

RELIGION AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION¹

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1. Introduction

All religion, theoretically and doctrinally teach universal love, peace, harmony, human solidarity and unity. But paradoxically some of the fiercest battles in the history of the world were waged in the name of religion. The religions have divided humankind into different camps, erecting walls of separation between them and fostering mutual suspicion, distrust rivalry, fanaticism, suppression and persecution. In Asia, the case of Sri Lanka is striking for its cruelty because two identities are in confrontation, one Sinhalese and Buddhists and the other, Tamil and nationalist. India is in the grips of twofold conflict between the fundamentalist Hindus and the minority communities (Muslim and Christians) on the one hand, and between the superior castes and the *Dalits* on the other. In Africa, Algeria offers the everyday spectacle of killing in the name of religious orthodoxy. In Rwanda where in just three months a million were left dead and more than twice as many were driven out of their homes, and some of the Catholic clergy have been seriously implicated in it. Commenting on the atrocities committed in the name of religion in Rwanda, it was said: "There are no devil left in hell, they are all in Rwanda."²

In the Middle East, terrorism on both sides is justified by religious fidelity, whether to Israel or to Islam. In Latin America, even though guerrilla activity has subsided to some extent, violence is not extinct and there is a religious basis to certain struggles waged by the oppressed against the violence of the rich. In Europe, events in Ireland are interpreted as hostilities between Catholics and Protestants.³

Religion is often one of the most divisive forces in society and therefore, harmony between religions is an essential pre-requisite for national integration. "Traditional religions have been", writes Stanley Samartha, "moats of separation

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²Miroslav Volf, "Religion and Violence: Outbreak and Overcoming—Europe:Bosnia", in *Concilium*, 1997/4, p.31.

³Francois Houtart, "The Cult of Violence in the Name of Religion; A Panorama", in *Concilium*, 1997/4, p. 3.

rather than bridges of understanding between peoples."⁴ At the inter-religious meeting on November 7, 1999, during his recent visit to India, Pope John Paul II said:

Religion is not and must not become a pretext of conflict particularly when religious, culture and ethnic identity coincide. Religion and peace go together/ to wage war in the name of religion is a blatant contradiction. Religious leaders in particular have the duty to do everything possible to ensure that religion is what God intends it to be: a source of goodness, respect, harmony and peace! This is the only way to honour God in truth and justice.⁵

2. India as Unity in Diversity

India is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural polity. We have a unique civilization amalgamating diverse facets of life-style into a single culture. Ours is an incredulous blend of people comprising innumerable differences in terms of caste, religion, region and language. All the twelve great religions of the world flourish in our country. 970 million people – that is to say – more than the combined population of Africa and South America live together as one political unity. Never before in history, and nowhere in the world, has one-sixth of the human race existed as a single free nation.⁶ In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru: "India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads"⁷

India has survived a partition, five wars, several insurgencies, hundreds of communal riots, famines, assassination of three of its tallest leaders and countless other assorted calamities. It has been fashionable in the West to write off India at the death of a leader, the rise of a new sectarian movement or the destruction of a mosque. As Shekhar Gupta, the editor of *The Indian Express* claims: "We have not merely survived. We have blossomed as a vibrant, resilient nation, stronger than

⁴Samartha S., "Religious Pluralism and the Quest for Human Community", in *No Man Is Alien*, edited by Nelson J., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p. 129.

⁵Pope John Paul II, "The Pope's Address", *The Herald*, November 11-18, 1999, p.1.

⁶Nani Palkhivala, *We, the Nation, The Lost Decades* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1994), p.3.

⁷Cited in Boris Klyuev, *Religion in Indian Society: The Dimensions of Unity in Diversity* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989), p.1.

what we inherited in 1947, while not just preserving our diversity but nurturing it into unique source of natural strength."⁸

India's unity in diversity is described in the following words: "India may be really a huge country, but geographically and culturally she is one; India may speak a multitude of different tongues, but her heart is sound and her soul is one. The fact of Indian unity is a positive faith with most Indians and it doesn't require any logical or material corroboration from statician or propagandist"⁹

Since India is historically and structurally constituted of diverse ethnic or racial groups, numerous and varied religious denominations, multi-lingual geographical areas, widely uneven economic and cultural strata, and opposing political ideologies, the process of integration is essential for the sheer survival of the nation.¹⁰

3. National Integration And Its Implications

Arundhadhi Ghosh, the former Indian representative at the United Nations use metaphors to describe the term national integration: *Mosaic* and *Melting Pot*.¹¹ The metaphor of *Mosaic* guarantees the protection of individual identities and provides ample opportunities for growth and development for the various groups without however sacrificing the overall good of the nation. Unity in Diversity is the expression often used for this model in India.

The national integration ideal, advocated through the metaphor of *melting pot*, doesn't take seriously the individual differences and particularities of diverse groups in its struggle for the nation's total good and welfare on the macro-level. The expression Unity through Uniformity seems to convey this ideal. With certain reservation, Switzerland and United States can be included in the first model of the

⁸ Shekhar Gupta, "There is Life After Fifty", *The Indian Express*, August 15, 1997, p.1.

⁹ Jeyarainam Wilson and Dennis Dalton, *The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing Ltd., 1982), p.2.

¹⁰ Thomas Manickam (Ed.), *Role of Religions in National Integration* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984), P. viii.

¹¹ Ishanand, "The Hindutva and National Disintegration", in *Indian Currents*, March 5, 2000, vol.no.9, pp. 14-15.

Mosaic, while the Pre-Gorbachev Soviet Russia, the Communist Nations of Eastern Europe, and the Maoist China are groped in the second model of the *Melting Pot*.

By national integration we refer to the harmonious blend of the divers components-religions, cultures, languages – that form the Indian polity to create an India where peace, justice and freedom prevail. It may be described as the “concrete historical process by which the citizens of a country become a people, conscious of their humanity, the rights and duties flowing from it, build a solidarity in freedom, justice, prosperity and shape a fraternal harmony inspired and nourished by their religious world-views.”¹² It is the process of bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a nation identity.¹³

Today India is witnessing an evolutionary crisis, a crisis of identity and integrity. The separatist tendencies are becoming more virulent and the agitation for carving out new States are flaring up, at places taking violent turns and causing disruption. There is vibrant and vehement stir demanding the Statehood status to Gorkhaland, Bodoland, Jharkhand, Uttarkhand, Konkan and Vananchal, and Union Territory status to Ladak, detached from Jammu Kashmir.¹⁴ It is a matter of serious concern, posing a grave threat to the unity and integrity of the nation.

4. Religion and National Integration

Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology called religion a by-product of ‘neurosis’ and Karl Marx, the founder of communism, termed it “an opiate of the masses.” Yet the latest researches in psychology and the present trends in the avowedly Marxist States have come to terms with religion.

The essence of religion consists in the human beings’ openness to transcendence, namely, the call to go beyond the narrow confines of one’s individuality and reach out in loving communion to the divine mystery. The

¹²Arokiasamy S. (Ed.), *Responding to Communalism-The Task of Religions and Theology* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash), p. 21.

¹³Wilson J. and Dalton D., *The States of South Asia: Problems of National Integration*, p.89.

¹⁴Bhawani Sing (Ed.), *Nationalism and Politics of Separatism in India* (Jaipur: Printwell Publishers, 1993), p. 24.

orientation of the human being to the divine is intimately linked to an orientation to fellow human beings, in whom the supreme spirit dwells. Hence reaching out to God implies, of necessity, reaching out to one's brothers and sisters. True religion can, therefore, be defined as communion between human beings and God, and between human beings themselves.

The *Upanishads* describe the enlightened person as one who see all beings in the self (*Atman*) and the self in all beings (*Isopanisad*, 6). The Biblical concept to love God with one's whole heart, whole soul, whole mind and whole strength, and to love one's neighbour as one's own self, articulates well the twofold dynamism of human nature. The Buddha's insistence on fellowship (*Maitri*) and compassion (*Karuna*), and the important place given to brotherhood in Islam reveal the role religion has to play in inter-human integration.

Communion with fellow human beings is the acid test of communion with God. One cannot exist without the other. This orientation towards communion and fellowship is acknowledged as the true essence of all religion. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes evident that many of the activities undertaken by the self-styled religious zealots in the name of God and country are truly anti-religious, anti-God and anti-human. These destructive activities have been cleverly clothed in religious garb in order to hoodwink the gullible public. The need of the hour is a genuine critique of religion and an earnest search for the true religious spirit by the adherents of all religions. Only then will the endeavour to promote peace, harmony and integration be a truly religious undertaking.¹⁵

All the great religions are critical about the use of violence. The primary role of religion is to bring people closer to God and to one another and thus to foster peace, justice, love and solidarity. The Golden Rule: "What you would not want to be done to you, do not do to others", can be found in practically every religion.¹⁶

India is a secular nation and article 51 of our Constitution mentions as one of the fundamental duties the promotion of "harmony and spirit of common brotherhood

¹⁵Joseph Vellaringatt, "A Decalogue for Communal Harmony", in *Vidya Jyoti*, 57(1993), p.482.

¹⁶Andrew Wilson, *World Scripture: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), pp. 114-115.

amongst all the people of India, transcending religion, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities." Secularism is "a mindset, a life-attitude a quality of mind and heart, a way of life, and ideology, which breathes and fosters tolerance, mutual respect, pluralism, nationality, humanism and universality. Secularism thus instinctively rejects and shuns narrow-mindedness, exclusivism and fanaticism as well as religious superstition and fundamentalism."¹⁷

Upholding secularism, India is a home to most of the religions in the world: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism. Commenting on the religious pluralism existing in India, Ishananda writes:

In India, most of the world religions are represented. The worshippers of cows and the eaters of cows, the worshippers of the conqueror deities Vaman and Ram, and of the conquered deities Mahabali and Ravan, the devotees of one God and those of many Gods, the adorers of the deity as male and those of the deity as female and male-female, live in the same localities and work in the same offices.¹⁸

The table given below shows the population in India by religion as per 1991 census:¹⁹

POPULATION BY RELIGION (1991)

RELIGIONS	PER CENT
Hindus	82.6
Muslims	11.4
Christians	02.4
Sikhs	02.0
Buddhists	00.7
Jains	00.5
Others	00.4

¹⁷John Desrochers, *Towards a New India* (Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1995), p. 126.

¹⁸Ishananda, *Krishna and Christ* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1989), p. 453.

¹⁹K.M. Mathew (ed.) *Manorama Year Book* (Kottayam: Malayala-Manorama Publications, 1999), p. 460.

5. Hinduism and National Integration

In his opening address at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, Swami Vivekananda said: "I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth."²⁰ Hinduism as the oldest continuing religion, still retaining its dynamic and vibrant presence down the corridors of time, has always stood for harmony, tolerance and unity in diversity.

Based as it is on the Vedas, the most ancient living scriptures, Hinduism has placed before us the noble idea of the oneness of humankind, *Vaudhaiva kutumbakam*, proclaiming the divinity inherent in each human being, the essential unity of all religion, and the brotherhood of the whole humanity. It is upto us to re-discover the core of divine power that resides in each individual, that underlies all creeds and dogmas, that cuts across all the artificial barriers that the human beings have so painstakingly erected through the ages.²¹

Recognizing the validity of all religions, *Isavasya Upanishad* asserts: "There is only the one power manifesting itself in an million ways." *Rig Veda* says: "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side." In the *Bhagavat Gita*, we read: "Even those who lovingly devote themselves to other gods and sacrifice to them in deep faith, they really worship me, though the rite may be different from the usual." The Hindu scriptures have affirmed the truths contained in other religions: "Just as the water falling from the heavens flow into the same ocean, so too the worship of Divine in numerous forms reaches Keshava."

6. Islam and National Integration

One of the two basic teachings of Islam, which the *Koranic* revelations emphasized from the earliest moment of their disclosure, was the unity of the whole mankind as one family. Islam encourages pluralism in matters of religion: "For every one of you, We appointed a law and a way. And if *Allah* had pleased he would have made you a single people. But that He might try you in what he gave you.. So vie one with another in virtuous deeds" (*Koran* 5:48).

²⁰Vivekananda, S., *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1958), p. 3.

²¹Arokiasamy, *Responding to Communalism*, pp. 14-15.

"To every nation We appointed acts of devotion, which they observes, so let them not dispute with thee in the matter, and call to thy Lord" (*Koran* 22:67). "And everyone has direction to which he turns. So vie with one another in good work" (*Koran* 2:148).

"Your brotherhood is but one brotherhood and I am your only Lord. Therefore, serve Me. Men have divided among themselves into schisms, but to us they shall all return. He that does good deeds in the fullness of his faith, his endeavours shall not be lost; we record them all" (*Koran* 21:92)

In the course of his farewell sermon before his death, Prophet Mohammed gave the message of a universal and humanistic ethics: "O mankind! An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not superior to an Arab, a white man is not superior to a black man, nor a black man superior to a white man, except by virtue of his conduct. The noblest in the sight of Allah is he who is the noblest in conduct."²²

As early as in the end of 19th century Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), a Muslim leader had spoken about the primacy of Hindu-Muslim unity: "India is beautiful bride and Hindus and Muslims are her two eyes. If one of them is lost, this beautiful bride will become ugly."²³

Speaking about the absolute necessity of communal harmony for national integration, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad said in September 1923: "If an angel demands from heavens today and proclaims from the Qutab Minar that India can attain Swaraj within 24 hours provided I relinquish my demand for Hindu-Muslim unity, I shall retort: "No my friend, I will give up Swaraj; but not, Hindu-Muslim unity, for if Swaraj is delayed, it will be a loss for India, but if Hindu-Muslim unity is lost, it will be a loss for the whole of mankind".²⁴

²²Xavier Irudayaraj and Sebastia Raj, *Religion and National Integration* (Bangalore: Infant Jesus Agencies, 1991), p. 83.

²³Cited in Palkhivala, *We, the Nation. The Lost Decades* (New Delhi: UBSPD, 1994), p. 97.

²⁴Cited in Pushparajan A (ed.), *Challenges to Religious Pluralism* (Madurai: The Commission for Dialogue, 1994), p. 115.

Islam has contributed towards integration of national life in India in many ways. First and foremost, it was only with the coming of the Muslims that for the first time after Harsha Vardhana in the beginning of the 7th century, the large parts of India were united under one rule of Delhi Sultanate. The political unification of India remained always an obsession with the Muslim rulers of Delhi, with various degrees of success, till the last great emperor of the Mughal dynasty Aurangzeb in the 18th century. The progress made towards the integration of India as one nation as well as the political, administrative and economic benefits of a single government over large parts of India can be appreciated fully only when these are viewed in the context of the handicaps under which India had suffered during its five centuries of political fragmentation before the coming of the Muslims.²⁵

7. Sikhism and National Integration

Integration of different strands of social fabric is a major concern of the Sikh faith. Sikhism is intolerant towards a birth-based multi-caste social set up, because it is violative of the unity and dignity of mankind. It is tolerant towards a multi-religious society, because of its moral and integrative potentialities. In the words of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism: "One who considers Hinduism and Islam to be equally valid will be able to solve many of his problems, but he who considers the other religions to be irreligious, will single himself in the fire of hatred."

Guru Nanak always stood for inter-religious harmony and exhorted his followers "to share the good qualities of others, leaving alone their bad ones." He used to say: "There are two highways-the Hindu and Muslim, but their Lord is the same." Giving due respect to other religions, Guru Amar Das prayed: "Grant me redemption O Lord, if not through the door that I have selected, through the door of your own choice." Guru Tegh Bahadur set an example for others to follow by laying down his life for the worshipping rights of a person belonging to another religion.²⁶

God is one, though people give him many names according to their spiritual needs and different degrees of understanding. In the words of Guru Govind Singh: "Let all human being understand that they belong to the one and same caste. The temple and the mosque are the same; There is no basic difference between Hindu

²⁵Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p.44

²⁶Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

and Musalman worship. All mankind is one, though it gives the false impression of being many... The Hindu and the Muslim gods are the same; the Hindu and Muslim sacred texts give, in essence, the same message."²⁷

8. Christianity and National Integration

Though Christianity always preached universal brotherhood, solidarity and love, the failure of the Catholic Church to bring about peace, harmony and unity was admitted by Pope John Paul II on March 11, 2000, when holding on to a 15th century crucifix from the Church of San Marcello, he made a public apology for the errors in the past: "We ask forgiveness for divisions between Christians, for the use of violence in the name of truth, and for the difference and hostility engaged against followers of other religions."²⁸

Contact, dialogue and co-operation with the followers of other religions is basic to the Church and is an essential element of her mission. In the post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999), Pope John Paul II draws attention to this reality in the following words; "...improving both ecumenical relations and inter-religious dialogue among religions, building unity, working for reconciliation, forging bonds of solidarity, promoting dialogue among religions and cultures, eradicating prejudices and engendering trust among people are all essential to the Church's evangelizing mission in the continent." (No. 24)

The Church believes that inter-religious relations "are best developed in a contest of openness to other believers, a willingness to listen and the desire to respect and understand other in their difference. For all this, love of other is indispensable. This should result in collaboration, harmony and mutual enrichment." (EA No. 31). The Church "rejects as foreign to the mind of Christ any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life or religion" (Nostra Aetate 5). Pope John Paul II in an address to a mixed gathering of Muslims and Hindus said:

It is never God's will that there should exist hatred within the human family, that we should live in distrust and at enmity with one another. We are all children of

²⁷Ibid., p. 53.

²⁸"Forgive Us, Pleads the Pope", in *Deccan Herald*, March 12, 2000, p. 1.

the same God, members of the great family of man. Our religions have a special role to fulfill in curbing these evils and in fostering bonds of trust and fellowship. God's will is that those who worship Him, even if not united in the same worship, would nevertheless be united in brotherhood and in common service for the good of all.²⁹

The Church is concerned also with struggles of people belonging to the other religions: "The joy and hope, the griefs and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1). "Christian charity should be extended to all without distinction of race, social condition or religion. They should 'interest themselves and collaborate with other in the right ordering of social and economic affairs... should share in the effort of those people who are fighting against famine, ignorance and disease and striving to bring about better living conditions and peace in the world'" (*Ad Gentes* 12).

The Catholic Church is open to other religion and she "rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions as they often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). "The Church therefore urges her sons in dialogue and collaboration with followers of other religions, with prudence and charity to recognize the spiritual and moral treasures as well as the socio-cultural value which are found among them, to preserve and foster them" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2).

9. Religious Fundamentalism and National Integration

In a multi-religious context, religions are called upon to play a creative role in promoting and safeguarding patriotism and fellowship among all citizens. But often religions have become instruments of division, communalism and alienation. In the words of Manickam:

When each community attempts to display its religious activities to an extent of causing disturbance to other communities, or thereby humiliate them by interfering with their cultural identity, or undertake steps offending the sensibility or the faith and practices of their communities, naturally there arise

²⁹Cited in Sreenivasa Rao (ed.), *Inter-Faith Dialogue and World Community* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1991), p. 35.

conflicts, communal riots and all forms of antisocial movements undermining the internal cohesion, strength and peace of the nation as a whole. In such volcanic situations, integration of the various forces and sources of life, ideas and ideologies is essential for peace, prosperity and progress of a nation.³⁰

The single most dangerous threat to our political integrity and to the very survival of the nation as an independent entity is the virus of communalism and religious fanaticism. It was from this perspective that Vivekananda said: "Though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion."³¹

Communal conflicts, "bear the characteristics of a semi-permanent group warfare, which erupts without prior warning, and leaves everyone injured, impoverished, embittered and confirmed in their hostilities."³² Social analysts point out that "Communal violence has become our way of life, that "bridges between communities are crumbling", that "the frequency and intensity of communal troubles are rising", and that the "level of mutual tolerance and understanding is precipitously falling."³³

A sharp divide between communities, each pulling itself apart from the rest and feeling superior, inferior, aggrieved and hostile, is the essence of communalism.³⁴ The exaggerated adherence to one's supposedly threatened religious identity that draws the members of a religious community into a tightly knit and defensive group, maintaining a hostile aggressive stance against members of other groups, has become a serious threat to the unity and stability of India.³⁵

According to Bipan Chandra communalism is "the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common social, political

³⁰Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p. viii.

³¹Vivekananda S., *The Complete Works on Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, p. 360

³²Gopala Krishna, "communal Violence in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XX, 2 (January 2, 1985), p. 75.

³³Balraj Puri, "Communalism and Regionalism", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXII/28, July 11, 1987, p. 1132.

³⁴A.J. Akbar, "Snakes and Ladders", in *Sunday* (October 1987), pp. 11-17.

³⁵Arokiasamy, *Responding to Communalism*, p. 139.

and economic interests."³⁶ Donald Smith defines religious communalism as "the functioning of religious communities or organizations which claim to represent them, in a way which is considered detrimental to the interests of other groups or of the nation as a whole."³⁷

The elements of religious fundamentalism are found in varying degrees in all religions, and from time to time they make their presence felt in a forceful and pernicious manner. The communal divide in India has been responsible for secessionist movements and for kindling separatist tendencies in the populace of our country. It has posed myriad problems in the amalgamation of cultures for nation-building. It is gruesome for national integration, virulent for social harmony and catastrophic for secularism. In post-independence decades, the communal holocausts have shaken our faith in communal amity, as we have witnessed progressively worse expressions, one after the other, almost in all parts of the country. Punjab, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa and Maharashtra appear to be badly in the iron grip of communal belligerence.³⁸

Speaking on the dangers of communalism Jawaharlal Nehru had observed in 1951 that the activity of communal organizations "probably is more dangerous for the future of India than any armed attack from any foreign country. We can meet an attack from a foreign country because we know exactly that foreign country is attacking us and is the enemy. We fight it with all our strength. But the other attack is vicious, because it gradually creeps into our minds without our understanding its full significance or its full danger"³⁹

9.1. Ethnocentrism and National Integration

Communalism may be spoken as a form of ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism refers to "that view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything and

³⁶Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vani Educational Books, 1984), p.1.

³⁷Donald Smith, *India as Secular State* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 454.

³⁸V.V. Singh, *Communal Violence* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1993), p. vi.

³⁹N.L. Gupta (Ed.), *Nehru on Communalism* (New Delhi: Vani Educational Books, 1965), p. 213.

all others are scaled and rated with reference to it."⁴⁰ Any attempt to claim superiority for one's own religion over that of other, either because of the brute numerical majority of people who follow it or because of the influence in terms of authority and power it wields, will lead to confrontations. Anthropologically such absolutising tendency has been qualified as ethnocentrism, the mentality of considering one's own ethnic group as the centre of attention, operation and planning, situating all others on the periphery of their human habitat. This tendency is very harmful to the minorities as their existence and survival will always be threatened by the centrifugal and centripetal interference of the ethnocentric group.⁴¹

9.2. *The Communal Organizations and National Integration*

The Communal organizations like the *RSS*, *Shiv Sena*, *Hindu Mahasabha*, the *Trishil Sena*, the *Bajrang Dal*, the *Jamet-e-Islami*, the *Adam Sena*, *VHP* and the Sikh terrorists of *Dal Khalsa* are formidable threat to national integration. First and foremost, they advocate exclusiveness and cohesiveness for their separate identity as opposed to integration and harmony in a pluralistic society. They openly denounce secularism as in the case of the *Hindu Mahasabha* which has the slogan : "Communalism is bliss".

Secondly, the communal organizations promote communal feeling by adopting a negative attitude towards the other communities and assigning negative values and motives to their mode of functioning and life-style. It is one's antagonism against other more than a conviction about one's religious beliefs that incites men to murder. According to K.F. Rustomji, the former member of National Police Commission: "the men who are killers have no faith in their religion, but a deep, obstinate, fiendish sort of hatred for the other side."⁴²

Thirdly, they often see the extension of their community alone as a nation or State. For instance, the *RSS* believes in forced assimilation and "stands for Hindus, Hindi and Hindustani." Fourthly, the communal organizations believes in the 'expansionism of their community interest to the extent of depriving others of civil

⁴⁰Emil D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth* (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1988), p. 14.

⁴¹Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p. xii.

⁴²Rustomji K.F., "Who are the Fanatics?", in *Freedom First* 39 (January 1987), p. 15.

liberties, legitimate rights and favours which they lawfully deserve. It has been very much revealed in the words of Golwalker: "The non-Hindu people in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language... They must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even the citizens' rights."⁴³

9.3. *The Reason for Communalism*

Almost all social scientists who have analyzed the problem of religious fundamentalism agree that the most important fact underlying communal riots is the economic and political competition between leaders of rival groups. It is in this context that they speak of the "Communal smoke-screen", or religion being "an instrument and not a causative factor", or "religion as the outer cover", or "the cloak of communalism", or religion used as a "convenient scape goat."⁴⁴ As Asghar Ali Engineer observes: "Religion is not the root cause of communal conflict, religion is rather a powerful instrument in the hands of those interests which seek to play their game though it."⁴⁵

Field studies of the major communal riots in the country since independence emphasized the conflict or economic interests behind the clash of rival religious communities. Thus the Bhiwandis riots of 1970 and 1983 originated in an economic-political struggle to grab control of the powerloom industry an Municipal seats. The Moradabad riots or 1987 have been attributed to the growing ascendancy of Muslim brassware industry entrepreneurs and the diminishing importance of Hindu middlemen.⁴⁶

According to Arun Shourie, the former editor of *The Indian Express* there are three reasons for the rise and spread of communalism in India.⁴⁷ There is near *total*

⁴³Cited in V.V. Shing, *Communal Violence*, pp. 95-97.

⁴⁴D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, p. 28.

⁴⁵Asghar Ali Engineer, *On Developing Theory of Communal Riots* (Bombay: Institute of Islamic Studies, 1984), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁶D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, p. 82.

⁴⁷Arun Shourie, *Religion in Politics* (New Delhi: Role Books International, 1987), pp. 291-92.

ignorance of one's own scriptures and the scriptures of other Indian religions. If we examine carefully the sacred texts, none of them speaks of communalism or communal hatred. They all inculcate great respect for other's faiths.

Secondly, most Indians *fail to go to specifics.* People are usually carried away by slogans without caring to analyze the point at issue. Thus often religious riots originate in baseless rumours centred on non-religious issues, or issues that are merely peripheral to religion. Finally, the spread of communalism can be traced back to *the inertia of the State to take apt remedial measures,* for fear of losing the votes at the time of elections.

9.4. *Religious Fundamentalism in India: A Flashback*

Pre-British India enjoyed centuries of comparative peace and tolerance among the various religious commonalities and their sects. While there was a clear distinction between the functions of priests and king in the ancient Hindu kingdoms, and later between the Muslim rulers and the *Ulemas* in the Islamic polity, there was no institutional separation of State and religion.⁴⁸

The British policy regarding religion was governed by their commercial interests, their administrative concerns and their official patronage of Protestant Christianity. Officially, the British pursued a policy of religious neutrality, striving assiduously to avoid antagonizing any religious group, either by interference in their internal affairs or by striving for conversion. Despite their efforts to remain religiously neutral, the British policies to bring about social reform and the growth of Christian influence through their missionary activities and educational institutions raised the cry of "religion in danger" leading ultimately to the War of Independence in 1857.

From 1857, British policy, in retaliation against the suspected protagonistic role of the Muslims in the Sepoy Mutiny, swung in favour of the Hindus. Later, with the rapid development of the Freedom Movement, the British claimed that colonialism was necessary for the protection of the religious minorities and began courting the Muslims. This alternating favouritism on the basis of religion, which became part of the British "divide and rule" strategy fostered the growth of communalism, if it did not give rise to it. "The resultant equation was a three-way tug-of-war with the Muslims

⁴⁸D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, pp. 17-18.

and Hindus trying or wrest the maximum benefits from their colonial masters, and the British playing off one religious community against the other to safeguard their own interest."⁴⁹

9.4.1. *The Indian National Congress and The Muslim League*

The Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1885 by Allen Hume embarked on a truly secular footing, by opening its doors to all religious communities and electing Muslims to the office of the President. However, gradually it tended to become a Hindu renaissance movement. Hindu symbol became an integral part of the nationalist struggle to evict the British from India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak popularized the celebration of *Ganapati*, in honour of Ganesh, as a ten-day festival with patriotic overtones. In Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee identified India with the consort of a Hindu deity in his famous poem *Vande Mataram* which soon became a popular nationalist song. Alarmed by this extremist rhetoric of Tilak and Aurobindo who dressed their nationalist ideas in the religious symbolism of Hinduism, Muslims departed *en masse* from the party, leaving behind a token representation of their community.

The founding of the Muslim League in 1906 coincided with the high tide of extremist influence in the Congress ushered in the era of party politics, firmly established on religious difference. "One result of the Hindu tinge was that a large number of educated Muslims remained aloof from the National Movement or became hostile to it and fell easy prey to the propaganda of the imperialist publicists and communal politicians."⁵⁰

Unquestionably, the fears generated by such frequent and sometimes emotional use of religious symbolism contributed significantly to the two-nation theory and the movement for a separate Islamic state. Thus the growth of the Freedom Struggle against the British and the rising tide of nationalism were offset by the widening gulf between the Hindus and Muslims.

The provision for separate Muslims electorates in most of the major provinces by the Indian Councils Act 1909 further accentuated the Hindu-Muslim division and

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India*, p. 146.

marked the official beginning of the politics of religion. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 correctly assessed the danger of separate electorate when it stated: "Division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organized against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens."⁵¹

Smith evaluates the introduction of separated electorates on the basis of religion as follows:

"The system of separate representation undoubtedly stimulated the further growth of communalism... It encouraged the very defect it sought to remedy...The minorities tended to lean on the artificial prop of separate electorates instead of strengthening their educational and economic position. The various religious communities became political units and functioned increasingly as such with each successive constitutional reform."⁵² The process of fragmentation reached its climax with the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan as a separate Muslim State.

9.4.2. *The Hindutva and Communalism*

In 1923, Vir Savarkar published *Hindutva*, one of the most influential works in the development of Hindu communal ideology. *Hindutva* referred to a people united by a common country, blood, history, religion, culture and language. He was the first to use the term *Hindu Rashtra*, an oft-repeated notion in the ideology of Hindu fundamentalism. In an atmosphere of mounting tension between Hindus and Muslims, the former were said to constitute a "nation", while the Muslims were but a "community." Savarkar wrote: "India cannot be assumed today to be a unitarian and homogeneous nation, but on the contrary, there are two nations in the main: the Hindus and the Muslims... There are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India."⁵³

The communal bias in the *Hindu Mahasabha* platform was plain as it clamoured for the establishment of *Hindu Raj* in *Bharat*, the end of all conversions from Hinduism and the re-conversion of earlier converts through the *Shuddhi* movements and a total ban on cow slaughter. In 1925, the *Rashtriya Swayam Sevak*

⁵¹Donald Smith, *India as Secular State*, p. 86.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 87

⁵³V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva* (Poona: V.G. Ketkar, 1942), p. 26.

Sangh (RSS) was founded by Gowalker with the aim of forming a disciplined corps to become the vanguard of the new Hindu nation. Gowalker maintained that "the non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language...or stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing...not even citizen rights."⁵⁴

9.4.3. Religious Fundamentalism in the Post-Independence Era

Though India constitutionally chose secularism in her approach to religion, the process of acquiring independence in 1947 had caused divisions among Indians. Though independence freed the country from British control, it simultaneously unharnessed a series of fears, suspicions and hostilities among the religious minorities of India, particularly among the Muslims. The minorities believe that India, for all pretensions of becoming a secular State, was still predominantly and stridently Hindu. "While Hindus harped back to the Gupta age as the zenith of Indian history, some Muslims dreamt of a glorious past which began with the invasion of Mohammed Bin Qasim."⁵⁵

In response to the decision of organizations like the VHP and the *Hindu Manch* to provide protection to Hindus and prevent conversion through the formation of communal organizations like the *Bajrang Dal*, *Shiv Sena*, *Shiv Sakh Dal*, Muslims Senas were formed like the *Adam Sena*, *Ali Sena*, *Ali Jahad* and *Jehadi Kashkar* to match the Hindu militancy. These fundamentalist groups are "as provocative, explosive and undesirable as the Hindu bodies, not only vitiating the atmosphere further but also strengthening the forces of fundamentalism and terrorism."⁵⁶

Ebe Sunder Raj and Sam Thambusamy have listed 146 incidents of violence against the Christian community alone in different parts of the country from March 1997 to September 1999.⁵⁷ The table given below offers a bird's eye view of the

⁵⁴Gowalker M.S., *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1947), pp. 55-56.

⁵⁵D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, p.25.

⁵⁶Inder Mohan, "Changing Patterns of Communalism", in *Evening News*, Feb. 13, 1987, p.10.

⁵⁷Ebe Sunder Raj and Sam Thambusamy, *Divide to Rule* (Chennai: Bharat Jyoti Publications, 1999), pp. 23-31.

communal riots that have happened in the country in the first four decades after our independence.⁵⁸

INCREASING COMMUNAL RIOTS

Year	Incidents	Injured	Killed
1955	75	457	24
1965	173	758	34
1975	205	890	53
1985	525	3665	328

10. The Effective Means for National Integration

Though all the religions stand for communal harmony, peace and universal brotherhood, the fundamentalists have made religion an obstacle in the way of national integration. The time has come to awaken to the urgent need to combat the communal virus that has been eating into the very life of Indian society at an alarming pace. We cannot remain a silent spectator to the naked dance of the demon of religious bigotry, but must join all men and women of good will in the struggle against those who are bent on destroying national integrity and social harmony.

10.1. Working Towards Equality

Since the principle factor fostering communalism is the grossly unequal distribution of economic opportunities and the callousness of the bureaucracy and the Government, the key solution to the problem lies in reducing this imbalance. All other solutions, no matter how commendable in themselves, are bound to fail as long as large sections of the population are deprived, overlooking a more basic divide that separates a rich and powerful minority from a poor and defenseless majority.⁵⁹

⁵⁸John Desroches, *The India We want to Build: Perspectives for a Better India*, Vol.II (Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1995), p. 268.

⁵⁹D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, p.64.

The Constitution (42nd Amendment), Act 1976, declared India to be "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic." Secularism, socialism and democracy go hand in hand and they cannot be compartmentalized. They are intimately linked as one goal cannot be pursued without the other two. The dream of a secular State will remain remote and improbable as long as basic needs like food, water, health care and education are not available to the rural masses and housing and employment are beyond the reach of millions of urbanites.

The religious communities can contribute immeasurably to communal harmony if they work shoulder to shoulder creating an awareness of social injustice and co-operating in its removal by inter-religious dialogue, attended largely by religious leaders, not the excitable masses. Jointly planning and implementing concrete programmes for education, employment and housing in the urban-industrial areas, where communal riots repeatedly occur, should constitute the social dimension of every religious community and complement religious ceremony and ritual.

As Paolos Gregorios says: "Communalism can be mitigated if all religions jointly fight for the oppressed and exploited, shedding their arrogance and superiority. No religion should tolerate any injustice anywhere, whether suppression of human rights or economic exploitation. This would serve as an important shield against communalism."⁶⁰

By serving the poor deprived, irrespective of their religious affiliations and appealing to the basic human values of equality, freedom of opportunity and respect for human dignity, the religious communities can manifest in action the common ground of religion, contained in the teachings of every religious founder, which binds all men and women into one human family.⁶¹

10.2. Political Measures

The entry of religion into politics bodes ill for the future of Indian secularism. We have many political parties with religious affiliations: *Muslim League*, *Akali Dal*, *Shiv Sena*, and *Kerala Congress*. The formation of political parties based on the religion has disastrous social and political implications. It would mean that a Muslim

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 66.

must belong to the Muslim League, because that party alone claims to speak on behalf of the Muslims. It would also imply that an attack on an individual of a particular religious community would be taken as an attack on one's religion. It is not treated as a personal attack but as a communal attack. It would also mean that a religious leader cannot be prosecuted as a 'human' criminal but only as 'Hindu', 'Muslim' or 'Christian'. In other words, communalism creates several nations within a single nation.⁶²

The promotion of communal harmony and national integration demands a ban on all fundamentalist groups that play on the religious feelings of the people for their vested interests. The communal organizations like the RSS, *Jamat-e-Islami* and *Anand Marg* which have been repeatedly engaged in fomenting communal unrest have not been banned or censured despite the recommendations of the National Integration Council and several judicial commissions established to investigate communal riots.

Politicians manipulate religious issues, as in the case of the construction of a temple at Ayodhya, or give a religious colouring to economic, social, linguistic issues in order to rouse people and to garner votes. The politicization of religion breeds violence and disharmony as it happened at the partition of India and later in all communal riots. It is in this context that Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswati Swami Sankarachary of Sri Kanchi Kamakodi Peetam exhorts: "All religions must keep away from political parties. It is such parties that create differences where there are none and fish in troubled waters... In their efforts to capture the seats of power, the political parties have divided the people, without giving any thought to the welfare of the people or the country."⁶³

10.3. *The Need for Religious Instruction*

The Kothari Commission Report on education has recommended for the students in educational institutions, instruction on the various religions of the country so that they become familiar with what they have in common. The aim of the

⁶²Arokiasamy, *Responding to Communalism*, p. 248.

⁶³Saraswati Swami Jagadguru Sri Jayendra, "Relevance of Inter-Faith Dialogue in Today's Context", in *Sarva Dharma-Sammelana 1998*, edited by A. Suresh, New Delhi: Commission for Inter-religious Dialogue.

instruction is not to convert others to one's perspectives, but to explore the mutual impact of religion, politics, culture and society in a scientific way.⁶⁴

The Kothari Commission states: "It would not be practicable for a secular state with many religions to provide education in any one religion. It is, however, necessary for a multi-religious democratic state to promote a tolerant study of all religions so that its citizens can understand one another and live amicably together."⁶⁵

10.4. *The Need for Inter-Religious Dialogue*

Inter-religious dialogue is an effective means for the promotion of national integration and communal harmony because there is only one religion- *the religion of love*; there is only one caste – *the caste of humanity*; there is only one language – *the language of the heart*; there is only one God- *the omnipresent*. As Gandhi once said: "The greatness of religion consists in its capacity to produce great minds... capable of accepting and appreciating the other."⁶⁶

A genuine inter-religious dialogue demands freeing oneself from all prejudices and fears about the other's religion and the fear of losing one's own faith. One should be detached from one's own exclusivistic, dogmatic, attitude and the consequent feeling of superiority, and one's own lack of inner freedom to enter into unknown mystery of the other. It demands "getting inside the skin of the other...walking in the other's shoes...seeing the world in some sense as the other sees it...asking the other's questions...getting inside the other's sense of "being a Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist or whatever."⁶⁷ In the words of Abhishiktananda:

Each partner in dialogue must try to make his own, as far as possible, the institution and experience of the other, to personalize it in his own depths beyond his own ideas and even beyond those through which the other attempts to express and communicate them with the help of the signs available in his tradition. For a fruitful dialogue it is necessary that I reach, as it were, in

⁶⁴Arikiasamy, *Responding to Communalism*, p. 78.

⁶⁵Cited in Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p. 21.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁷Arokiasamy, *Responding to Communalism*, p. 279.

the very depth of myself to the experience of my brother, freeing my own experience from all accretions, so that my brother can recognize in me his own experience of his own depth.⁶⁸

Speaking on the need for inter-religious dialogue, Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 stated:

The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Muslim, nor is a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. Each one assimilates the spirit of the other and yet preserves its individuality and grows according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world, it is this. It has proved that holiness, purity and charity are not exclusive possessions of anyone religion in the world and that every system had produced men and women of the most exotic character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of one particular religion and the destruction of the other, I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that, whatever be the banner, every religion will soon be hidden in spite of the resistance. Help and not fight. Assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace and not dissensions.⁶⁹

10.5. Adopting a Gandhian Approach to Religion

Religions are meant to establish peace on earth. Hindu prayers (*Mantras*) are often concluded with *Om Santhi*. Christian prayers often start with the exchange of greeting for peace. Etymologically, Islam means 'peace'. The religious riots, dissensions and discord in the past can be attributed to the lack of proper understanding of religion. Taking a Gandhian perspective to religion can be a very effective means for fostering national integration and communal harmony. The source of harmony, according to Gandhi, is the realization that all human being are the children of the same Father.

We are all children of the same Father whom the Hindu, the Muslim and the Christian know by different names. The Allah of the Islam is the same as the

⁶⁸Abhishiktananda, "The Depth-Dimension of Religious Dialogue", in *Vidya Jyoti*, 45(1981), p. 214.

⁶⁹Cited in Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p.8.

God of Christians and the Ishwara of Hindus...and little man has tried in his humble way to describe the Mighty God by giving Him attributes, though, He is above all attributes, indescribable, inconceivable, immeseaurable. Living faith in this God means acceptance of the brotherhood of mankind. It also means equal respect for all religions.⁷⁰

Gandhi believed in the unity of all religions. Different religions, according to him, are but different flowers in the same garden, or branches of the same tree. Using the simile he says: "Just as a tree has a million leaves, similarly, though God is one, there are as many religions as there are men and women though they are rooted in one God... Each mind has a different conception of God from that of the other."⁷¹

Gandhi considered all religions of the world to be true 'more or less' because religions as conceived by the human beings can never be perfect, perfection being the exclusive attribute of God alone. "If all faiths outlined by man are imperfect, the question of comparative merits doesn't arise" says Gandhi. All faiths aim at the revelation of Truth. Truth is like the fire at the heart of a multi-faceted jewel. Each angle shows a different aspect and different colour. Imperfect as we are, we can see truth only in fragmentation and act according to our limited vision. When such an attitude becomes the law of life, the conflicts based on the difference of religion will disappear from the face of the earth."⁷²

All religions have to be respected and held in esteem. Gandhi asks: "Religions are different roads coverging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long we reach the same goal?"⁷³ Since all religions have a basic unity, and they share the same Truth and are equal. Respect for all religions is possible only if we study all religions with equimindedness. Gandhi exhorts: "I would advise the Hindus and the Sikhs to read the *Quran* as they read the *Gita* and the *Granth Saheb*. To the Muslims, I would say they should read the *Gita* and the *Granth*

⁷⁰M.K. Gandhi, *All Religions are True* (Bombay: Pearl Publications, 1962), p. vii.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²Manickam, *Role of Religions in National Integration*, p. 89.

⁷³A.K. Chirappanath, "Gandhiji's Views on Religion", in *Indian Missiological Review*, No.4 (1980), pp.353-54

Saheb with the same reverence with which they read the *Quran*. They should understand the meaning of what they read and have regard for all religions. This is my life-long practice and ideal."⁷⁴

11. Conclusion

India is a land of many living religions, that have shaped and moulded the history of our people. Today we are deeply pained and outraged by the evils of communalism and fundamentalism through which vested interests are destroying the basic humanity and the inter-human fellowship of our peoples. They also distort the authentic religiousness which is open to human solidarity and non-communal fellowship. Such a fellowship can arise only out of a common commitment to the struggle against the forces of disintegration and to the promotion of freedom, justice and the dignity of human beings especially the poor and the oppressed.

The emergence of an authentic and universal religion is a prelude and prerequisite for national integration and universal brotherhood. Such an authentic religion is to be more of a way of life than a set of dogmas, doctrines and rituals. It demands a universal vision that can come from an authentic spirituality based on the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Human Beings and the Unity of the Whole Creation.⁷⁵ As D'Cruz emphatically puts it:

The final goal of a secular society must be to divert the attention of individual citizens and groups from a narrow fixation on categories that divide or separate them from others and to concentrate on that basic bond of humanity which underlies as these distinctions, makes all men and women equal and assure to each and every citizen the fundamental freedom enshrined in the Constitution. To achieve this goal, the State must exemplify the ideas of equality, freedom and respect for human dignity in its own actions and motivate its citizens to concern for human rights before loyalty to religion, caste, language, community and even one's country. In effect, it will mean the desacralisation of politics and the depoliticisation of religion.⁷⁶

⁷⁴M.K. Gandhi, *All Religions are True*, p.26.

⁷⁵Irudayaraj, *Religion and National Integration*, p. 60.

⁷⁶D'Cruz, *Indian Secularism: A Fragile Myth*, pp. 79-80.

"Without peace between religions, there shall be no peace between nations", said Prof. Hans Kung.⁷⁷ The greatest obstacle to national integration is not Pakistan or China but Indians themselves. As Chitra Subramaniam, the journalist who exposed the Bofors scandal, wrote in her recent book *India is for Sale*: "Nobody lets India down like Indians themselves."⁷⁸ You may ask what can we do about it? If we rely upon the Government to do anything to foster national integration, we are indulging in pipe dream. As the late US President, John Kennedy said: "Do not ask what the country can do for you; ask what you can do the country."

Yavar Abbas, the distinguished filmmaker and broadcaster, speaking on national integration shares with the people of India a great vision and a dream:

...like Martin Luther King, I too have a dream...that the people of my land will be able to travel its length without let or hindrance. I have a dream that our own Berlin Wall erected in our mind with the brick and mortar of mutual trust...I have a dream that the divided and estranged people of our ancient land will come together again and pool their enormous talents for the greater glory of all... I have a dream that love will triumph over hate the Gandhi's life will not have been lived in vain.⁷⁹

The road to India of our dreams may be long, but as a Chinese proverb goes: "A journey of thousand miles begins with a single step.." The question is whether that single step, that starting step, can be your step.

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⁷⁷Cited in Pushparajan A (ed.), *Challenges to Religious Pluralism* (Madurai: The Commission for Dialogue, 1994), p. 20.

⁷⁸Chitra Subramaniam, *India is for Sale* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1997), p.2.

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