



Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu-Muslim Unity: During Transfer of Power and Partition (1944-48) - Ch M. Naidu

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The book 'Mahatma Gandhi and Hindu-Muslim Unity: During Transfer of Power and Partition (1944-48)' by Ch M. Naidu published in 2005 has the issue of Hindu-Muslim identities central to it. Before this book, the author has been credit of three books: Salt Satyagraha in the Coastal Andhra, 1986; Nationalism in South India: Its Economic and Social Background (1885-1918); and Mahatma Gandhi's Leadership and Quit India Movement in Coastal Andhra, 1996. For this book, last phase of Gandhi's pursuit of freedom to bring out the Hindu-Muslim split to an end has been selected by the author. The book has been divided into eight chapters which includes Gandhi-Jinnah Talks, Simla Conference, Cabinet Mission, Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta, Noakhali, and Bihar, Gandhiji's Negotiations with Mountbatten and India's Partition, Final Struggle for Hindu Muslim Unity and Martyrdom along with introduction and Conclusion. Here author analyze the events with creditable probe into many original sources.

This book can be used in many courses because it is very clear to be fitted unto multi or inter-disciplinary due to its structure and examples. This can provide with useful context. The theoretical lineage or school of thought out of which the book can be seems sociology, political science, women studies etc. As stated in this book, it has tried to put together Gandhi's confidence in his moral mission as against the politicians like Jinnah and conflicting forces of suspicion, intense all-round prejudice all-encompassing the communalized environment of Indian politics, and the sheer projection of sectional interests. The book is written to analyze the problem, why Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, could not prevent the partition of India. Why he did argue independently with him, without officially supported from congress? Why did he project Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his place at Simla conference against Jinnah? These and many other questions are discussed in analyzing the events.

It becomes important to understand relevance of research in this book that, "Of all the problem of Mahatma Gandhi faced, the most intricate was the Hindu-Muslim unity. The reason is that the relations between the two communities were sensitive and the difference also deep and varied. Unless they were improved and resolved, India could not make any progress through in the political scenario both the communities no doubt played key roles in the movement for Swaraj. This book is best contribution to show that Gandhiji took, the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity as his life's challenge and was determined to bring about harmony and peaceful coexistence of the two communities. The only potential solution was, as Gandhiji believed,

unity, live-and-let-live, mutual forbearance and toleration and undivided India. He adds to believe that for them to be brave, generous and trustworthy.” There should not be mental reservations and both communities should think in terms of non-violence.

In this book the author starts with, Gandhiji believed, that the British government committed a mistake in recognizing Muslims as a minority and thereby pursued on that basis the policy of divide and rule. But efficiency and merit should not be sacrificed. The author also asserts who decided to change this attitude from organizing the civil disobedience movement against the British to mobilizing human resources and thereby avoiding friction with the Muslims, and achieve independence. Here it is narrated the solution to the problem of unity by Gandhiji in two ways : the royal way of non-violence, and the other violence, between the two methods of violence and non-violence in attaining Swaraj, if Hindus and Muslims together preferred the violence. It must mean prolonged fighting and rivers of blood." But if they talked of non-violence, certainly Hindu-Muslim unity was an automatic eventuality.

The book places discussion saying, Gandhiji’s initiative of talk to conquer the main hurdle in his way is Mr. Jinnah who is well expressed in this book. It is revealed that Gandhiji wanted unity, Jinnah insisted on partition of the country. Jinnah claimed that even in 1940 the Muslim League passed a resolution for partition. But the Gandhiji could not accept it. He opposed it saying that it was simply a patent untruth. But many wondered how Gandhiji is the apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity. But with Quit India movement, times were changed and even in Gandhiji some change appeared. In the beginning it looked like that Mr. Jinnah would give up his extremist views on partition and not block the progress of negotiations. The book clearly articulate the fear that if the interim government got materialised, it would be a Hindu domination one. It is on this aspect Jinnah was worried and to save Muslim, he wanted division into two parts. But these talks gave a definite victory to Jinnah over Gandhiji. He gained a lot of ground for the creation of Pakistan. It also enhanced his position and prestige. Thus both the Sikhs and Hindus of Punjab and of Bengal were gripped in fear and threw blame on Rajaji-Gandhi’s scheme that Indian province were not the private property of Gandhiji or Rajaji. The book shows that , Gandhiji put up valiant efforts to arrive at a solution but the pity is that the more he tried, the more he was subjected to criticism and the shaping of Jinnah as a successful one. In the book Maulana Azad opined that Gandhi’s approach was totally a political blunder. He gave a lot of unnecessary importance to Jinnah who later exploited the same to the full time. The Muslim leader Jinnah actually had a good place at one time in congress but he lost and left it in 1920s. Jinnah’s reaction are very important in this book, he said “I reject the two nation theory, but I do not reject the idea of partition between two members of the same family. My point was that partition could take place in reality only after independence. ” But the conference soon did not evince any signs of progress just like Gandhi-Jinnah talks. In the chapter 4, Cabinet Mission, it was again revealed that, as Jinnah was so firm for Pakistan, it just remained to be seen whether congress would concur or not. He dominated the league and was its sole exponent; Gandhiji’s was not the congress representative. But Gandhiji’s vice still prevailed before the Mission since Pt. Nehru were not loud like him..

The analysis of Mr. Jinnah holds here important that, in India peculiarly there were two different civilizations Hindu and Muslim that emerged with deep-rooted differences side by side. In Jinnah’s view such opposite

cultured people would not coexist or survive. Hence the only solution was to place them on the same platform by the creation of Hindustan and Pakistan. Thus Jinnah held a totally different view from Gandhiji in regard to Indian Muslim. While Gandhiji's views hold important that they were from converted stock and so there was no need to be separated, the reason is Jinnah say that, since they had a different civilization and culture, the land is partitioned, along with people. It means there was a need for Pakistan's formation. In chapter 3, However, Gandhiji knew that the Simla conference was not like the one as it was held at the same place a year ago. But the tragedy is that they had internal differences, so it failed. The mission further noticed acutely the anxiety of Jinnah and the Muslim had been subjected to the perpetual Hindu majority rule and hence should have a sovereign state of Pakistan consisting of six province as claimed by the league but the mission was concerned with Punjab's view that their demand would not solve communal majority problem because there were some non-Muslim minorities particularly Hindu in Muslim majority states like Punjab and Assam. The chapter 5, Hindu-Muslim Riots in Calcutta, Naokhali, and Bihar, shows that Gandhiji toured these riot affected areas to improve the Hindu-Muslim relations but he did not succeed to the extent he expected. Yet his influence over masses was timely and soothing. As he read verses from Quran, Bible, Gita they exerted a feeling of togetherness and created an atmosphere of trust. Hence no communal violence occurred in this area again. In Chapter 6, Gandhiji, Negotiation with Mountbatten and India's Partition, the question of the division of India, as proposed by the Muslim League is based on the fundamental fact that there are two nations- Hindus and Muslims- and the underlying principle is that we want a national home and a national state in our homelands which are predominantly Muslim and comprise the unit of the Punjab, the North West frontier province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal, and Assam. This will give the Hindus their national home and National state of Hindustan, Which means three-fourths of British India.

In chapter 7, Gandhiji replied that while he was certainly proud of being a Hindu, his Hinduism was neither intolerant nor exclusive. Thus he pleaded with the Hindus and Muslims not to harass each other. Further, Gandhiji did fast for the last time in life but some misunderstood him and thought that it was intended for the cause of Muslim. He too felt himself vaguely that Muslims lost everything. Previously, they used to depend on the British Government or on the Muslim League. But since the Muslim League was no longer there and the country got independence after partition, Muslim thought protesting their interests by themselves as they happen to be a minority.

So it was announced quickly that it had decide to pay to Pakistan immediately a sum of Rupees 55 crores and further Gandhiji, in spite of his fast and weakness insisted that the amount be paid as pre-partition share from India. In an address to a peace rally in the city in the same evening, said that Gandhiji undertook the fast to bring about a change of heart in the people, it was difficult to assess when the required change of heart had taken place. The book unfolded the brains of conspirator Nathuram Vinayak Godse, the editor of Hindu Rashtra of Poona, and its manager Narayan D. Apte, Maharashtra, noted for strong tradition of militant Hindu nationalism for self-dedication, patriotism, sacrifice and renunciation. But a question arise why Gandhiji's peace mission in Delhi angered these Maharashtrians who actually dedicated to remove him from scene. It seems his fast should have softened them but on the other hand subsequent release by the Indian government of Rupee 55 crores to Pakistan should have enraged them still further. Future atrocious tales of

unimaginable crimes against Hindu womanhood kept pouring in from Kashmir. These must have intricate them and took a decision. And faith, finally destained , the Prime Minister of India Mr. Pandit Nehru with heavy heart and trembling voice said, “The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere when Gandhiji was assassinated”. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaqat Ali Khan too send a message thus: “His dastardly assassination must be condemned unreservedly by everybody. His removal from the stage of Indian politics at this juncture is an irreparable loss. His great effort for the restoration of communal harmony will be remembered with gratitude by all lovers of peace and goodwill”.

The book shared information on how Mahatma Gandhi laid down his life for the mission of Hindu-Muslim unity. It is unfortunate that he was misunderstood by certain section as pro-Muslim. Further it was also due to the weakness of a few individuals. But in his death India’s spiritual prestige went high as never before. His death came at critical moment but yet respect to him increased to a degree of reverence in a way a warning to his successors like Nehru, Patel, and others that they had a lot of responsibility on their shoulders to make a fresh and determined to carry out the principles for which he died. So here Gandhi’s role is visible in the freedom struggle inextricably linked to his deconstruction and reformulation of the Hindu-Muslim problem on the one hand, mobilizing the urge for freedom and channelizing it into non-violent civil disobedient movement occupied a good part of his time, on the other hand, pursuing Hindu-Muslim reconciliation also received his attention.

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