostage. From that date Sultan has also become the theocratic head of the Islamic world. This is in sharp contrast to the events that lead to renaissance in Christendom. There the non-conformists Lutheran, Calvinists and other Protestant factions challenged the temporal authority of Pope. Authority of Pope was limited to the kingdoms whose rulers were Catholic. Islam however resisted any such progressive move and the Islamic State (Ottoman empire) also managed to hold on to its possessions spread over three continents, that too for more than four centuries. Their military mite of course was commendable. Islam also spread rapidly in the Balkan because it is definitely egalitarian for the faithful and discriminatory only for others. More than that what helped the Islamic state in its enterprise of conquest, was the mutual distrust amongst Catholic and Protestant States and over-jealous attitude of the Pope. Therefore, a politically divided Europe was not a match to face the military mite of the Ottoman empire. Just to escape the discrimination many in the Balkan States accepted Islam. The mutual distrust amongst the Christendom can be understood from the fact that even after the grand victory of the holy league in the battle of Lepento in 1571³, the alliance could not hold together and individual states negotiated peace with Turkey, even paying war reparations. Though Turkey was not a tolerant state, the Bulgars (Bulgaria), Magyars (Hungary) were more comfortable under their dominion, than being part of the Hapsburg empire. Czar Alexander of Russia was able to unite them under Pan-Slavism in opposition to Pan-Islamism and ousted Turkey from the Balkan. In the same process, the Slavish alliance would have freed eastern Thrace also but for the designs of Austria, whose interest in holding on to its possessions in the Italian peninsula might have been prejudiced by strengthening Greece and its allies. Right from the Crimean war, Turkey progressively lost its possessions on the Black Sea coast. On conclusion of first world war, dismemberment of Ottoman empire was complete. What is surprising is that the Arabs and other Muslim states like Syria, Palestine, Mosul and

Jordan etc preferred independence to continuing under the Turkish yoke. The young Turks or CUP⁴ who deposed the Sultan and assumed power were no paragons of virtue, they wanted to continue the Ottoman empire as a military state, rather than an Islamic State with the Sultan playing the role of Caliph also. However, their mentors i.e., Germany cautioned them that in the Muslim world no declaration of war is acceptable without a religious sanction. So, the advice was to get Jihad declared by the Grand Mufti of Mecca who was their hostage. However, Mufti Hussain refused to do so precisely for the same reason that the ruling junta of CUP⁴ is irreligious. This exposes the dichotomy of the later version of the Turkish State which was actually aiming to expand their realm. In other words, pan-Islamism was being promoted in the guise of Jihad. Mufti Hussain saw through their hidden agenda and refused to sanctify the declaration of war as Jihad, as the latter measure is permissible only in self-defence and not as an aggression. He also questioned their sincerity as their allies being Christian states. Therefore, Turkish declaration of jihad made no impact in the Muslim world, except the Mohammedans of India.

11 Turkey even after its existence as an empire for more than four centuries could not assimilate divergent linguistic, religious and cultural groups. They could also not adopt the legacy of the golden crescent or the levant. Contrast it with the policy of Manchu dynasty in China. Manchuria was not part of Chinese empire. They usurped it because of internal strife within China. However, once assumed political control, they became proud Chinese and continued Confucianism as state policy. They also accepted the Han way of life and merged Manchu identity with that of China. The ancestors of the Turks, had migrated from the steppes of Mongolia to Central Asia and later through Anatolia to Asia-minor. Turkey did not assimilate none of these cultures and in fact, they harassed the religious minorities of Armenia. Sultan Abdul Hamid earned the sobriquet of "great assassin" for the pogrom against Armenian Christians in 1908. It is claimed that more than a million Armenian Christians perished in targeted killings, and forced marches through the Syrian desert without food and water. Many Armenian women were captured as slaves and allotted to the Turkish military and its supporters as keeps.

12 Turkey is the gateway to Europe. Therefore, European culture also might have influenced Turkish way of life. However, the effect was simply like a window dressing and Turkey did not assimilate the European spirit of liberalism, democracy and secularism. The political set up remained medieval and oppressive to the minorities. Even their own co-religionists i.e., the Arabs hated them. Arabs' deep hatred for the Turks is clear from the following statement of Sheriff Hussain: "We want a Govt which speaks our language and let us live in peace. And we hate the Turks" (Robert Graves, Lawrence and the Arabs/48). The Ottoman empire, obviously could not even keep the Muslims subjects in good humour and could not firmly base the empire even on the props of religion.

This was quite strange, as Ambedkar states: "the religious tie of Islam is the strongest known to humanity. No social confederacy can rival Islamic brotherhood in point of solidarity". (B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India/238) The Turkish predicament was very aptly explained by Czar Nicholas I who reportedly told British Ambassador in 1853 "we have on our hand a sick man - a very sick man - He may suddenly die upon our hands" (P/241 ibid).

The sick man of Europe suddenly did not die. He limped on for another six decades albeit very sick and mortally wounded. The sickness was obviously political because the ruling junta did not cultivate the ruled subjects. Turkey is essentially Asian, but aping the Europeans without developing appropriate political institutions. Only Kemal Pasha tried to foster a liberal democratic republic by banning Islam from the corridors of power. However, after his demise the Bosphorus though narrow, is proven deep and an impregnable barrier for Turkey from integrating with the European society. It continued with the medieval, middle-eastern methods, as a sure defence against the winds of change and liberalism.

13 Many alien tribes including Gujar's, Huns, Bactrian Greeks and Sakha, Kushans came to India as conquerors and settled down. Bactrian Greeks made positive contribution to Indian culture. The Buddhist monuments and sculptures in present day Afghanistan are the finest example of Greek influence in Indian sculpture. Great rulers like Kanishka of the Kushan dynasty adopted Buddhism and helped spread of the new faith in China and the far-east. They became part of the country of their adoption. In sharp contrast is the case of Islam. Though, only a handful of invaders stayed back and more than 95% of the Muslims are Hindu converts, they maintained their separate identity and refused to be part of the composite Indian culture. Once converted, they look down their erstwhile co-religionists as Kafir. This disparaging usage explains the contempt that they harbour against the Hindus. Even Mahatma Gandhi was not excluded. Gandhiji's comrade-in-arms in the Khilafat movement, Maulana Mohamed Ali had the following to say about Gandhiji:

“Yes, according to my religion and creed, I do hold an adulterous and a fallen Musalman better than Gandhi”. (As quoted by Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India/332).

Such a creed, to say the least, proves intolerance of the worst kind. It can only breed social strife and internal disturbances. We have seen that Islam practices discrimination only against non-Muslims. Once converted, it ensures equal opportunity without discrimination on account of birth, race, caste etc. Even slaves can become rulers, e.g., Malik Gafur with whom begun the slave dynasty in India. The invaders led by the likes of Khilji's, Tughlaqs, Lodhi, Mughal etc were very few in numbers and were not sufficient to administer a vast territory like India. Therefore, they recruited local converts to man important positions. Thus, a good number of Indian Muslims occupied key positions in the administration and military. They were the creamy layer of the society and part of the ruling set up. This privileged class was apprehensive of losing its privileges, if a progressive set up emerges as was being demanded by the Congress. So they preferred not to be part of the Congress. That elite class did not relish the ordinary Muslims mingling with the Hindus. Of course, Islam was also influenced by Hinduism and the result was the Sufi movement. Whatever reconciliation was affected through Sufism, Aurangzeb undid them all as he considered all sects other than Sunni Islam as heretic and harassed them. The result is that the Indian Mohammedans remained isolated from the Indian society. Till establishment of the colonial rule, it was most ideal for them, being under Muslim rule or Dar-ul-Islam. When the Britishers established their colonial rule, Muslim elite living in their past glory of ruling over Hindus through seven centuries wanted at least to retain their prominence even by cultivating the friendship of the ruling elite. Even then, agitated over Khilafat, they tried to do Hijras (migration)⁵ to Afghanistan and few families had moved to that kingdom in the first decades of the twentieth century. They were also uncomfortable with the Congress principle of rule by suffrage, that too with universal adult suffrage. They were also apprehensive of the prospect of a Hindu majority rule, once adult franchise becomes the law. That was never acceptable to them. Maulana Hasrat Mohani as president of Jamaat -ul-Ulema conference in 1931 at Allahabad was unequivocal in declaring the Muslim view: He said:” It is clear that no one can conceive of a despotic form and a democratic form, whether it be unitary or federal but centripetal, will be nothing more than Hindu raj which the Musalman can in no circumstances accept”. (Dr Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India/317). In fact, they were afraid of popular democracy and were inventing this bogey of majoritarian Hindu raj to mislead the common Muslims who were prohibited from associating with Indian National Congress. Even prominent Muslims like Sir Md Iqbal, the celebrated poet, who first wrote “*saare jahaan se ache, Hindustan hamare*” (Our Hindustan is better than all heavens), confided during the third session of round table conference that there should be no Central Government for India. Provinces should be autonomous and directly under the Secretary of State for India. In other words, Muslim majority provinces like Punjab, Bengal, Sindh and NWFP shall be practically independent viz a viz Hindu majority provinces like UP, Bombay and Madras. This was a clever way of concealing the real intention i.e., partitioning India on religious lines and in the absence of a Central Authority exploit the resultant anarchy to expand the Islamic State. With communal representation and the reforms of 1935, the British Govt had conceded them all their demands short of partition of the country. Dr K M Munshi sums up the situation as follows:

“What with the conquistador spirit of the Muslim master-racists and the psychological, social and cultural exclusivism of the Hindus, contact between the communities remained superficial, no integration was possible. (Dr K M Munshi, Pilgrimage to Freedom/65). Shri Aurobindo was more forthright in his assessment: “Mohamedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Mohamedan afterwards, on the existence of the great Mohamedan nations”. (Sri Aurobindo, India’s rebirth/64). It is because their religion prohibits appreciating” *ibi bene ibi patria*”(there is good country there) unless it is ruled by a Mohamedan according to Sharia.

British contribution of Hindu-Muslim strife

14 In 1884, when two Tehsils in Malabar were affected by violent religious frenzies of fanatical Muslims a Commission of enquiry was constituted to enquire into these problems. One of its members Justice Karunakaran Menon had also published his views through an article in the “Madras review” of May 1897. He asserted that there was no fanatic outbreak in Malabar before the establishment of British Rule, and there is still no such outbreak in Travancore and Cochin”. This statement is not gain said. Even Jinnah had given evidence before the Joint Select Committee for considering reform proposal in 1919:

“If you ask me, very often these riots are based on some misunderstanding, and it

is because the police have taken one side or the other and that has enraged one side or the other. I know very well that in the Indian States you hardly ever hear of any Hindu-Mohammedan riots” (.Dr Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India,P/347).

There were no communal riots serious enough to be noticed in Indian History. There were rebellions and revolts against the rulers. However, the people were not fighting against each other. The peaceful atmosphere of the country was spoiled by the British administration whether wilfully or otherwise. They introduced foreign codes and methods in administration of justice. Their policy of encouraging Muslim separatism also resulted in communal strife in India. History of Muslim appeasement started from 1892 when the British Parliament passed the Indian Councils Act. It was to provide a semblance of democratisation of the local bodies and limited representation of the natives in the running of Municipalities’ and District boards. The council membership is by nomination from prominent groups like Universities, Bars, Merchant Association, land owners

etc. However, when it is implemented in India, Lord Dufferin introduced the element of Muslim representation. Till then there was no demand as such from the Muslim community. The Muslim elite got the cue and on 1 Oct 1906 waited on Lord Minto with a petition to consider their representation in Legislative bodies and services, not merely according to their numerical strength, but with due regard to their status as erstwhile rulers of this country. The British had a bitter experience of the rebellion of 1857 when Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder against the aliens. They therefore gladly conceded the demands for communal representation as a constitutional principle. The Act of 1909 took care of these demands. When Tilak was to negotiate Lucknow pact, he had no choice but to concede the principle of communal representation. When round table conference to consider constitutional reforms was in the anvil Jinnah came with his 14-point demands⁶ against the constitutional scheme suggested by Nehru Committee. which included besides continuance of communal representation and separate electorate in Hindu majority provinces, statutory majority in Punjab, Bengal and newly created provinces of Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan. Congress as expected opposed these demands, because it is illogical to ensure majoritarian hegemony of the majority community by Statutory measures. In Muslim minority provinces, they have communal quota and also separate electorate to elect their representatives. On the other hand, in Punjab and Bengal, Hindus and Sikhs got the left over after reserving the lion share to the majority community. They are not given the privilege of separate electorate also. In other words, the minority cannot get any one elected who is unacceptable to the Majority community. In other words, Muslim League wanted both minority safeguards and untrammelled majority privileges. Britishers accepted

these demands and provided all measures sought by Jinnah in the Constitutional measures promulgated in 1935. This move widened the schism between the communities and fore stalled any move for reconciliation. The federal part of this constitution did not materialise because Muslim league will not participate without settling the communal problem. Jinnah had the veto that was gifted by the empire and they effectively used it to stall the constitutional process.

15 By the end of World War II, it dawned upon the empire that they could so far hold on to India and win several wars in Asia, Europe and African desert only because the Indian Armed forces were loyal and dependable. That is no longer the case. Indian forces were no more reliable as proved by Indian POWs joining INA en masse and mutiny of Indian Sailors of Royal Indian Navy. They are also in a hurry to leave because the economy was in a mess. India was bled white for the war that was purely in the interest of the imperial Britain. Britain ordered procurement of ration for the allied forces from India alone and that measure resulted in recurrent famine in Bengal. Had they continued, the handful of British forces and Officers would have risked the prospects of being stoned by the angry men on the street. So, they were in a hurry to flee. Greatest obstacle to this escape plan was Muslim League who will not accept nothing short of separate Pakistan consisting of Muslim majority provinces. Jinnah's direct action" and savagery riots in Calcutta, forced the Congress party to accept partition with a rider, that Muslim League can have their Pakistan but cannot take Hindu majority districts and constituencies with them. Hence both these provinces are to be partitioned. For Jinnah who dreamt of lording over the powerful provinces of Punjab and Bengal, as well as strategically important NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan, this was a shock. He being disappointed with moth-eaten Pakistan was asking for an open corridor to connect both the wings of East and West Pakistan. He was however cautioned by his well-wishers that nothing more is now possible with the Labour Govt in power. Otherwise, Jinnah wanted solid, whole blocks, whether it is acceptable to non-Muslim or otherwise is beyond question. His interest was limited to Muslim Rule. The Congress strategy took the wind out of the sail of Jinnah. His entire plan was frustrated because the borders of undivided Punjab lay at the precincts of Delhi and with such a prosperous province under their control. It was easier for them to take control of Delhi and endanger the very existence of Union of India.

16 Muslim demands started with communal representation and ended with partition of the country on communal line. British bureaucracy and the right-wing politician of UK were supportive of the Muslim demand for a separate Muslim state to serve as a bull-work against the policy of expansionism of the Russians. Congress leaders like Nehru were unabashedly communist sympathisers though not communists. Nehru insisted on Westminster model of parliamentary democracy and a unitary state. This was unacceptable to Muslims not because there is anything repugnant in their holy book to such a constitutional scheme. They argued that with three fourth of the population being Hindu, such a scheme based on universal adult suffrage might become Hindu raj. Reality is that a Hindu politician elected by the majority to hold the post of chief executive, cannot establish Hindu raj without violating the Constitution. Muslim apprehension can only be explained with reference to their holy book which is theological as well as political. That is not the case with the Hindus who in politics can remain uninfluenced by religion, as religion is absolutely a personal affair and only a factor amongst several factors that influences his social existence, and immaterial for his political views as a citizen. Muslim fear was therefore imaginary than real. In the round table conference that was convened in 1931 at London, the Congress demanded complete independence as well as repudiation of debts. Demand of independence is of course a reasonable for a political party fighting for it, but the repudiation of debts, being economical would have alerted the ordinary Englishmen and turned them anti-congress and by implication anti-Hindu. Muslims on the other hand did not advance such demands. They were not demanding independence and were content with communal representation to be in a better position to bargain with the Congress viz a viz Hindus. Summing up Dr Ambedkar reveals the Muslim mind: "that for the Muslims independence is not the end. It is only a means to establish Muslim Raj. Therefore, there is frustration, if nation's destiny is conceived of in terms of Dominion status because the Muslims will not abide by it. They fear that under Dominion status, the Hindus will establish Hindu raj taking benefit of the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value". (B R Ambedkar,P/372)This is clearly a political discourse; howsoever justifiable it may sound. Faith was merely an

excuse to obstruct winds of change. Otherwise, what explains co-existence of Muslim minorities in Christian majority states in the Balkan, that too without any constitutional safeguards or special consideration?

17 Muslim League always wanted to project the Muslim community as a victim of high handedness. In 1935, they accused Congress ministries in UP harassing Muslim minority. True to their declared stand, the Govt had constituted an enquiry. Before completion of the enquiry, in protest against Govt of India joining World War II without taking the provinces into confidence, the Congress ministries resigned. Muslim League celebrated the event as the day of deliverance. A few days later, the enquiry report that was submitted revealed that all allegations against the Congress government were false and motivated. Then why were such grievances raised at all. The answer is simple. In the 1935 Act, the governor of the province is expected to ensure minority representation in the Govt. Taking this cue, Muslim League wanted Congress to form coalition ministry with their participation even in provinces where Congress had got absolute majority. Congress rejected the proposal that they had sufficient majority and shall not accept coalition. As far as Muslim representation is concerned, if any Muslim Leaguer wanted to join the Ministry, he can do so first expressing faith in the policy and programme of Congress. In other words, the stalemate is on account the principle whether Muslim representation means only the Muslim League and as to why a Mohamedan elected on congress ticket cannot be considered as Muslim representative? The stand of the Congress though legally correct, was morally not defensible. There were many Congress Muslim leaders being not sure of winning on Congress ticket, fought elections as Muslim League candidate. The list included Chaudhary Kaliq-uz-Zaman and Nawab Mohd Ismail. Congress scheme was to seek their defection to Congress and take them into cabinet as Muslim ministers. In that election Muslim League fared very badly in Punjab and Bengal and could only claim moderate success in reserved Muslim seats. It was therefore too much for Jinnah to lose whatever support he could gather in UP. He therefore considered Congress as an enemy. Durga Das observes "the break thus caused by Nehru's impetuosity and Jinnah's arrogance was never repaired. This was the actual grievance of the League against the Congress. However, as they were aware that their argument was legally not tenable invented non-existent victim hood. It is a classic example of inventing *gravamen politics* to conceal *machi politics*. (Dr Ambedkar BR, *Pakistan or Partition of India*, P/225).

18 The most effective campaigner of the two-nation theory and Pakistan was of course Mohammed Ali Jinnah. His leadership of Muslim League gave it an acceptability in Great Britain that was crucial for its success. Paradoxically, Jinnah was not a fundamentalist nor was he a practising Muslim. The Muslim elite recognised his potential to deliver the moon. On the other hand, Congress despite being sure of his nationalist view and credentials forced him out of the organisation. We must note that he had not associated with the Khilafat Committee nor had supported their demand. He had problems with the programme of Gandhiji. Gandhiji wanted to change the aim of Home Rule League as "Swaraj" instead of "responsible Government within the empire" and also "legitimate means" in place of "constitutional means". Jinnah moved an amendment which suggested that "Swaraj" means responsible Govt with in the empire. This was also rejected. Jinnah was a constitutionalist in the mould of Gokhale and Ranade and therefore had no choice but to walk out. Recalling the event Dr K M Munshi states:

"When Gandhiji forced Jinnah and his followers out of Home Rule League and later the Congress, we all felt with Jinnah that a movement of unconstitutional nature sponsored by Gandhiji with the tremendous influence he acquired over the masses, would inevitably result in wide-spread violence barring progressive development of self-governing institutions based on a partnership between educated Hindus and Muslims". (K M Munshi, *Pilgrimage to Freedom*, P/18). Dr Munshi's statement implies that the ultimate aim of that organization was responsible Govt within the empire consisting of educated Hindus and Muslims. They were not aiming at a popular executive which is responsible to the legislature elected by the people. This in fact is not "Swaraj" This also implied that the elite wanted continuance of the privileges being enjoyed by them. Jinnah resented popular democracy because that would mean end of the privileges for the elite whether Hindu or Muslim. Dr Munshi in this chapter also recalls that when Rowlett Act was passed, the Home Rule League in its meeting passed a

resolution seeking boycott of foreign goods. The resolution was moved by Dr Munshi. Gandhiji termed it as violence and forced them to withdraw it. This measure was effective against the British who had for this reason alone, had to rescind partition of Bengal. Still, it was not acceptable to Gandhiji. Munshi concludes: "we have learned to our horror that a superman was in our midst, to whom votes had no meaning and we had either to submit to his opinion or get out of the League". (P/14 *ibid*). No wonder a self-conceited politician like Jinnah left Congress and joined the opposite camp. Durga Das states in his work "India from Curzon to Nehru and After" that Jinnah was not very happy with this legal profession in London. He left India only because Willingdon became Viceroy with whom he was not in good terms. In London, he expected a seat in the Privy Council that was also not materialised. He states: "I was hurt, besides when my very reasonable proposal at the Calcutta All-Parties convention were turned down by Motilal Nehru and his lot, I seem to have reached a dead end. The Congress will not come to terms with me because my following is very small. The Muslims do not accept my views, for they take their orders from the Deputy Commissioner (District authority)" (DD, P/151). This statement is factually correct, because the new Vice Roy Willingdon, was in alliance with influential but communally minded politicians like Prince Aga Khan and Sir Fazli Hussain, as in those days British authorities were hopeful of an Anglo-Mohamedan alliance as a counter poise to Congress and nationalist Hindus. Such an alliance will enable them to continue their hold on to this country. The reforms of 1935 also attempted to alienate depressed classes from Hindu community, by providing them separate electorates and reserved seats. Congress was thus reduced just as an organisation of caste Hindus. Having pushed to the wall, Gandhiji announced fast unto death. Dr Ambedkar saved the situation for the nation by entering into a pact with Gandhiji in which depressed classes got more seats in the legislatures than provided by the communal award without separate electorates. In other words British efforts to separate depressed classes from Hindu society were frustrated.

19 We have to concede that the immediate outcome of Khilafat and disobedience movement was violence of an unprecedented scale. In Malabar it resulted in massacre of Hindus on a scale acclaimed as "Bartolomeo" by Dr Ambedkar⁶. The reasons were not far to seek. The illiterate, fanatical Muslim neither understood nor was prepared to accept the principle of non-violence. He was under the grip of the clergy whose aim was Muslim rule in South Malabar. Initially under the influence of local Congress leadership, the Muslims targeted the Govt offices. Soon they started targeting the Hindu population. Hindus were targeted in Kohat also. In retrospect, we have to ask whether was there any justification for the Congress to participate in the Khilafat movement? Whether non-violent, non-cooperation movement was justified? Gandhiji even rejected the offer of Viceroy Lord Reading to cooperate with the Govt in the visit of Prince of Wales. Viceroy also promised to convene a round table conference in India and to provide autonomy to provinces and dominion status at the Centre. He also promised to release all political prisoners on whom there were no criminal charge. This was possible only with active intervention of Pandit Malavya through Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. Gandhiji straightway rejected this offer for the simple reason that the scheme of amnesty will not benefit Ali brothers on whom there were criminal charges. This irrational decision of Gandhiji only turned British bureaucracy and politicians anti- Congress and by implications anti- Hindu. That too when loyal Muslims of Punjab had waited on the Viceroy at Shimla on 21 Oct 1921 and were convinced that penal action against some agitators who had violated the law is not an action against the Muslim community. In short, Gandhiji was espousing a cause that was not of any interest to that community. Had Gandhiji accepted the offer, perhaps the country could have obtained dominion status in 1921 or 1922 without partition. At that time, the Anglo-Mohammedan axis was not so strong and prejudice was not hardened to the extent of partitioning the country. On the contrary the empire was severely criticised by the allies as well as the Muslim subjects for their handling the Khilafat question. We had to wait for another 25 years for dominion status that too with partition of the country. The movement also resulted in violence in Punjab where the situation had gone out of control of the leadership of the both communities. The administration reacted with brute force and declared martial law in Punjab, which finally resulted in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

20 Gandhiji wanted to be the leader of not only Hindus but also Muslims. Gandhiji during an interview told

Durga Das who was his confidant among journalists: Gandhiji added that there was a fundamental difference in his approach to the issue of freedom from that of Jinnah and others who wanted to build the movement for it from the top. He on the other hand wanted to build from below. The Muslim masses instinctively understood the religious issue and would feel brotherly towards non-Muslim who espoused their cause. He had only to tell them that while they earned two annas a day the Viceroy's salary was Rs 700/= a day to make them realize the tyranny of the system."(Durga Das,P/88) Events proved that Gandhiji's assessment was wrong. Despite Jinnah being irreligious and not a practising Muslim, by and large Muslims supported his leadership or at least the organisation lead by him. His leadership was challenged in Punjab and Bengal., In Punjab Muslim league got only around 4.5% of polled Muslim votes. The province was won by the Unionist party of Sir Sikander Hyatt Khan. In Bengal, Krishak Mazdoor Party of Fazlul Haque formed the Govt with the support of the Congress. It implies that Jinnah may not have won over the entire Muslim population, but it also implies that if not Jinnah, the choice of is another Muslim leader and not a Gandhi. In Punjab the claimant initially was Sir Fazli Hussain, and on his death Sir Sikander Hyatt Khan. Both of them were rich land lords of Punjab. The Muslim proletariat were obviously not matured enough to realise the injustice in the system as Gandhiji pointed out.

21 Emphasising the political roots of the problem of Hindu-Muslim conflict, Pt Nehru wrote to Asaf Ali in his letter dated 16-11-1939:

"I do not know what exactly you envisage in regard to communal talks with Jinnah. I am perfectly ready as I told Jinnah and I wait to hear from him. But essentially there is no communal difficulty in the way as between Jinnah and us. It is the political difficulty. He cannot reconcile himself to any action of the kind Congress is used to". (Pt Nehru, A Bunch of Letters, P/398). He makes the position abundantly clear to Sayed Mahmud:" Essentially, I think, the attitude of Jinnah and the Muslim League is governed by the desire to prevent radical changes or democratisation of India not because of a Hindu majority but because the radical elements will put an end to semi-feudal privileges etc." (Nehru, P/463). This is true so far as the back-room managers of the Muslim League is considered.

FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion

Religion did not stop racially distinct population from choosing independence rather than continuing with the ruling race, albeit prophesying the same religion, e.g., Saudi Arabia, Iran Iraq, Jordan etc. Indian sub-continent was divided into India and Pakistan. Within twenty-five years, a major ethnic group, though Muslims, separated, establishing the principal that faith is not a substitute for nationality, language and cultural identity. Religions have only regimented the people in opposite camps giving fillip to clashes not on philosophical or theological views but purely on political issues. Islam peacefully co-existed with Hindus for major part of their millennium long existence in the Indian sub-continent for the simple reason that Hinduism is not a "religion" and is only a

way of life. It is neither dogmatic nor authoritarian in its set up. It can only promote intra and inter-community relations. The political ambitions concealed as theological dogmas resulted in parting of ways and partition of the country.

END NOTES

- 1 Universal religion: - This is an original concept coined by Swami Vivekananda. He believed that Vedanta can function as a fulcrum of such a universal religion
- 2 Augustusberg principle- Sixteenth century Europe was a theatre of conflict between Catholics and Protestants. After three decades of war they negotiated peace and agreed on a principle "whose religion, his religion". This implies that citizens have no choice but to accept the
- 3 Holy League and crusade- The Holy League with blessings and fundings of the Pope embarked on crusade. In 1517, the League attacked Turkish forces in the bay of Lepanto in the Aegean sea. Turkish flagship was captured and the admiral killed. Turkey was routed in that encounter
- 4 CUP (Committee on Union and Progress)- It was an organization of Turkish Officers who had European training. They were progressive to the limited extent of replacing Sultan and by implication Caliph with a military state.
- 5 Darul Islam and Darul Harb- Country under Islamic rule is Dar-ul-Islam. Others are Dar-ul-Harb. A Muslim is expected either to wage religious war (jihad) against non-Muslim countries or migrate.
- 5 Darul Islam and Darul Harb- Country under Islamic rule is Dar-ul-Islam. Others are Dar-ul-Harb. A Muslim is expected either to wage religious war (jihad) against non-Muslim countries or migrate.
- 6 14 Point Programme- 14 point charter is not really the creation of Jinnah. In 1928, when all Party's conference at Calcutta adopted Nehru Committee report (constitutional proposal) Muslim organizations including Muslim League had moved several amendments. These were outvoted
- 7 Gravamen Politic, Machu Politic- Please see note below P/225 of Pakistan or Partition of India by B R Ambedkar

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