CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION, SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis entitled "Gandhi’s conception of inter-caste marriage - A critical study" is an in-depth analysis of Gandhi’s understanding of Hinduism and removal of untouchability. The scholar wishes to trace Gandhi’s conceptual shift from disapproval of inter-caste marriage to encouragement of the same. It reveals that Gandhi’s declaration, "All become Harijans" among the Hindus is basically the ultimate aim of his comprehensive vision of Hinduism.

Mohandhas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2.10.1869 at Porbandar, a small town in the West Coast of India, in a middle class family of Vaishya Caste, Bania community. His grandfather had risen to be the Dewan or Prime Minister of Porbandar. His father was Karamchand Gandhi. His mother, Putlibai, was a saintly character, and left a deep impression on her son’s mind. Both of them were a great source of religious inspiration to Mahatma Gandhi.

In India, there were many social and political reformers and religious thinkers who had worked for the removal of untouchability and caste. Even as Gandhi did not believe in untouchability. He had a unique approach to reform Hinduism by abolishing untouchability. He wanted all the untouchable castes to become ‘Harijans’ and he wanted them to be allowed to enter temples and be given access to public places, wells etc.

The principle of purity and pollution is pervasive in all aspects of Hindu life. Indeed, the predicament of the untouchables of India cannot be found anywhere else in the world. There are untouchables (Buraku)
in Japan, but unlike untouchability in India, it does not have religious sanction. The practice of untouchability in India has its justification in the Hindu Dharma Shastras and other Scriptures considered as authoritative in the Hindu religion. This is the unique plight of untouchables in India. According to Gandhi, practice of untouchability, is the greatest blot on Hinduism.

Untouchability is similar to racism in its practice. But racism can be understood by fear and stigma generated by physical differences (i.e. Skin colour). In India, untouchables cannot be distinguished from caste-Hindus in terms of physical appearance (Colour).

**Varna Ashrama Dharma:**

The caste system of traditional Hindu society is explained in terms of the four fold system of Varna Ashrama Dharma. The word "Varna" is translated to mean "Colour". The four-fold division is explained by the use of analogy of these Varnas to a human body. The Brahmins are equated with the head of the body. The Kshatriyas are equated with the arms of the body. The Third-Vaisyas are equated with the thighs of the body. The fourth-shudras are equated with the feet of the body.

According to Manu Smritis, (recognized text of Hinduism) only the first three Varnas (Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya) are permitted to hear the vedic teachings, and it is strictly forbidden for the shudras and Avarnas (untouchables). The concept of **Dharma** is the basis of much of Hinduism. This 'dharma' more specially 'svadharma' (Duties understood to be corresponding to one's station in life) is in turn regulated by the doctrine of Karma and rebirth. This cycle of
reincarnation is not limited to the four Varnas but also includes animals, and of course untouchables. Moksha is the highest attainment that prevents one from the cycle of reincarnations and rebirths.

The traditional Hinduism with the hierarchical caste system as a focal point (pivot) in its practice, is maintained thus by a principle of inequality. This hierarchy is characterised by a strict observance of endogamy (marriage within a particular group) by each caste or sub caste and strong disapproval of inter-caste marriage amongst the Hindus. Although Gandhi tried to describe these divisions as four inter-dependent groups void of any sense of inferiority or superiority, it is quite obvious that the hierarchy was and is in practice.

In the present study, a modest attempt has been made to trace the Gandhian approach (Doctrinal and practical aspect) to Inter-caste Marriage between Harijan and caste Hindus among Hindu masses.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Chathurvarna system of social organisation had come to stay in India. In this traditional Hindu social hierarchy, the Brahmin represented the highest Strata and the Shudra the lowest. All of them put together were known as Savarnas (within the Varna system). But the untouchable castes were termed as Avarnas or those who were outside the Varna system. This was as per the injunction of the Manu Dharma Sastra and other Dharma Sastras. From time immemorial the Avarnas (Scheduled castes) were segregated in 'Cheris' outside the proper villages and were denied the elementary civil rights, such as entering the streets of high castes, temples, drawing water from the village wells, burying the dead in the common burial ground etc.
For ages together, no attempt was made to remove this disability and amalgamate them into the Hindu society. Of course they were not sent out of the society but allowed to be in the society without the rights allowed for other castes. In short, they were in the Hindu society but not of the society. The Bhakti movement of the medieval periods preached spiritual and social equality and tried to induct the Avarnas into the Hindu Society but it was a short lived affair.

Only after the coming of the Christian Missionaries and the spread of western education among the people, especially among the scheduled castes the problem of untouchability came to the surface. In fact, it was the English census officers, who at first (1935) classified these Avarnas as Schedule Castes and highlighted their disability\(^1\). The Missionaries, partly out of a desire to convert the downtrodden people to Christianity and partly out of human sympathy, tried to educate and elevate the scheduled castes. Thus arose the scheduled castes elevation movement. Gradually, the enlightened British Officers and the Government stepped into the field of Harijan elevation. Associations started by selfless high caste Hindus and by educated Scheduled caste leaders then came into the field. Of course they did their best to improve the economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes.

But their efforts touched only the fringe of the problems because they raised, to some extent, only the economic and educational standards of the Scheduled Castes; but they could not raise their social status and integrate them into the Hindu Society, owing to the rigidity of the caste system.
Of late, social history has become very popular among historians. A number of books on caste system have been published. But they have not dealt within the problem of untouchability in detail. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar has dealt with the problem in his book “The Untouchables”. But it does not deal with the conditions in the Hindu religious ideologies. Prof. K.R. Hanumanthan's book, "Untouchability - A Historical Study upto 1500 A.D". is indeed a pioneering work in the realm of social history of Tamil Nadu. But his work comes only upto the medieval period. Therefore, an investigation into the problems of the untouchables in modern times is a felt necessity. The present study aims to find out as to what extent Gandhi’s actions have helped to remove the untouchability practices among the Hindus in the modern period.

The untouchables were called by different names – viz., depressed classes, Adi-Shudras, untouchables, out-castes, Paraiah, Panchamas, Avarnas, exterior castes, dalits etc. The epithet 'Depressed Classes' confers them not only low status in the hierarchy of caste combined with religious and social disabilities but also a low economic condition. In the 1920s they were called Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Andhras, etc. In 1935, they were grouped under the head, Scheduled Castes. Gandhiji named them as ‘Harijan’ (Children of God). In 1938 – Dr. Ambedkar launched a protest against the Bill of Congress for the use of the word ‘Harijan’ and walked out of the Assembly along with Dadasaheb B.K. Gaikwad and Independent labour party group.

Reform Movements and Scheduled Castes:

Before the 19th century, the untouchables were in the same old wretched condition. In fact, they were reconciled to their fate, and they were not even aware of their disabilities. So, also the caste Hindus were not aware of their tyranny over them. This was because of the belief in
the Varnashrama system and Karma theory which said that everyone is born into a particular Varna, superior or inferior, according to his good or bad karmas performed in his/her previous births.

In India, caste system has persisted, showing that it has tremendous vitality and resilience. Even Buddhism preached against the caste system 2500 years back. And during the 12th century Ramanujar (1047 – 1167) also brought a great reform in vaishnavism. Basava (1131 – 1167) developed a new sect which did not admit the caste system. About the 14th century, many attempts were made by great reformers like kabir (1440 – 1518), Chaitanya (1485 – 1533), and Nanak (1479 – 1531) to uplift the people belonging to the untouchable castes. In the 19th century, there were four religious movements with the main aim of abolishing the caste system².

Bhrahma Samaj (1818) - Raja Ram Mohun Roy
Arya Samaj (1875) - Swami Dhayananda Saraswathi
Ramakrishna Movement - Swami Vivekananda
Theosophical Society (1893) - Annie Besant.

Each one of them had, in their own field, created a consciousness of India’s destiny and helped to generate a spirit of Sacrifice in India.

The 19th and 20th Centuries were an era of social and religious reform. More or less, Scheduled Castes elevation became the aim of all reform movements. The difference was that some organizations worked only for this objective while some others worked for other reasons also.

Ramanujacharya of the Medieval period converted a large number of scheduled castes into Brahmins and called them as Thirukulathar³. These sporadic efforts, taken now and then, to raise the status of the untouchables did not bear any tangible result.
**Brahmo Samaj** was the offspring of the Indian Renaissance movement. It was founded by Raja Ram Mohun Roy, to propagate reform ideas and to eradicate social evils. The Madras Branch of the Samaj was founded in 1818. It spread its activities among the Scheduled Castes.

**Arya Samaj** movement was founded in 1875 by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi. His ideas were clearly explained in his book ‘Sathyarth Prakasan’. There he vehemently condemns the caste system. Taking inspiration from Swami Dayananda, the Arya Samajists Sect of Hindus toiled much to improve the condition of the Scheduled Castes. They brought in a number of Scheduled Caste people into their fold, shared with them the one exclusive scriptural knowledge and mixed and moved with them with abiding equality. But the Arya Samajists were not able to make headway in canvassing more Hindus to accept their reformist ideas and treat the Scheduled Castes with social equality. Hence, the Scheduled Caste people while enjoying equal status among the Arya Samajists, continued to be the victims of rigid caste distinction, in their relationship with non-Arya Samajist Hindus.

In 1925 the Self Respect Movement (SRM) was started by E.V. Ramasamy in Tamilnadu. It tried to prepare the ground for casteless society and it stood for the total abolition of untouchability. Most of the marriages performed by the SRM were of the rationalist type only. The mode and conduct of these SRM marriages represented a breakthrough in the civil marriage system of the times. In order to humble the opposition and to get legal recognition to these marriages, a number of these marriages were registered from 1932 onwards⁴.
In the beginning, the Self Respect Marriages conducted in his distinctive style gave much needed support for those who felt victimized when their demand for validity went unheeded. For fear of being revoked, several of these marriages were registered later under Civil Marriages Act. At last, a legislative sanction was accorded to these marriages when the DMK, the off-shoot of the SRM formed Ministry in 1967 in Tamil Nadu.

The Self Respect Marriage, introduced, propagated and spread by the Self Respect Movement, was its medium and message to achieve its goal of abolition of caste and forging non-Brahmin unity. They conducted a large number of inter-caste marriages which served to promote its ideal.

In 1948, C.N.Annadurai, the dynamic leader of D.M.K party in Madras, spoke at length on the need for the abolition of caste system. And his main aim was the promotion of inter-caste marriages. In pursuance of one of the major resolutions of the Madras Presidency Students Conference (1948), All-India Inter-caste Marriages Association was established with C.N.Annadurai as the President and S.Chandrasekar as General Secretary. This association was intended to educate and encourage the country's youth on the need for such marriages and to provide monetary incentives for them. As the head of the Madras Government, C.N.Annadurai did excellent work in trying to ameliorate the lot of the common man. He instituted official medals and monetary incentives to encourage such marriages - (the first official step in this direction in Madras state) and continued to stress their importance in overcoming caste barriers and prejudices at every opportunity.
Having been impressed very much by the mode and conduct of Self Respect Marriages, even Brahmin leaders like C.Rajagopalachari, a staunch believer in social reform and social change, praised its ideals on the occasion of one such marriage held at Courtalam in Tirunelveli district on 31st May 1936 thus: "I am very much impressed by this marriage. All went on well. My friend Mr. Ramasami Naicker said that this is a priest-less marriage. I don't agree with him. He himself is a priest. I can say that many number of times. Definitely this marriage is far superior than any other orthodox marriages. This is my ambition that in future Ramasami conducts such marriages in large numbers for the good of the people. By advocating such marriage he had been rendering yeoman service to the country. More and more reform marriages of this should take place in future".

Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhiji – the two leaders strove for Scheduled Castes elevation but from opposite directions. The difference between the two was a fundamental one. While Gandhi attacked untouchability and caste, he wanted to save Hinduism. Dr. Ambedkar argued that the heart of the problem of untouchability was the caste system itself. And he did not want to save the Hindu religion. In 1935, in the Yeola Conference, he declared “Born a Hindu because I could not help it, I would not die a Hindu”. In 1956, He embraced Buddhism with 5 lakhs of peoples. Jawaharlal Nehru said, that it is “A symbol of revolt against all oppressive features in Hindu Society”7. But, Gandhiji condemned all the approaches of conversion from one religion to another.

Despite these barriers, inter-caste marriages have been on the increase in the post – Independence era. Even before India's freedom, India's politically prominent families - Gandhi, Jinnah, Sarojini Naidu,
Nehru, Rajaji, Radhakrishnan, Ambedkar, Masani, E.V. Ramaswamy, to name only a few - have encompassed inter-caste marriages. A thousand other instances among families well known in other spheres can also be cited. In major cities such as New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad, and Madras, it is not unusual to find several castes represented in certain families through marriages.

A number of social reformers, like Jyotiba Phule in Maharastra, NarayanaGuru in Travancore, Periyar in TamilNadu, Sasipada Bandopadhiaya in Bengal and B.R. Ambedkar in Maharashtra, also have taken many measures to eradicate the evils of untouchability and to give relief to the oppressed people at various levels in different ways. Whereas, Gandhi had a unique approach to remove the evils of untouchability by reforming Hinduism. He was not against the reservation policy, but he advocated, that reservation should be given on the basis of interim - relief to the oppressed people. He was not in favour of continuing the reservation policy permanently. Instead, he was of the view that the reservation policy should be implemented with a time frame work.

Gandhian Ethics is theological and naturalistic. We can safely say that his Ethics is theistic, subjective and naturalistic. His whole moral philosophy rests on the concepts of Truth and on his shift in 1930 from 'God is Truth' into "Truth is God". His emphasis on Truth, Ahimsa, Bramacharya etc.. too rest on his concept of God.

Gandhiji had a unique approach to the age old problem of untouchability. His programme against untouchability was called ‘Removal of untouchability’. He called the oppressed masses ‘Harijan’
which means ‘Children of God’. In 1932 he started a movement that worked for the betterment of the oppressed masses as “Harijan Sevak Sangh”. Gandhiji issued an appeal for observance of ‘Harijan Day’ on Sept. 24. And he himself records the resolution passed in Agra’s Harijan Conference, “Inter-caste marriage and inter-dining must be on the programme of the (Harijan) movement”. On Nov.7, 1933, Gandhiji started his “Historic All India Harijan Tour” from Wardha Ashram and ended it in Varanasi on 2.8.34, it covered 20,000 kms. As a result, Harijan-Welfare made great progress throughout the country.

Gandhi was therefore, basically concerned with the reconstruction of the whole Indian society in order to rehabilitate the dignity of India in the community of nations, without which an Indian could not be rehabilitated in the family of human beings as an equal, and as a human with due dignity to him. Gandhi's ethical views come to us either through his life or the remarks that he made time and again but in no systematic order. But through his ‘Constructive Programmes’, Gandhiji tried to reform the Indian Society that included removal of untouchability also.

Gandhian organizations exist at the local, regional and national levels across India. The movement is decentralized, so most of the organizations follow their own evolution only slightly influenced by national trends. The main national organization is still the ‘Sarva Seva Sangh’. Its units present almost in every state and in half of the districts in the country, are involved in propagating Gandhian ideology through seminars, group discussions, marches etc. And they take up various socio-political issues. In 1969, the Gandhi Samark Nidhi was dissolved as directed by its own self-liquidating clause and divided its remaining resources among four smaller organizations: The leprosy foundation,
Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust, and the Gandhi Peace Foundation.\(^9\)

Gandhian Philosophy is rooted in "Welfare of all", the spirit of love, Truth, Ahimsa and co-operation with all through the spirit of self-realization and self-sacrifice. According to Gandhi, it is based on certain spiritual and moral values, like respect for all human beings, being in tune with nature, human dignity, equality of opportunities and so on.

Gandhiji approached India’s reconstruction on the emphasis that unity between Hindus and Muslims should be given preference rather than India’s Independence. That is, he insisted on religious harmony rather than freedom to happen first. Gandhiji said, “Swaraj is as unattainable without the removal of the sin of untouchability as it is without Hindu-Muslim unity.”\(^10\)

The primary unity among Hindus is very essential to attain the unity between all people in India. The basic element of unity among Hindus, according to Gandhi is inter-caste marriage between caste Hindus and Harijans. He believed that it would be sufficient to bring reformation back to Hinduism. He reserved his blessings only to inter-caste marriages in which one of the partners was a Harijan.

In 1946 Gandhi came to the conclusion, that the Inter-caste Marriage between caste Hindus and Harijan people is essential for the reformation of Hinduism. It would bring peace among Hindus and also that it would lead to Hindu-Muslim unity.
Government Efforts to the Removal of Untouchability:

The Constitution of India gives certain fundamental rights and social protection to Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The constitution of 1950 enacts as justifiable fundamental rights of provisions designed to eliminate caste discrimination on the part of Government bodies.

In 1923, the Bombay Legislative Council resolved that the untouchables be allowed to use all public places, wells, schools etc. 1931, the annual meeting of Indian National Congress of Karachi, propounded a program of fundamental rights for Future Republican India.

(Item – 6) No disability to attach any citizen by reason of his or her ... caste in regard to public employment office of power or honours and in the exercise of any trade or calling.

(Item – 7) Equal rights of all citizens in regard to public places and other places of public resort.

The Constitution of India 1950 declares, (Article 17) Abolition of untouchability and forbidding of its practice in any form. (Article 25b) Removal of any disability with regard to access public places, public entertainment etc. wholly or partially out of State funds or dedicated to use of general public.

The protection of civil rights (PCR) Act 1955, is administered by the State Government. Under a provision of section 15A of the Act, the Government. also places every year, before each house of Parliament an annual report on the working of the provisions of section 15A of the Act. Also the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 is implemented by the State Government.
Through the centuries, inter-caste marriages among the Hindus, or marriages across such religious lines as Hindu-Muslim, were not permitted by the personal laws of both religions. Inter-caste marriages could take place under the Special Marriage Act 1872. This bill had its root in the Brahma Marriage Act 1872, passed during British period, that permitted inter-caste marriage. Later the Modified version of the Special Marriage Act of 1954 was passed and that solved the problem by permitting inter-caste marriages without requiring either partner to deny his or her faith.

Sooner or later, India must become an emotionally integrated society. Inter-caste marriages have remained an intractable problem complicated by two major difficulties: the reactionary Hindu law on the subject and the tradition of arranged marriages.

This study, attempts to explore the extent of Gandhi's ideas on regeneration of Hinduism by way of encouraging inter-caste marriages among the Hindus. This study also includes the works of Harijan Seva Sangh towards the welfare of Harijans.

The present study aims at finding out how far the efforts of Gandhi and Harijan Sevak Sangh succeeded in not only removing the economic and cultural disabilities of Harijans but also in raising their social status. It also aims at discovering how far the efforts of Gandhiji contributed to the regeneration of Hinduism. He founded the Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932. Through this organization he popularized the movement for the eradication of untouchability and elevation of the Harijans to the level of equality with the high caste Hindus. The aim of the Sangh was removal of untouchability and the liberation of Scheduled
Castes from the shackles of social, economic, educational and political disabilities. All the state branches of the Harijan Sevak Sangh faithfully carried out the ideas of the Central organization.

Gandhiji believed that the evil of untouchability could not be removed forcibly. He believed that social equality could be established gradually by educating the Hindu masses and also by creating the necessary public opinion in favour of it. In his last phase of life, he believed that inter-caste marriage is the only way to remove untouchability., On July 23, 1945, in his letter to shyamlal (Secretary, Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust) he wrote, “Caste must go if we want root out untouchability”.

Numerous researches on Gandhiji’s basic works and his philosophy have been carried out in the recent period. Of course Gandhi's ideas on inter-caste marriage between Harijan and caste Hindus, the Scheduled Castes, their condition and elevation have somehow escaped the attention of these scholars. Hence this subject (inter caste marriage) has been chosen for a critical study. The study is restricted only to Gandhi’s approach to Inter-caste marriage.

Inter-caste marriage in the context of Indian society (Caste consciousness) is a very sensitive subject indeed. Inter-Caste Marriages do not take place in a laboratory and so we cannot control the variables to test certain hypotheses and come to the truth or the facts behind a person’s desire to intermarry. Society, especially India's villages are complex in their system of inter personal relationships which is affected by a number of factors and influences that cannot be fully enumerated.
The method adopted by the scholar is descriptive, analytical, and critical. The main focus of this study is to trace out the cause of the ideological shift of Gandhi's conception of inter-caste marriage, and probe into the motives behind the Hindu masses to accept the Gandhi's vision for casteless society.

This researcher realizes that this subject "inter-caste marriage" has many dimensions and is limited due to the review of literatures. For whatever it is worth, this research is done with the hope that a greater awareness will come and with it an understanding of inter-caste marriage, what Gandhi called, "Every mixed marriage will tend in varying degrees to the stigma attracted to such marriages. Finally there will be only one caste known by the beautiful name Bhangi". So that future generations will realise a caste-less society.

Louis Fischer, a famous American Journalist, came to Sevagram Ashram and had spent one week with Gandhiji. He interviewed Gandhiji (03.06.1942) all which contents has expressed itself in Fischer's biography on Gandhiji where he has aptly remarked Gandhiji's ideological shift on inter-caste marriage thus, "from 1921 to 1946 Gandhi had gone full circle: From the utter disapproval of inter-caste marriages to approval of only inter-caste marriages".

This made the scholar to take this subject for the research work. In this context, the research scholar has taken the following objectives for the research work.
Objective 1: To Study Gandhi’s Concept of Hinduism

Gandhi spoke and wrote about Hinduism on different occasions. He called himself as a “Sanatani Hindu”. He had a strong faith in the Hindu Doctrine of Karma and rebirth. He also had a belief in one God theory. That is why he said that God is the corner stone of all religions. His ideas about Hinduism were mostly influenced by the Bagavath Gita. It is also interesting to note that he had given a new interpretation to the Bagavath Gita.

Similarly, he was an advaitist (believer of monoism theory) but at the same time, he supported dualism also. He condemned the practice of untouchability in Hinduism. He also said that he wanted to attain Moksha by serving the people. Once he said that the removal of untouchability is an integral part of his life.

To understand the problem of untouchability, one has to study the concept of Hinduism. Therefore, to study Gandhi’s concept of Hinduism has become one of the objectives of the study.

Objective 2: To know Gandhi’s Concept of Caste and Varna Ashrama Dharma

Caste is one of the rigid social system in India. A person born in India, is born with and in a caste. It is not possible to change the caste during his life time. To trace the origin of caste system is difficult. Due to the practice of the caste system, people are put into troubles. That are the evils of the caste system. One such evil is the practice of untouchability. Some particular castes are considered as untouchables. It is also important to note that, some religious leaders, philosophers like
Ramanujar, Basavar, Kabir, Ramakrishna Pramahamsar, Vivekanandar and Gandhi have done their efforts to remove the evil practice of caste system through their reforms.

Gandhi had clear views with regard to caste system. Similarly, he had a strong views about Varma Ashrama Dharma, it will be difficult to understand his idea of casteless society. Therefore, to know Gandhi’s concept of Caste and Varna Ashrama Dharma has become another objective of this research.

Objective 3 :-
To analyse Gandhi’s Concept of Inter-caste Marriage and its evolution.

Marriage is an social institution, which is the basis for men and women to enter into a family life. Monogamy fraternal polyandry, sororate, hypergamy, exogamy are different forms of marriages. But in India, endogamy is common that is, marriage within the group or caste. Marriage out side the caste is not so common. It rarely happens. Marriage is considered as sacrament in Hindu Dharma. According to Hinduism, marriage is essential to perform holy poojas. That is to be performed only by husband and wife.

Anuloma marriage is a form of inter-caste marriage wherein men of higher caste weds women of lower castes. Pratiloma Marriage is a form of Inter-caste Marriage wherein men of lower caste marry women of higher superior castes. Gandhi encouraged and blessed only those couples who underwent inter-caste marriage, where one of the party should be Harijan and the other party a non – Harijan (Caste Hindu).
As a believer of Hinduism, Gandhi has a different opinion with respect to inter-caste marriages. He advocated inter-caste marriage. It is relevant to analyse his concept of inter-caste marriage and also how he evolved this concept. He advocated inter-caste marriage as a strategy to create casteless society. Therefore, Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage and its evolution has become another objective of the study.

**Objective 4 :-**

**To trace out the Gandhi’s Views on Religious Conversion.**

Arya Samaj worked in its own way to abolish caste and other organizations also have worked against religious conversion. Gandhi wanted to follow inter-caste marriages to establish casteless society. But, he opposed religious conversion to abolish untouchability and to establish casteless society. He also firmly believed that untouchability cannot be removed by the law or by religious conversion.

Gandhi opposed religious conversion for the sake of marriage. According to him marriage outside one’s religion is different from that of marriage outside one's caste. Marriage is an sacred institution. There is no need of conversion to happen. Therefore, it is important to trace the views of Gandhi on religious conversion with a view to promote inter-caste marriage.

**Objective 5 :-**

**To study Gandhi’s Concept of Harijan and Durjan and to evaluate his ideas on ‘All Hindus become Harijans’**
Gandhi had realized the problem of untouchability even from his childhood. He thought that it was a curse and a blot on Hinduism. Gandhi had clearly told that there is no such thing as fifth Varna in Hinduism. And so he insisted that the untouchables should have all the rights common to the four Varnas. Religious reformation can he done in Hinduism by removing untouchability from the society. For that purpose he had started “Harijan Sevak Sangh”. He went on Harijan-tour throughout India and mobilized men and resources for the emancipation of the untouchables.

He called them as ‘Harijan’ that meant ‘Children of God’. According to him, the people who are practicing untouchability were ‘Durjan’. He said that “All Hindus become Harijans”. This study will analyse the various approaches of the Gandhi’s ideas on “all Hindus become one caste”.

Objective 6 :-

To analyse the relevance of Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage in the Modern India.

In India, Marriage within a caste is very common. But, marriage outside a caste is a rare phenomenon in the past. To abolish untouchability from Hinduism, Gandhi advocated inter-caste marriage. He favoured marriage between Harijans and Caste Hindus. According to him only these are considered as inter-caste marriages. But today inter-caste marriages are performed without much difficulty. These may be due to the various schemes promoted by the state Governments and may also due to marriage through online. In this context, it is relevant to analyse the Gandhian conception inter-caste marriage.
HYPOTHESIS:

Caste is the most essential part of Hinduism. Hinduism is the religion of the majority in India. Caste sustains Hinduism and is therefore protected. The institution of marriage is a sacrament. Those days Hindu doctrines strictly insisted only in eight forms of marriages viz, Brahma, Deiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasha and Paishacha Vivakam. According to Hinduism every Hindu must belong to one particular caste and he should undergo marriage within the caste or Varna. Marriage between any two castes is termed inter-caste marriage and hence restricted in Hinduism. Only 'Anuloma' Marriages were encouraged to perform within the Varna system. Hinduism strongly insisted in 'endogamy'. Besides inter-caste marriage with Harijan (low caste) or with 'Avarna' people is prohibited and punishable.

The untouchables were termed 'Avarna' by the sacred law books of the Hindus. Hinduism misled the people and so they misunderstood the term 'Avarna'. The term 'Avarna' as such does not mean Varna or caste. The untouchables were originally the rejected people from the four fold division itself. That is why they were called the 'Panchamas' or 'Antyasa' or 'Chandalas'. In other words they were simply called the 'outcastes' or 'the excluded one'.

Gandhiji viewed it differently and his views were diametrically opposite to that of the excluded status of the untouchables and his opinion was that the untouchables should remain within the Hindu mainstream. The roots of Gandhi's concept of Harijan (Children of God) can be from the concept of good and evil. He remains an eclectic in his attitude towards Hinduism. He preferred to call the caste Hindus as Durjan (Men of evil).
Gandhiji considered caste an obstacle to national and spiritual growth. And so he believed that the eradication of caste is essential for the removal of the scourge of untouchability. For this he wanted to annihilate the caste system by encouraging the inter-caste marriage among Hindus. He insisted that in inter-caste marriage, one of the party should be Harijan (low caste) and the other party a non-Harijan (Caste Hindu). He promoted only such 'Pratiloma' marriages.

His ultimate aim was to annihilate the caste system to establish the casteless society among the Hindus. He called upon all Hindus to become one caste, i.e. 'Harijan'. He has also said untouchability cannot be removed by any force, including law and Reservation policy, but only by the process of conversion, by which Gandhiji meant, 'Purification of Hindus heart,' and not religious conversion. Gandhiji firmly believed that inter-caste marriage is an apt way to abolish untouchability and to create a casteless society.

Sources of the Study:

This Thesis is a Literary research mainly relying on Literatures. Reference are drawn from Gandhi's personal writings in his magazines 'Young India' (1919 - 1931) 'Navajivan' and 'Harijan' (1933 - 1947) and also in "The story of my experiments with Truth". The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi (Volume - 1-100), has been primarily relied upon for direct reference of Gandhi.

Besides a number of books, by others written on Hinduism, caste system, untouchability, conversion and social change, were taken up for this study.
Methodology:

The method adopted in the thesis is descriptive, analytical and critical study. While explaining Gandhi’s concept of Hinduism, Caste and Varna system descriptive method is followed. While dealing with the term 'Harijan', inter-caste marriage and Conversion to other Religions, analytical method is followed.

Gandhi’s conception of inter-caste marriage and his ideological shift from disapproval of inter-caste marriage to encouragement of only such marriage are taken for critical analysis. This scholar attempts here to analyse Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage and to trace the cause of the shift of his statement- "All Hindus become one caste, ie. ‘Harijan’, among Hindu masses".

Scope of the Study:

Most the research on Gandhi has been of a general nature. No in-depth study on Gandhiji’s concept of inter-caste marriage has been made so far. This study is a pioneering attempt in that direction. Further this study aims at increasing awareness among the students of Gandhian Thought, with reference to the removal of untouchability and to create casteless society.

Limitation of Study:

This study is limited to Gandhi’s concept of Hinduism, removal of untouchability and inter-caste marriage, as applicable to India. Though the ideas of Gandhi may be relevant for all time, they cannot be applied in general to all Countries with different socio-political background.
Since, the researcher has undergone the study about Gandhiji’s thoughts on inter-caste marriage, 55 years after his martyrdom (30.01.1948) the researcher was unable to collect the facts from the Gandhi’s contemporary personalities. For this research, as much as possible, the researcher has put in profound efforts and has assimilated all the necessary data mostly from Gandhi’s journal namely ‘Young India’, ‘Harijan’, and the collected works of Mahatma Gandhi (vol.1-100) published by Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1958.

The whole research has been carried out only on the basis of Gandhi’s speeches, writings and his actions towards the inter-caste marriage. The research is restricted to the term inter-caste marriage and its various connotations. The whole study deals about the inter-caste marriage between Harijan and Caste Hindus exclusively among the Hindu masses.

The whole research is limited to Gandhi’s vision and wisdom of Hinduism, and Hindu religious reformation. The main focus on Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage is to establish casteless society by the eradication of caste system in India.

**Chapterisation**

The whole analysis of the study will run into Seven Chapters, each devoted to specific aspect of Gandhi’s Concept. The first Chapter elaborates the Introduction of the subject, reason for choosing this topic, Source of Studies and Methodology, Hypothesis, Limitation, and the Objectives. The second Chapter entitled, “Gandhi’s Concept of Hinduism” will critically analyse the right understanding of Gandhi’s
ideas on Hinduism, without this essential study we cannot evaluate his concept of inter-caste marriage.

The third Chapter is entitled, “Gandhi’s Concept of Caste and Varna Ashrama Dharma”. It elaborates the Gandhi’s understanding of caste and Varna. It deals with the practice of untouchability and Gandhi’s ideas on removal of untouchability and annihilation of caste system. This study will explore his ideas of casteless society.

The fourth Chapter entitled “Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage” will evaluate the real spirit behind the strategies and change of Gandhi’s ideas on inter-caste marriage. This critical study will enable us to answer the Gandhi’s vision and wisdom of “Inter-caste marriage”.

The fifth Chapter entitled, “Gandhi’s concept of religious conversion” will discuss Gandhi’s thoughts and writings and actions in respect of conversions to other faith. It is must to study Gandhi’s view on this vital issue of conversions. And so as to find out the reasons for his rejection of religious conversions of untouchables and his encouragement to the inter-caste marriage among Hindus.

The sixth chapter entitled, “Gandhi’s concept of Harijan and Durjan” will make us to understand Gandhi’s perspective on the key concept of Harijan and Durjan. It critically analyses the Gandhi’s vision and wisdom of “All Hindus become one caste” i.e., Harijan.

The Seventh Chapter entitled, “The Relevance of Gandhi’s concept of inter-caste marriage in the modern India”, will analyse the
various aspects of removal of untouchability with reference to Harijan Sevak Sangh and Gandhian Constructive programmes. It will evaluate the constitutional remedies undertaken by the Government and to study the social welfare programme implemented by the Government and the NGOs in the society.

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