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THE INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN INDIA

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In the opinion of many there is little hope for any real progress in India until a satisfactory solution is found to the communal problem. In this article Dr. Asirvatham, who is Reader in Politics in Madras University, analyses the primary and subsidiary causes of communal conflict and suggests steps which may be taken towards developing a healthy nationalism.

IN the national life of India to-day there is no problem which calls for a more immediate and lasting solution than the problem of the inter-communal conflict. Even the problem of British Imperialism, or of the princes, or of the federation-to-be pales into insignificance when compared with communalism.

Mahatma Gandhi is considered the greatest living Indian to-day because he has given us a profound sense of national self-respect. But the man who can find a permanent solution to the problem of national unity will be considered even greater than he. Posterity is certain to regard such a man the greatest saviour of India in modern times. National self-respect becomes a mere sentiment, devoid of all reality, if it is not augmented by national unity. 80 long as national unity is lacking and communal strife is rampant, we shall continue to be a subject people and an object of derision to the outside world.

The problem of communalism is on the whole peculiar to India. It is true that many of the smaller European countries, South Africa, the United States, and Canada have their problems arising from the presence of minorities in their midst. But these minorities are linguistic, racial, religious or political. In India, on the other hand, the communal problem is all these and something more.

The chief communal problem in our country is between the Hindus and Muslims. In the Madras Province, however, it is between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins, although it has never reached such proportions as the Hindu-Muslim problem in North India. A further communal problem all over the

country, and particularly in the southern province is the problem between the caste Hindus and the so-called Depressed Classes. The Christians of India as a whole have not been much affected by communalism, although it must be said in the interest of truth that in some parts of India, Indian Christian leaders have at times tried to make common cause with the Muslims and Depressed Classes against the Hindus. In some instances they have joined hands with Anglo-Indians for purposes of social intercourse and the securing of employment.

The Hindus form the bulk of the population of India. According to the 1931 census, out of a total population of 353 millions, fully 68 per cent are Hindus, 22 per cent are Muslims, 1.7 per cent are Christians, and a still slighter percentage are Sikhs. Statistics show that the Mohammedans increase faster than the Hindus. Further, Hinduism not being essentially a missionary faith, has been steadily losing its numbers to both Christians and Muslims. The Sikhs, being confined largely to the Punjab, do not constitute a serious problem for the rest of India.

The Hindus largely predominate in the centre and south of India. In the Madras Presidency they are no less than 88 per cent. They are in the majority in Assam, Bihar, Orissa, the United Provinces, the Central India tracts, Rajputana and Bombay. The Muslims practically monopolise the North-West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, and Kashmir and are considerably in excess in the Punjab, Eastern Bengal and Sind. They form about 32 per cent in Assam, 15 per cent in the United Provinces and 11 per cent in Hyderabad. There are more Hindus living in Indian States governed by Muslim Princes than Muslims living under Hindu Princes.

Seriousness of the Problem. There is no doubt that the inter-communal problem is becoming more and more serious every day. It threatens to lead to a permanent civil war. The present generation of Indians have the responsibility of either making the future of India or of marring it for years to come. A wrong step taken at this juncture will lead to such awful results that one shudders even to think of it.

At the bottom of the inter-communal problem is a profound sense of fear and suspicion and gross misunderstanding. The Muslims do not trust the Hindus and the Hindus in turn distrust the Muslims. The Muslim fear is that the Hindu is very clever, and possibly cunning, and that by the art of palaver, will keep the Muslim down as a hewer of wood and drawer of water. The Hindu fear is that the Muslim is fanatic and bigoted and that, with the help of the sword, he will strive to establish military supremacy over the whole of India, making it a part of the larger Islamic world. Both these fears are ill-founded and are based on old prejudices.

CAUSES OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT

The primary causes of communal conflict are economic, political and psychological. The secondary or subsidiary causes are social, cultural, and religious. Even to-day the communal conflict is confined largely to the educated classes living in town and cities. But a good many selfish political leaders are dragging the masses into the picture in order to advance their own interests.

(1) *Economic.* In many parts of India, the Muslims occupy an inferior economic position to that occupied by the Hindus. In the Punjab and Bengal, where the Muslims form a comfortable majority, we are told that, from the point of view of wealth, Muslims are behind the Hindus, many of the landlords and money lenders being Hindus. In Bengal the Hindus pay more than half the taxes, although they form only 43 per cent of the population. In some forms of business, however, the Muslims are the *entrepreneurs*, while Hindus work for them. This is particularly true in the leather industry, tanning, and *beedi* manufacture. In towns and cities a good percentage of Muslims are shop-keepers and traders. In the skilled trades, arts and handicrafts, the Muslims have on the whole a better showing.

In many of the Government services, the Muslims are behind the Hindus both as regards numbers and influence. This disparity is due largely to the fact that Hindus took to western education much earlier than did the Muslims. In competitive examinations for Government Service the Muslims have made a poorer showing than the Hindus. One possible reason for this is that the Muslim on the whole is not such an apt pupil as the Hindu, the high caste Hindu having had a much longer tradition of book learning. To remedy this inequality the Government of India introduced some years ago a system of communal representation into the central services, according to which 25 per cent of the posts were reserved for Muslims and 8 per cent for Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, etc. For some years now there have been nominated to the I. C. S. a certain number of Muslims who take the competitive examination at Delhi, but who do not come out in the list of successful candidates. In the provincial governments too, there is the communal rotation and nomination to such posts as those of the Naib-Tahsildar and Deputy Collector.

Of late the problem of communal representation in the services has taken a very serious turn in Bengal. Implementing a resolution of the Legislative Assembly that 60 per cent of Government appointments hereafter should be given to Muslims, 20 per cent to the Depressed Classes, and 20 per cent to the rest, the Bengal Ministry decided to reserve 50 per cent of Government posts to the Muslims. The Muslim argument in support of this position is that the Muslims hitherto have had less than their share of the loaves and fishes of office and that, in the name of efficiency and under the guise of com-

petitive examinations, many incompetent Hindus have been appointed to responsible posts. It is further argued that book knowledge is not everything and that what is required of an administrator is capacity to understand human beings, to enlist their co-operation, and to execute orders. While all this may be true—and there is no proof that any community has a monopoly of these qualities—, as Macaulay and Trevelyan foresaw nearly a century ago, nothing can really be an effective substitute for a right type of competitive examination. The real position appears to be that the Muslims of Bengal, finding themselves in a strong position, want to turn the tables on the Hindus.

The economic struggle is so keen that certain forms of business and petty industry are monopolised by members of one community or another, and no one from outside is given a chance to get into the close preserve. Not long ago the *beedi* manufacturers in a certain city put considerable pressure on their workers to change over to the faith of their employers, if they wanted to continue in employment. Disputing the oft-expressed claim that the communal problem is essentially a religious one, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Prime Minister of the Punjab, has recently said : "The communal problem is not a religious problem, but is really a mundane, material problem."

(2) *Political*. The successive instalments of self-government, granted from time to time, have not been an unmixed blessing. They have accentuated communalism and whetted the selfish desire to grab all that one can for one's self and one's community. The Muslims have been quick to realise that political power is passing from the hands of the British to Indian hands. They contend that in the present circumstances of education, wealth, and general progress, self-government really means government by the Hindu majority. Because of this fear, the Muslims have been anxious to safeguard their position by such devices as separate electorates, weightage, and nominations to district boards, municipal councils, etc.

The pernicious system of separate electorates was first introduced as an experimental measure after the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. But the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and the Government of India Act of 1935 have widened and strengthened it. The Macdonald Award of 1932 was really a reward to the faithful. As things stand at present, a progressive individual who wants to cut across the artificial communal barriers fixed by separate electorates cannot do so without altogether foregoing his civic right to exercise the vote. An Indian Christian, for instance, has to vote in the Christian constituency, and for a Christian, whether he likes it or not. He is not allowed to vote in the general constituency. Nor is a non-Christian permitted to seek election from a Christian constituency.

-Separate electorates which are in existence to-day for elections to the

provincial and central legislative chambers are spreading even to local and municipal elections. Very recently separate electorates have been re-introduced into the Calcutta Corporation on the plea that the Muslims, who form only 25 per cent of the city's population, require special protection. Strange as it may seem, in the Province, too, where the Muslims form a majority, separate electorates are in existence. In the city, the minority is to be protected against the majority, but in the Province the majority is to be protected against the minority. Surely a case of "Heads we win, tails you lose!"

Separatism is fast becoming the bane of Indian politics. It has spread from the legislatures, district boards and municipal councils to administrative services, and now threatens to invade even the cabinet system of government. It is argued by some that, in the place of a homogeneous ministry representing the majority party in the legislature and the country, there should be a composite cabinet, representing the different religions and other such interests in the Province and the country, holding office for a fixed term of years. Such a change, we are afraid, will not serve the true interests of minorities any more than communal representation has served their interests in the legislative field.

At the present moment there is very little of nobility or magnanimity in Indian politics. It is supercharged with selfishness of the worst kind. The situation has reached such a pass that vociferous minorities are able to hold up the progress of the whole country by threats of sabotage. It is a clear case of a tyranny of the minority over the majority. It is easily forgotten that if minorities have their rights, so has the majority. Majorities and minorities have a meaning only in reference to genuine differences as regards social, economic and political principles, policies, and methods. But majorities and minorities based on religious, caste, and class affiliations have no abiding place in politics.

(3) *Psychological*. Some of the minorities suffer both from an inferiority and a superiority complex. The inferiority complex arises from the realisation of the fact that they are not so clever and nimble-witted as some others, particularly the Brahmins. They are not so good as their rivals as regards book learning, capacity for hard routine work, and ability to please superiors.

The superiority complex in the case of the Muslims arises from the fact that some centuries ago Muslim kings ruled India, although with the help of both Muslim and Hindu ministers and administrators. The Muslims sometimes argue to themselves that from the point of view of physical strength and prowess they are superior to the Hindus, and, therefore, there is no reason why they should be deprived of their innate right to rule.

To sum up, the primary causes of inter-communal conflict are the instinct of self-preservation, lust for power, and determination to find a place in the sun. To these are added certain subsidiary causes.

SUBSIDIARY CAUSES OF COMMUNAL CONFLICT

(a) *Social and Cultural.* The social and cultural cleavages between the communities are becoming wider every day. Till a few years ago the Muslims, who on the whole do not observe caste restrictions, had no hesitation in accepting food and water at the hands of the Hindus. But now the division is becoming more and more clearly marked, as one can see in separate restaurants for different communities, particularly in the railway stations. For this state of affairs the Hindus are largely to blame. Whatever merits caste may have had in the past, caste as meaning anti-social restrictions has no right to exist to-day. One can understand the feeling of a vegetarian in not wanting to eat with a non-vegetarian. But distinctions other than vegetarian vs. non-vegetarian are meaningless.

Even in such matters as dress and the style of dressing one's hair, the communities are drifting apart. Comparatively insignificant matters such as cow slaughter and music before mosques, which can easily be kept under control, provided there is commonsense and goodwill on both sides, are allowed to become the occasions for bloody communal riots. Hindu participation in Muslim festivals and Muslim participation in Hindu festivals is becoming less and less frequent. The Hindi-Urdu controversy is made to do service to communalism. Inter-marriage between the communities is rare. Relatively speaking, there are more inter-marriages between Hindus and Christians and between Muslims and Christians than between Hindus and Muslims. There is a fundamental social equality among the Muslims which is not so clearly marked among the Hindus.

(b) *Religious.* Instead of being a unifying factor, religion in India is on the whole a divisive factor. The Muslim looks down upon the Hindu as an idolater and polytheist. Hindu pantheism makes no appeal to him. The Hindu, on the other hand, looks upon his own religion as highly philosophical and exceedingly tolerant, and so broad-based as to include every religious faith and sect in India. Mohammedanism, he believes, was well suited for the nomadic conditions which prevailed in Arabia in the early days, but is too elementary to suit modern times.

Hindu worship is mostly individualistic and at times noisy. Muslim worship, on the other hand, is corporate, quiet, and orderly. Sacrifice of cows and goats which forms a part of Muslim worship is repellent to the high caste Hindu.

Many a Muslim feels that Mecca is his spiritual home, and to the extent to which his ultimate loyalty is to a place and to a people outside India, he gives the impression that he is not fully rooted and grounded in India.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION ?

Multiplication and exaggeration of differences in all trivial matters and the nursing of grievances, whether genuine or imaginary, are not ways along which communal harmony can be achieved. Our starting point should be the wholesome conviction that geographical and historical conditions have destined that Indians of all descriptions should live together in harmony and unity on a basis of mutual understanding and accommodation. Our motto might well be: Each community its own social, cultural, and religious existence within well-defined and reasonable limits; all the communities one State. We do not want a Hindu Raj, a Muslim Raj or a British Raj, or any combination of these. We want an *Indian Raj*.

If our national leaders would only realise that our very existence as a country and a people is at stake, they would not indulge in propagating such untenable propositions as "India, a land of two nations," or a "confederation of Hindu India and Muslim India." Instead of confining the area of co-operation to members of their own caste, class or community, they would extend it to include the whole country. India does not want leaders who fan the communal flame and make an amicable settlement difficult of attainment by their exaggerations and half-truths. She wants men and women filled with a passion for national self respect, unity, strength, and justice. Once the necessary psychological attitude, viz. "the will to co-operate," is adopted, problems which appear to be insoluble are bound to vanish into thin air. Emphasis on minority claims and interests is capable of endless multiplication until India becomes a congeries of innumerable tribes, sects, and self-seekers, and no majority is left. Questions such as the creation of a Tamil province or an Andhra province, protection of the rights of non-Brahmins, etc., should all be approached from the angle of national unity and solidarity.

It is too late in the day to argue that the different communities of India belong to different racial stocks and that they can never live in peace. The fact of the matter is that a considerable percentage of present-day Muslims and Christians are converts from the Hindu fold and are flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone. Even supposing that there is racial heterogeneity in India, it must be remembered that there has also been in the past a great deal of racial intermixture. What science teaches is that no race is pure anywhere in the world; all are mongrels—except perhaps the Jews. If it be true that that the Celt, the Saxon, the Dane, and the Norman have coalesced into the

modern Englishman, and the blood of every conceivable European nationality has entered into the blood-stream of the modern American, it is absurd to claim that the Hindu and Muslim can never unite on the racial plane and form a strong nation.

In India we must cultivate the habit of mind which says that racially we are one. History shows that even assumed racial relationship has acted as a cementing factor. The psychological feeling that we are one is much more important than the anthropological proof that we are one. From whatever part of India we may hail and whatever be the religious community or caste to which we may belong, we feel more at home with fellow-Indians, than say with the Chinese, Japanese, British, Germans, or Russians. This may be an irrational and mystical feeling. But it is there, and we must make the most of it if Indian nationality is to become strong and vigorous. We shall do well to cultivate a little bit of Coueism or auto-suggestion in our daily life and contacts. We should develop that habit of mind which says : "Every Indian: the Pathan, the Punjabi, the Bengali, the Gujerati, the Mahratta, the Andhra, the Tamil, and the Malayalee is equally my brother."

A wholesome affection and love for the country which gave us birth is undoubtedly an important corrective to exaggerated communalism. No Indian child should be allowed to grow up without developing an intense love for his village, district, province, and country. Indian mountains and rivers, plains and valleys, historical monuments and ruins should rouse the tender feelings of every Indian. Indian legends and stories of heroes and heroines should become the common property of all. If it be true that a naturally defined territory or geographical unit is an essential condition of nationality, it must be confessed that we have not made full use of the existing geographical unity. Except for some cracks in the Himalayas, India forms a distinct geographical unit marked off from the rest of the world. Therefore it seems altogether futile to speak of dividing India into Hindu India, Muslim India, Sikh India, and Christian India. India is our national home and the boundaries are clearly marked. This does not mean that there are barbed wires around it or a Maginot or Siegfried line shutting out foreigners. The gates are left open to all friendly people who are willing to come and identify themselves completely with us.

Communalism can further be combated by stressing the unity of ideas and ideals which underlie Indian culture. The consciousness that we have a mission to perform to the rest of mankind can help us to forget our differences and work together for a common purpose. Greece at the height of her glory made a great contribution to art, literature, philosophy, and politics. Rome made her contribution to law, order, and practical administration. In modern

times Great Britain has contributed the immortal plays of Shakespeare, wise statesmanship, and the art of governing people through much bungling. America has made valuable contributions in the utilisation of matter for the alleviation of human suffering. India, too, can make her great contribution to mankind when she becomes the master of her soul. She can demonstrate in no uncertain terms the victory of the spirit over matter and the power of truth and non-violence in all human relations. There is already a common allegiance to the ideals behind charka—the ideals of simplicity, purity, truth, non-violence, and concern for the toiling masses. To these passive virtues we should add active, rugged virtues such as bravery, courage, frankness in speech and action, and service to others.

SPECIFIC REMEDIES

(1) *Economic.* One of the primary causes of communalism being economic, some of the ardent spirits in the country believe that socialism may be the way out of our difficulty. When the State provides for the needs of every one who is able and willing to work, it seems reasonable to hope that the present keen struggle for existence will come to be greatly modified, if not cease altogether. To reward people according to the socially useful labour performed may be the best form of social justice, but the world has not yet devised the necessary machinery for the realisation of this end. The hope that Russia may be able to lead the way has been dashed to the ground by her recent unprovoked and aggressive activities. Even if socialism may not be possible in our day, a much larger degree of social justice than what obtains to-day is an absolute necessity. Among other things, it may help to assuage communal feelings. We should work for a state of affairs in which family ethics will take the place of "jungle ethics."

A drastic reduction in salaries attached to government posts may prove to be a blessing in disguise. The huge salaries paid to our public servants are altogether out of keeping with the poverty of the country. Great Britain does not pay its Ministers and civil servants as lavishly as does India. The salary of the Japanese Prime Minister is roughly 1/5 th of that received by Indian Prime Ministers in non-Congress provinces. If an all-round salary cut is brought about, it is possible that there will not be the same scramble for government posts as at present, and consequent communal squabble. Government service should become a vocation which a person takes up out of a sense of duty. The satisfaction of rendering public service should become a reward in itself.

The economic causes of communalism may be partially removed by the opening up of other avenues of making a living besides government posts.

The gradual industrialisation of the country and the revival of cottage industries on a large scale are steps in the right direction. There should be a chain of swadeshi shops and industries all through the country, employing Indians of all descriptions solely on the basis of efficiency and expert knowledge.

As regards communal representation in public services, it should be borne in mind that it is necessary to keep in proper balance the right of each community to its legitimate share of public posts and the right of the nation at large to receive its money's worth. Other things being equal, there should be a due proportion between the strength of any one community in the country and its representation in the services. But it must be remembered that the right of the citizen to be safeguarded against inefficient and worthless officials is much greater than the right of every caste and community to its exact mathematical percentage in the services.

(2) *Political and National.* It is the paramount duty of every parent and teacher to inculcate in boys and girls a healthy national outlook so that when they grow up they will instinctively place the national good above their own narrow or selfish good. Willingness to sacrifice for a common cause and mutual trust should become a part of their nature.

The majority community should give ample proof of its sincerity in striving for the welfare of the minorities. The minorities in their turn should give up their attitude of fear, suspicion, and jealousy and the habit of reading motives even into the most innocent of acts. Both the majority and minority communities should strive to abolish separate electorates which are a blight and a curse, and the futility of which even their keen advocates have come to realise. All that separate electorates have succeeded in doing is to divide India into numerous warring communities and to place a premium on fanaticism, bigotry, and personal and group selfishness. If the transition from separate to joint electorates cannot be made all at once, joint electorates with a reservation of seats may be tried as an intermediate stage. In localities where members of one community or another are found in large numbers, by a slight re-drawing of the boundaries of the constituency it is possible to obtain roughly the same representation for the minorities as obtains to-day under separate electorates.¹ The good citizen should vote for a man not because he belongs to the same caste or community, but because, in his judgment, he is the best available candidate for the office in question. Even if separate electorates are retained for some time longer, opportunity should be given to progressive individuals of all communities to vote in a general constituency. The present arrangement is such that, instead of pulling up the backward to the level

¹ A suggestion which I owe to Mr. V. Devika Char, M. A., a research student in the University of Madras,

of the progressive, the progressive is dragged down to the level of the backward.

People should be trained to realise the fact that there is a political etiquette just as much as there is a social etiquette. Party Government ought not to mean partisan government. No one has a right to sling mud upon one's political opponents. Hitting below the belt is unworthy of political parties as well as of individuals. Keeping on repeating a lie till it appears to be true is a game which even a party politician will do well to avoid. Negative criticism is not only injurious to the general welfare of the country but also corrodes the soul of the person who makes it. If a community has a genuine objection to the Wardha Scheme of education, to a national flag or a national song, it is the duty of that community to evolve something better which will meet with the general approval of thoughtful people among all communities.

To allay the fears of minorities, certain fundamental rights may be incorporated in the preamble to the constitution, remembering at the same time that the best safeguard is the mutual good will and commonsense of the communities. While fundamental rights cannot be enforced in any effective way, they can give to all concerned considerable psychological satisfaction.

Leaders of all communities should put their heads together to evolve a national dress and national headgear. This does not mean that there should be no local or provincial dress. All that it means is that one need not be tied down to it slavishly, especially in these days of rapid transport, frequent travel and abundant social intercourse. Attempt should be made to cultivate an Indian cosmopolitanism as regards food, drink, and social customs in general. In all these matters, the guiding principle should be, "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good."

A national language is undoubtedly an absolute necessity. Seeing that spoken Hindustani is the nearest approach to a national language, every effort should be made to popularise it. Whether the Urdu or the Devanagiri Script should be used is immaterial to most of us. Perhaps both scripts might be used; or better still the Roman script might be adopted. The use of a national language does not mean the destruction of the principal provincial languages. Every Indian child should be given a thorough grounding in his own mother tongue and a working knowledge of a national language as well as of an international language like the English. Such an accomplishment is not difficult of realisation when we remember that Indians are good linguists and that children in many of the smaller European countries learn three languages with great ease and are able to write and converse in all of them.

Voltaire once boasted that the French language and literature had made

more conquests than Charlemagne. National language and literature make for pride and reverence. A well-known English Professor, J. H. Rose, considers common language to be the most powerful political influence. According to another authority, Joseph, language is the most obvious element of nationality. More than any other factor of nationality, a common language can break down the barriers of sectionalism in India.

(3) *Psychological.* Reference has already been made to the necessity of cultivating that frame of mind, especially among the educated, which looks upon every Indian as a brother and fellow-worker in the national cause. Sectionalism and communalism will die an instantaneous death if our communal leaders possess a vivid realisation of the low status to which they have reduced themselves and their country in the eyes of the outside world. Whether we belong to the martial north or the "benighted" south, whether we belong to the "Hindu nation" or the "Muslim nation," we are all given the position of helots once we leave the shores of India. We are looked upon as "a brand of niggers" or a mere appendage of Great Britain; and for this state of affairs we have none to thank but ourselves. No nation on earth will stand the humiliating position assigned to the countrymen of ours in South Africa, Kenya, the Fiji Islands, Ceylon, and even Burma. Yet we stand helpless because we are disunited and are unwilling to think and act in terms of nationalism, even when Great Britain has declared her willingness to set us on the road to freedom.

To perpetuate communalism—whether practised by a majority or a minority—is to brand ourselves as an inferior and semi-civilised people for all time to come. There can be no doubt that communalism is a negation of nationalism. We cannot be both communalists and nationalists. Communalism means a perpetuation of fissiparous tendencies. So long as communalism takes the form of a healthy family pride and means greater effort for the educational, social, and cultural uplift of the members of one's community, without standing in the way of the development of others, there may be no objection to it. But if it means, as it often does, the dividing of India into warring communities, each community trying to secure as much as it can for itself at the expense of others, and each one sticking its tongue out at the others, there can be no justification for it. Communalists often draw a false analogy between family devotion and devotion to one's community. It is conveniently forgotten that those who benefit by communalism are often the most selfish and bigoted members of their community who use their communal cloak for the advancement of their own ends.

(4) *Social and Cultural.* It is the duty of every educated Indian to encourage social intercourse and inter-dining between members of all com-

munities and no community. It is high time that Hindu ' *cha* ' and Muslim ' *cha* ' were replaced by wholesome Indian ' *cha* . ' There is no justification in this day and generation for such exclusiveness as indicated by "For Brahmins only" in cafes and restaurants.

Strenuous attempts should be made to bring about a cross-fertilisation of cultures. Those who study Urdu as their mother tongue might be compelled to study a little Hindi and *vice versa*. Hindus should be encouraged to study the great Muslim poets and writers and the Muslims to study the great Hindu poets and writers. Popular lectures should be arranged emphasising the nearness of Islamic and Hindu cultures as they have developed side by side in India.

While not actively encouraging inter-communal marriages, we should not do anything to discourage them so long as they are rooted in a unity of mind and spirit and take place under proper auspices. Until the whole of Indian society becomes *inter-marriageable*, caste and communalism in some form or another are likely to continue. More than other countries India needs a practical demonstration of the Brotherhood of Man rooted in the Fatherhood of God.

The policy of segregation in streets and wards and the setting up of parallel institutions are most deplorable. The various communities of India, through the centuries in which they have lived in close proximity with each other, have so interpenetrated one another that it is both undesirable and unworkable to separate them geographically, socially or culturally.

Communal schools should be replaced by national schools. If, during the transitional period, it is necessary for communal schools to continue, such schools should receive no government grants unless they are willing to admit at least 25 per cent of their total strength from other communities. Indoctrination of pupils in any religious or sectarian creed should be prohibited in all State-aided schools—the proper place for such teaching being theological schools and colleges. When special grants are given for the education of backward communities, the children should, as far as possible, be required to study in public, as against separate communal, schools.

Attempt should be made to stamp out communal riots by strong action, knowing as we do that such riots quite often begin in a lie or false propaganda. Unfounded rumours of kidnapping or stabbing are frequently the cause of communal riots. It is necessary that those who bring about such riots should be given an exemplary or deterrent punishment, while, as a matter of fact, they are often let off easily in order to allay communal feelings. Goondas, or organised bands of rowdies, in every community should be liquidated.

For the prevention of communal riots and the promotion of communal

harmony, there should be standing committees of men and women belonging to different communities whose chief business will be not to act as advocates of their respective groups, but to keep the contending parties in good relations with each other. These committees may be co-ordinated under a provincial department of administration on communal harmony. Members of these committees should be people of wide sympathy, free from prejudice, commanding the confidence and goodwill of every one in the neighbourhood. They will be the "bridge-builders" between the communities, solely concerned with the creation and maintenance of a neighbourhood spirit.

If communal riots are to be kept under check, it is very essential to curb the propaganda press. While a certain amount of latitude may be allowed as to where facts end and propaganda begins, restraint must be placed upon newspapers which make scurrilous attacks upon individuals, distort facts, and fan the communal flame.

(5) *Religious.* There can be no doubt that for the most part religion, as it is practised in India to-day, is a divisive factor. This does not mean, as is often supposed, that religion is the curse of India. The curse is irreligious and unworthy views of religion. Religion "true and undefiled" brings men together. But religion meaning shibboleths and catchwords, outworn rituals and ceremonies, drives people apart. The true meaning of religion is that it is a perpetual reminder of man's imperfection. We as a people cannot be said to make any progress so long as we fail to distinguish the essentials of religion from non-essentials—the essentials being love of God and love of man or, to state it a little more concretely, a passionate devotion to brotherhood, justice, freedom, truth, and non-violence. What God requires of every one, whether he be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Parsi, is "to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." It is obvious that cowslaughter and music before mosques are not such heinous crimes as murder or theft. Righteousness and brotherhood are more essential than ceremonial correctness or conventionality.

In the interest of national unity and communal goodwill, it is time to call a halt to proselytism, but not to genuine conversion which is the fundamental right of every individual. Although law cannot prevent or regulate proselytism, sound public opinion can and should. Hinduism's difficulty should never be regarded as the opportunity of Islam, Christianity or Sikhism. The Hindus, in their turn, should set their own house in order as regards caste, untouchability, temple entry and social customs in general which do not fit into modern conditions, remembering that caste and untouchability are the parents of communalism.

We should learn to use commonsense or rational methods in studying

Scriptures and in approaching religious questions. Blind partisanship and bigotry have no justification to-day. We have no right to reject religion just because some religious people have been bigots or fanatics. God requires not outer conformity but inner surrender. He calls for circumcision of the heart, and not circumcision of the flesh. The different Scriptures of the world contain the Word of God in varying degrees, but it is high presumption to claim that God's revelation is found closed between the covers of any single book. The common cry "Religion in danger" has no meaning. It is not religion which is in danger, but the so-called religious people who are in danger of losing their souls. Any religion which has truth and vitality in it and meets the deepest desires of men's hearts can be trusted to defend itself.

The educated and cultured people of India can do much to promote communal harmony by a respectful and sympathetic study of each other's religions. It is their business to arrange for periodical inter-religious gatherings and conventions where the best in all faiths can be studied and pondered over. Only by such methods can true tolerance be promoted—not tolerance which is another name for indifference, but tolerance born of mutual sympathy, study, and understanding. The French proverb says "To know all is to forgive all."

If within living memory, Hindus have endowed Muslim mosques and Muslims have endowed Hindu temples, is it impossible to expect such fraternisation to-day ?

An enlightened priesthood in all the communities is a paramount necessity of the day. Special attention should be paid to the proper training of priests, moulvis, and pandits in view of the fact that half-educated and fanatical priests can easily rouse people's passions into a frenzy.

While sectarian and religious indoctrination in schools is to be condemned, children should be given the best possible moral and spiritual training. For this purpose the various Scriptures and songs and devotional literature of India along with the lives of the great men and women of all communities should be freely used.

Every enlightened Indian will do well to avoid the specious argument, "I am a Hindu, Muslim or Christian first, and afterwards an Indian." In ordinary circumstances the two loyalties—loyalty to one's religion and loyalty to one's country—do not clash. If and when they do clash, the good citizen should prefer the higher loyalty to the lower. When the highest principles of one's religion come into conflict with the claims of one's family, caste, community or nation, one should undoubtedly decide in favour of the former. One should obey God rather than man. But there is no justification for the wide-spread belief that a good Hindu, Musalman or Christian should consider

every public question first from the point of view of his own community and only secondarily from the angle of the nation. It is a shame that in recent months even fresh taxation measures in the legislatures have been examined exclusively from the point of view of the members of one community or another and supported or criticised solely from that point of view.

Communalism and provincialism are two of the greatest stumbling blocks in the path of India's national progress. In whatever constitutional changes that may be made in the near future, special care should be taken not to abandon the degree of centralisation which we enjoy to-day. To substitute confederation for federation, as some suggest, is to undo the good work of the past and to open the flood gates of separatism-sectionalism and communalism. Mere condemnation of communalism and provincialism will not destroy them. We must study and ponder over them in order that we may remove their root causes and substitute for them a healthy nationalism which has for its motto "live and help others to live" as well as a healthy feeling of racial integrity which will enable us to look upon all Indians, irrespective of their physical, linguistic, and religious differences as equally our brothers.

It is fortunate that Indian nationalism, even to-day when the nationalist fever is high, is not the aggressive type of nationalism found in the Western world. It is midway between the European concept of aggressive nationalism and the federal concept of world citizenship. The problem for the future is to reconcile the claims of legitimate nationalism with the demands of internationalism. This task can be undertaken only by those who are absolutely free from communal inhibitions and national and racial prejudices.