CHAPTER - III
GANDHI’S CONCEPT OF CASTE AND VARNA

The word ‘caste’ comes from the Portuguese word ‘Casta’ signifying ‘Breed’ race or class. Caste is a social institution which is based on birth. Caste is the most essential part of Hinduism. Caste sustains Hinduism and is therefore defended and protected by the fundamentalists. A Hindu must necessarily belong to a caste. There can be no Hindu without a caste. There are various factors responsible for the evolution of castes in India. Caste system evolved due to the integration and assimilation of different cultures. “Indian Caste System is offered by the Korosea Tribes of the Fiji Islands, the societies of Tonga, Samoa and Rotuma Islands”\(^1\).

In 1908 eminent scholar Ramesh Chandra Dhathar in his book “Ancient Hindu Civilisation”, has explained that there was no institution of castes during the Kritha era (Yugam). Arya samaj advocates that “Vedic Path” is the only route for the formation of casteless society. (“Caste is not there by birth” Book – Released by Arya Samaj, Chennai).

In order to organize the caste Hindus, Pandit Mohan Malaviya, who was a member of Arya Samaj, founded the Hindu Mahasabha in 1909. It promotes the idea of Hindutuva, of ‘India as Hindustan’ and the rights of Hindus to legislate and govern themselves in accordance with Hindu political ideology.

In 1925, K.V. Hedgewar, who was a member of Hindu Mahasabha founded the Hindu Socio-Political force Rastriya Svayam Sevak (RSS) It helps to unite all Hindus against foreign influences. In Hindu Society at present the clutches of castes have lessened their grip leave reduced to some extent and a few inter caste marriages have started taking place.
The Arya Samaj in its beginning years, took steps to abolish untouchability and caste as a principle. Many great leaders like Sri Ramanujar, Kabila, E.V.Ramasamy (Periyar) and Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi tried to abolish caste inequality in their own ways. They had contributed a lot for the renaissance of Hindu religion, abolition of untouchability and for several other reforms. Particularly in 1932 he formed “Harijan Sevak Sangh” for abolition of untouchability. The aim of this study is to consolidate Gandhi’s works and opinions related to that of caste abolition.

Caste and Varna System:

The Indian caste system has interested many sociologists for years. Caste is the most essential part of Hinduism. The Hindu religion divides the population into five basic groups. The four highest groups are known as Varnas. The four varnas consist of:

1. Brhamans - a priestly caste
2. Kshatriyas - a military caste
3. Vaishyas - a merchant (or) agriculture caste
4. Sudra - a labouring caste

Although the term “Chaturvarna” means a system of four castes, it originally had only three – Warriors or Kshatriyas, those performing rituals or the Brhamans and the rest of Vaishya in that order. According to Purusha Myth, “God created the four Varnas thus: the Brahmian from his head, the Kshatriya from his arms, the Vaishya from his thighs and the Sudra from his feet” (RV. X. 90. 11-12).

The word ‘Varna’ is not quite the same as the English word ‘colour’. Varna does not refer to physical colour but to mental qualities. The qualities or Gunas were, perhaps, symbolically expressed in terms of colour or Varna. Gunas (or) Qualities are classified into three categories.
**Sattvika**: An ordinary action done without love or hatred by one. Not desirous of the fruit and free from attachment (Verse. 23).

**Rajasika**: The action which is performed with desires or with self-conceit and with much effort is declared to Rajasika (Verse. 24).

**Tamasika**: Unsteady, Vulgar, Arrogant, Dishonest, malicious, Indolent, Despondent and are called, Tamasika (Verse. 28)

Several theories exist regarding the origin of caste. The occupational or racial theories and theories which attribute caste to colour, the doctrine of Karma, or to primitive beliefs are too well-known to warrant any detailed treatment in this text.

The concept of Caste might have come into existence long before it was practiced among the ancient inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. It is not improbable that the ancient Indian mind, whose imaginative powers are well known, had worked out a well balanced social classification free of the impurities which it developed in later practice. This classification might have paved the way for the origin of the absolutely rigid caste system as it developed later on. This is amply illustrated in the relevant passages of the Bhagavad Gita. In chapter IV, Verse 13, Krishna States, that “the fourfold caste was created by me, by the differentiation of Guna and Karma. Though I am the author thereof, know me to be the non-doer and changeless.”

Caste affects the whole way of Indian life despite laws against discrimination such as the Indian constitution’s law of 1950 which officially abolished “Untouchability”. Even now caste is still important in Indian society. Due to the efforts of the reformers and other laws relating to discrimination, the attitudes of the people have changed a
little since India’s Independence in 1947. With this background, the scholar wishes to see Gandhi’s views on Caste and Varna.

The Caste Reform Movements in India:

In the era of social reform, right from the days of Bhakti movement at the beginning of the 12th century, enlightened people of India have been fighting against the caste system. The principle of human dignity and equality came to the forefront in Bakti Age. In the 12th century there were two great religious reformers belonging to the Bhakti Movements: Ramanujar (1047 – 1137) and Basavar (1131 - 1167) Both of them stood for breaking down the caste rigidity. In the 15th century there were the great leaders of Bhakti movements like Ramananda, and Kabir (1440 – 1518). Again in 16th century, reformers like vallabaacharya (1479 – 1531) chanitanga (1485 – 1533) and the 17th century reformer and poet Tulsi Dase (1532 – 1623) in the 19th century there were four great religious movements with the aim of abolishing castes: Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Movement and the Theosopical Society.

In 19th century, reform movements were started in Tamilnadu and South India, with the main aim of abolishing caste system, through Vaikandasamy (1809 - 1851), St. Ramalinga Vallalar (1823 – 1874) and Sri Narayana Guru (1856 – 1928) etc., In North India, one of the earliest caste protest movements among the lower castes was due to the efforts of Joyti Rao Phule (1827 – 1890).

Sri Narayana Guru was born in 1854 in a middle class Ezhava family at Chempazhanthy, a suburb of the city of Trivandrum, the capital of the then princely state of Travancore. The state has now merged in Kerala but the city remains the capital of Kerala. Sri Narayana Guru was not only blessed with a very critical and analytical mind even as a young
boy. However he avoided arguments and spent long time in meditation and reading by himself.

From 1884 to 1904, Sri Narayana Guru’s Head Quarters was mostly at Aruvippuram. The Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam founded in 1903 for the uplift of the lower class of society has become the biggest single organization in Kerala to defend to natural and constitutional rights of socially and economically depressed people of Kerala. In 1907, he left Aruvippuram and settled in Varkala. The Jaganatha Temple, Tellichery built in 1908 was opened not only to Ezhavas but also to Pulayas. The famous Varkala hills have since been renamed as sivagiri. 1912 he developed the place into the site of the Sarada Temple. 1913, he founded an Ashramam near Kalady, as a homage to the hallowed memory of Sankara to proclaim his own stand.

The Narayana Gurukulam founded in 1923 became a world wide fraternity of contemplatives. It is the most articulating organ of Sri Narayana Guru’s philosophical and humanist teachings. He founded the Narayana Dharma Sangam for his sannyasins, which was registered in 1927. According to him, Swami Bodhananda was his successor and Nataraja Guru was the adviser of the Dharma Sangam. This Sangam has become the monastic order. At the age of 74, Sri Narayana Guru attained the final release from his mortal body and his Samadhi.

Theory and practice needed to make the perfect whole Sri Narayana Guru was a harmonizer of all religions in the world based on the concept of ‘One God’ without going into the caste system. The unique contribution of Sri Narayana Guru to advaita philosophy and religion is the theory of ‘One Caste, One Religion and One God’ for all humanity. According to him “humanness is the caste of human beings”.
And he said, “caste is an anomaly in religion if it is said that one is born as a Shudra but becomes a Brahmin by his cultural action” is to accepted as valid\(^5\).

Many organisations, though, strove for caste eradication, there were also attempts to sustain caste by some caste sabhas. These caste sabhas played a active role during the enumeration of census in 1901(Herbert Risley, Census Commissioner), 1911(Census Operation by O’malley) and 1931 by claiming a superior status for them in such enumeration. This made the census commissioner not to make the 1941 census with caste enumerations.

Excerpts from “Social change in Modern India” by M.N. Srinivas, Allied publishers, New Delhi, 1966, P.92-98

“The first time a nation wide census was undertaken was during the year 1867-1871 and on this occasion Two Tamil peasant castes, vellalas and padaiyachis, wanted to be recorded as belonging to a higher varna than that popularly conceded to them; the vellalas protested against being included among Shudras and wanted to be called Vaishyas.

“Caste association’s came into existence in different parts of the country and each association had as its aim the improvement of the social and economic standing of its caste”. …“The caste sabhas articulated as well as organised the new urge to nobility. They represented to the census authorities the demand of Individual castes to belong to a particular Varna not to a lower one. The superintendent of the 1931 united provinces census, for instance received 175 claims, of which 34 were made through caste sabbas. The sabhas ultered the style of life of their castes in the direction of sanstritization.
“According to Donald E. Smith, over the years this tendency became so pernovinced that at the 1941 – census the British Census Commissioner eliminated the column about caste.

Gandhi identified this caste problem not only in Hinduism, but also in other religions like Christianity and Islam etc. The innumerable subcastes are some-times a convenience, often a hindrance. The sooner there is fusion the better. He believe that, “I have frequently said that I do not believe in caste in the modern sense. It is an excrescence and a handicap on progress”.

Caste distinctions have taken such deep root amongst us that they have also infected the Muslims, Christians and followers of other religions in India. It is true that class barriers are also to be found in more or less degree in other parts of the world. This means that it is a distemper common to the human race. It can be eliminated only by the inculcation of religion in its true sense. I have not found sanction for such barriers and distinctions in the scriptures of any religion.

Gandhi’s Views on Caste and Varna:

Gandhi, even as a child did not believe in untouchability. His main proposal for reforming Hinduism was to abolish untouchability. He wanted all the “untouchables” to be allowed to enter temples, given access to public roads, wells etc.,

His other main proposal of fusing the castes within each of four varnas can be explained thus, i.e. Gandhi believed that castes have saved Hinduism from dis-integration. But it has presented an ugly growth. The four divisions alone are fundamental, natural and essential. The innumerable sub-castes that are sometimes a convenience, often a hindrance, should be fused at the earliest.
On a question of abolishing caste and adopting the class system of Europe, Gandhi said that “Law of heredity is an eternal law and any attempt to alter that law must lead us to utter confusion”. He insisted that “the Hindus should believe in reincarnation and transmigration that the nature will degrade a misbehaving Brahmin, and upgrade the status of virtuous lower caste men in the next incarnations, respectively”.

Around 1920 Gandhi’s belief in the four varnas and in inherited vocations was passionate. He said that the beauty of the caste system is that it does not base itself upon distinctions of wealth possessions. Caste is an extension of the principle of the family. Both family and caste are governed by Blood and heredity. Heredity is not an illusion. Even if we accept the western doctrine of milieu, it is easy to prove that milieu can be conserved and developed more through caste than through class. Changes come very slowly in social life, and thus caste has allowed new groupings to suit the changes in lives. These changes are quiet easy. It is difficult to imagine a better harmonious human adjustment.

Gandhi asserts that caste does not connote superiority or inferiority. It simply recognizes different outlooks and corresponding modes of life. But it can’t be denied that a sort of hierarchy has been evolved in the caste system. It is inevitable but it can’t be called the creation of the Brahmans. A hierarchy is inevitable, when all castes accept a common (religious) goal of life. Because all castes cannot realize the ideal in equal degree.

Gandhi believed that it is because of caste system, Hindu Society could stand. A community with the caste system must be said to possess unique power of organization. Hereditary occupation or hereditary principle is an eternal principle and natural order of society.
To change it is to create disorder. The caste system is a natural order of society, and so Gandhi said, he opposed all these attempts to destroy the caste system.\textsuperscript{12}

Gandhi felt that even if one had managed somehow to learn a profession other than one’s ‘Hereditary’ one, i.e. other than one’s varna, one must not earn a living by it. i.e one should earn one’s living by means of doing one’s hereditary vocation only.\textsuperscript{13}

Caste, whatever its origin, is another important institution of an essentially religious or hierarchical nature. As observed in the Report on the Census of 1901, the most obvious characteristic of the ordinary Hindu is his acceptance of the Brahmanical supremacy and of the caste system. The system consisted of four ranked categories called Varnas. Besides the four Varnas developed by the Brahmins, there was also a fifth category. People of the castes in this category were something called Panchamas (or) outcastes (or) Avarnas. Today the untouchables of India are known as Dalits.

The caste system survived because of two basic sociological reasons; firstly, to the upper castes, it provided a convenient instrument of exploitation without endangering social stability, and thus ensured their prolonged domination. Secondly, to the lower castes, it provided a means of security by enabling them to identify with a larger group, and thus increased their chances for survival. At the same time, the rules of behaviour imposed upon the upper castes gave the lower castes some protection against excessive exploitation and severe injustice.\textsuperscript{14}

But, according to Dr. Ambedkar, the object of the Varna system is to prevent competition, class struggle and class war. Varna means the determination of a man’s occupation before he is born. In this system
no man has any liberty to choose his occupation. His occupation is determined for him by heredity.\textsuperscript{15}

Gandhi had a different opinion with regard to this. It can be seen from the following words of Gandhi: “In accepting the fourfold division I am also accepting the laws of Nature and law of heredity that is inherent in human nature. We are born with some of the traits of our parents and also some characteristics of our parents caste. Some of our inherited characteristics can be reformed to a certain extent. But it is not possible in one birth entirely to undo the results of our past doings”\textsuperscript{16}.

Gandhi in the mid-1920, downplayed his own ideas said during early 1920s that “a hierarchy is inevitable”. He said the caste system has a scientific basis and reason doesn’t revolt against it. It has both disadvantages and advantages. It does not prevent a Brahmin from serving his shudra brother. The doctrine of caste should be restricted to four divisions only. Any multiplication would be an evil. The evil practices in the caste system should be weeded. But there is no reason for their abolition. Here is no question of superiority or inferiority. A Brahmin who looks down upon the other castes is not a Brahmin. He should be first not only in status but also in spiritual services\textsuperscript{17}.

In Gandhi’s conception of the law of varna no one is superior to any other… A Scavenger has the same status as a Brahmin\textsuperscript{18}.

He said, “Hindustan rendered a great service to mankind by the discovery and conscious obedience to this law”. Gandhi said, “Varna ashrama is in my opinion, inherent in human nature, and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science. It does attach to Birth. A man cannot change his Varna by choice”\textsuperscript{19}.
Gandhi didn’t believe in caste in the modern sense. For him it is an ugly growth, a handicap on progress. He also didn’t believe in inequalities between human beings. All are absolutely equal. But equality is of soul and not of bodies. Assumption of superiority by any person over any other is a sin against God and man. Thus caste is an evil, as far as it connotes distinctions in status.

Gandhi believed in varna which is based on hereditary occupations. Varnas are four to mark four universal occupations imparting knowledge, defending the defenseless, carrying on agriculture and commerce, and performing service (to other humans) through physical labour. These occupations are common to all mankind, but Hinduism, has made use of it in regulating social relations and conduct. Like gravitations were made to yield results by the scientists, Hinduism had startled the world by its discovery and application of the law of Varna... According to his own definition of Varna, Gandhi believed that there were no Varna in operation then in Hinduism. All Varnas had ceased to impart their assigned occupations.

And he said, “No matter what was the position in ancient times, no one can nowadays go through life claiming to belong to a high class. Society will not admit any such claim to superiority, but only under duress. The world is now wide awake.” Inspite of the doubtful position in ancient times no one can nowadays claim to belong to high class. Only under duress or threatening, society will admit any such claim to superiority.

All the four varnas are determined by birth. They are equal in status. If they are not determined by birth they tend to lose all meaning. These varnas can be changed by a person choosing another profession. He said, “There are four varnas, all equal in status, and they are determined by birth. They can be changed by a person choosing
another profession, but if varnas are not as a rule determined by birth, they tend to lose all meaning”\(^{23}\).

The Varna system implies the lessening or removal of all distinctions of high and low. Neither carpenter nor shoemaker, pleader or doctor, is superior to the other. If such belief is entertained then all would try to become only to the position of highly recognized one.

When it is suggested that everyone should practice his father’s profession the suggestion is coupled with the condition that the practitioner of every profession will earn only a living wage and no more. Learning is not a trade and may not be used in order to amass riches. This principle is an integral part of the varna system.

Gandhi believed that, Boys between 9 and 16 years of age should be taught their parent’s avocation. These boys should obtain their livelihood by practising the hereditary craft. This does not apply to the girls. Every young person between 16 and 25 years of age should be allowed to have education according to his or her wishes and circumstances\(^{24}\).

In Gandhi’s opinion, the Varna system has now broken down. There is no true Brahmin or true kshatriya or Vaishya. We are all shudras i.e one Varna. Removal of untouchability does mean root and branch destruction of the idea of superiority and inferiority\(^{25}\).

Annihilation of Caste and Varna:

Gandhi would evoke this ‘all sudra’ idea from time to time thereafter: Gandhi found an utter confusion of varna and so wished that all Hindus would voluntarily call themselves shudras\(^{26}\).
In 1945 Gandhi expressed his opinion a man moves either forward or backward. He never stands still. The whole world is moving and there is no exception... Gandhi viewed that, “Where are the four Varnas of the Gita today? There prevails only one Varna today that is, of ‘Shudras’ or you may call it ‘Adisudra’s’... If I can bring round the Hindu Society to my view, all our internal quarrels will come to an end.”

There prevails only one Varna today, that is ‘Shudras’, or you may call it, ‘Athi-Shudras’, if the Hindu society could be brought to his view, then all the internal quarrels would come to an end. Gandhi further says, If one considers oneself as the trustee of one’s property instead of being as the owner of the property then no one will be poor and no one rich. All religions will be equal. All quarrels arising out of religion, caste and economic differences will be ended. Trusteeship is accepting only that much for oneself as one has earned with his (physical) labour. And Gandhi wanted to live for the attainment of this swaraj (self-rule) of his dreams.

Someone suggested that formerly all were Brahmins and that now too all should be recognized as such and that the other Varnas should be abolished. It is the so called superior that has to descend from his heights, if the reform is to be peaceful.

In 1933 Ambedkar said that “The out caste is a bye product of caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes, and nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system.” Such views of Ambedkar would some time provoke Gandhi into arguing that it was not really important even to reduce the number of castes to four. So Gandhi said that varna too has its limitations and defects, but there is nothing sinful about it. Untouchability is a by
product of the caste system. It is only like a ugly growth of a body, or weeds of crop\textsuperscript{31}.

In 1934, to an interviewer’s question of a Varna system with everyone enjoying equal economic and social status and itself having historical recognition or warrant, Gandhi did admit that it had no historical warrant. He said that misapplication or an imperfect understanding of the law must not lead to ignoring of the law itself. By constant striving we have to enrich the inheritance left to us. This law determines the duties of man. Rights follow from a due performance of duties\textsuperscript{32}.

Gandhi met Dr. Ambedkar (1891-1956) for the first time in 1930. Ambedkar soon became the most articulate critic of Gandhi’s views on caste. In 1916 he took a Ph.D degree in Economics at Columbia university (in New York), where he delivered a paper entitled, “\textit{The castes in India-their Mechanism, Genesis and Development}.” Returning to India in 1923, he practiced law and undertook a variety of social, educational and political projects for the advancement of the untouchables.

After the Vaigam Satyagraha (a struggle against untouchability) Gandhi came to Vaigam, and met with Sri Narayana Guru at Sivagiri Ashram on 12.3.1925. He came to the conclusion that, there is no authentic (religious scripture) source to practicing untouchability.

In 1925 the Self Respect Movement was started by E.V. Ramasamy in Tamilnadu. It tried to abolish the caste system. The mode of conduct of these marriages, performed by the Self Respect Marriages were of rationalist type only.
E.V. Ramasamy and Gandhi had ideological differences in issues like Varnasharma Dharma ever since the starting of the Kudi Arasu - 1925. There ensued an Ideological battle between Gandhi and E.V. Ramasamy at a meeting arranged for them in Mysore in 1927.

The contrast between Gandhi’s and Ambedkar’s view of varna and inherited vocations was heightened by their respective relations to the most radical contemporary reform-Hindu movement. The Arya samaj, founded in 1875, overtook the older Brahma samaj, proclaimed that Hinduism was far better than any other religion and criticized sharply a number of conservative Hindu practices and precepts, among them the multiplicity of castes based on birth alone. Then, around 1930, a small off shoot of the Arya Samaj, the Jat-pat Todak Mandal (“Caste-breaking society”) dedicated itself to promoting a casteless Hinduism by advocating marriages between people of different varnas and castes.

Gandhi felt that if eradication of castes means the abolition of varna then he may not approve it. But if the aim is to end the innumerable (sub) caste distinctions then he will support it. In 1935 Gandhi said, “Caste has to go.” The caste system is the very antithesis of varnashrama. The sooner it is abolished the better.

In Varnashrama there is prohibition to change of one’s hereditary occupation for purposes of gain. The existing practice has set up cruel restrictions about interdining and intermarriage and has tolerated anarchy about choice of occupation.

The most effective, quickest and most smooth way to destroy caste is for reformers to begin the practice with themselves without bothering for the social boycott. Then the change will be gradual and
Ambedkar declined Gandhi’s invitation to express his views in ‘Harijan’ (weekly). But Gandhi called attention to them anyway and commented in 1936 thus: “Dr. Ambedkar quoted chapter and verse in proof of his accusations. There are flaws in it. Caste has nothing to do with religions. It’s origin is not known. Varna has nothing to do with castes. The law of Varna teaches all to follow the ancestral calling. The essence of Hinduism is Truth as one and the only God and its bold acceptance of Ahimsa as the law of the human family”.

Gandhi said that his interpretation of Hinduism will be disputed by many including Dr. Ambedkar. But this won’t affect his position. The profound mistake that Dr. Ambedkar had made was to rely on texts of doubtful authenticity and value and on the statements of degraded Hindus who are no fit specimens of the faith. Judged by the standard applied by Dr. Ambedkar, every known living faith won’t be found worthy of acceptance.

Ambedkar said that he must admit the vedic theory of Varna as interpreted by Swami Dayanand (The founder of Arya Samaj) and some others as a sensible and an inoffensive thing. It did not admit birth as a determining factor in fixing the place of an individual in society. It only recognized work. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma’s view of Varna his nonsense as it claimed Varna and caste as two very different concepts. Varna is based on the principle of each according to his work, while caste is based on the principle of each according to his birth. He also said, that Gandhi advocating the caste system and terming it the Varna system of following ancestral calling is causing confusion.
Dr. Ambedkar explains further that, the real reason why the Mahatma is suffering from this confusion is probably to be traced to two sources. The first is the temperament of the Gandhi. And the second is the double role which the Gandhi wants to play – of a Mahatma and a politician. As a Mahatma he may be trying to spiritualize politics. But politics have certainly commercialized him. Gandhi is afraid that if he opposes caste and Varna he will lose his place in politics. He not only deceived himself but also he had deceived the people preaching caste under the name of Varna. Ambedkar’s quarrel with Hindus and Hinduism is not over the imperfections of their social conduct. But it is much more fundamental. It is over their ideals.

In 1946 an American (Louis Fischer) who visited India described Gandhi’s view of caste at that time. Then Gandhi had said that he was trying to create a classless and casteless India. He yearned for the day when there would be only one caste, and Brahmins would marry Harijans. Gandhi asserted that he is a ‘social revolutionist’. Violence is bred by inequality, non violence by equality.

In 1946, when Gandhi was questioned, “why he should not concentrate to make a wider crusade against the caste system itself, so that by digging out the root, the branches of untouchability will wither by themselves?” “Gandhi replied that his mind is ever growing and moving forward. The all including society may not keep pace with it. Therefore he has to exercise utmost patience and should be slow. If he could live up to 125 years, he could except to convert the entire Hindu, Society to his view.

Gandhi told that a Harijan by birth may repudiate his Varna but how can he who has become a Harijan by choice? He did not have the hesitation to ask all the caste Hindus to become ‘Athi-shudras’ if the
cancerous caste feeling is to be eradicated from Hinduism and if Hinduism is not to perish from the face of the earth\textsuperscript{39}.

Gandhi said, “When all become casteless... monopoly of occupations would go”\textsuperscript{40}. Gandhi has said occasionally that if some person masters an occupation other than his ancestral one, he should earn his living only by his hereditary occupation and not by the new one.

The vocational organization of society may be vertical and competitive, or horizontal and co-operative. Under the former, remuneration is on the basis of the law of supply and demand; in the latter all occupations are paid equal wages. A person choosing an occupation is based on this skill or aptitude for it. And these skills and aptitudes generally follow the line of heredity. And if there were no inequalities of remuneration any person will tend to follow his ancestral vocation. And this can be changed only if the new vocation is not made used for one’s survival as done by Buddha, a ruling prince by birth, Socrates a sculptor, St.Paul a tent-maker. But they became the enlightened one, philosopher and an apostle respectively and did not regard their new calling (Vocation) as a means of livelihood\textsuperscript{41}.

To have abolished, “all distinction of class and caste” (in the Indian National Army) was, he said, Subhas Chandra Bose’s “Greatest and lasting act”\textsuperscript{42}

In 1947, Gandhi told that he would wish to have a brave, selfless and pure-hearted scavenger girl to be our first President. “It is not a vain dream. If we make an effort to find them we can certainly come across such Harijin girls”\textsuperscript{43}. From the above knowledge, it is clear that Gandhi’s view on caste and varna can be summed up as the following:
To Sum Up:

The Hindu Religious spiritual book Srimath Bhagavath Githa declared: "The fourfold caste was created by me, by the differentiation of Guna and Karma. Though I am the author thereof, know me to be the non – doer and changeless".44

In the Hindu Religious scripture of Rigveda – and in the purushasuktha hymn untouchability was stressed. Castes which were associated with different vocation were later assigned to one's birth. In India, castes are like pillars of Hindu religion. Though caste clutches have slightly loosened themselves, the Reservation policy and election system, still contribute to the aggravation of caste conflicts. Castes which were associated with vocation are now trapped, and mutilated within the system of reservation. On the other side, the Hindutuva force trying very hard to strengthen the caste system.

Even as child Gandhi did not believe in untouchability. His main proposal for reforming Hinduism was to abolish untouchability. He wanted all the so called, "untouchable" castes to become Shudra (servant) castes and they should be allowed to enter temples, given access to public roads, wells etc.,

Gandhi believed that castes have saved Hinduism from disintegration. But it has presented an ugly growth. The four varna divisions alone are fundamental, natural and essential. The innumerable sub-castes should be fused at the earliest within each of the four varnas. According to Gandhi, the law of heredity is an eternal law and any attempt to alter that must lead us to utter confusion. He insisted that the Hindus should believe in reincarnation and transmigration. Further caste does not connote superiority or inferiority. It simply recognizes
different outlooks and corresponding modes of life. But it can't be
denied that a sort of hierarchy has been evolved in the caste system,
which is inevitable. He believed that it is because of caste system, that
Hindu society could stand. Hereditary occupation or hereditary principle
is an eternal principal and natural order of society. To change it is to
create disorder.

Gandhi didn't believe in caste in the modern sense. For him it is
an ugly growth and a handicap on progress. He also didn't believe in
inequalities between human beings. All are absolutely equal. Thus
caste is an evil as far as it connotes distinction in status.

Around 1920 Gandhi's belief in the four varnas and in inherited
vocations were passionate. He said that the beauty of the caste system
is that it does not base itself upon distinctions of wealth possessions.
Caste is an extension of the principle of the family.

Both family and caste are governed by blood and heredity.
Heredity is not an illusion. One should earn one's living by means of
doing one's hereditary vocation only. Some of our characters and traits
inherited from our parents can be reformed to a certain extent. But it is
not possible in one birth to undo the results entirely of our past doings.

Gandhi in the mid 1920, down-played his own ideas said during
early 1920s that "a hierarchy is inevitable". He said the caste system
has a scientific basis and reason doesn't go against it. It has both
disadvantages and advantages.

In 1920, Nagpur Congress, Gandhi insisted the removal of
untouchability as one of the main constructive programme of the
Congress workers. In national Congress Belgaum, Gandhi insisted that the removal of untouchability is as essential for Swaraj as the attainment of Hindu - Muslim unity.\(^{45}\)

In Gandhi’s conception of the Law of Varna no one is superior to any other. A scavenger has the same status as a Brahmin. Varnas are four to mark four universal occupations imparting knowledge, defending the defenseless, carrying on agriculture and commerce, and performing service (to other humans) through physical labour. These occupations are common to all mankind. Whereas all Varnas had ceased to impart their assigned occupations.

For all the ailments of Varna and Hinduism according to Gandhi, the remedy is not destruction but correction. If the true Hindu-spirit is reproduced within oneself it will only satisfy the soul.\(^{46}\)

In Gandhi’s opinion there is no true Brahmin or true kshatriya or vaisya. All are shudra i.e. one Varna. Removal of untouchability does mean root and branch destruction of the idea of superiority and inferiority. All the four varnas are determined by birth. They are equal in status. If they are not determined by birth they tend to lose all meaning. This Varna system implies the removal of all distinctions of high and low.

According to Gandhi the idea of inferiority and superiority has to be demolished. The four Varna divisions are not a vertical one, but a horizontal plane on which all stand on a equal footing doing the services assigned to them respectively.\(^{47}\)
According to Dr. Ambedkar, “The out caste is a bye-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can emancipate the outcaste except the destruction of the caste system.”

Gandhi’s answer to Ambedkar was that by removing untouchability alone caste system can be purified. This only shall fulfil his dream of bringing a true Varnashrama, the four divisions of society.

Gandhi felt that if eradication of castes means the abolition of Varna then he may not approve of it. But the caste system is the very anithesis of Varna Asharama. The Sooner it is abolished the better. The most effective quickest and most smooth way to destroy caste is for reformers to begin the practice of inter-dining and inter-marriage with themselves without bothering for the social boycott. Then the change will be gradual and smooth. Gandhi found the essence of Hinduism to be Truth as one and the only God ie. ‘Truth is God’ and its bold acceptance of Ahimsa as the law of the human family.

Around 1933, Gandhi found an utter confusion of Varna and so wished that all Hindus should voluntarily call themselves shudras. Gandhi would evoke this ‘all Shudra’ idea from time to time thereafter. Gandhi said that varna too has its limitations and defects, but there is nothing sinful about it. In 1934, to an interviewers question of a varna system with everyone enjoying equal economic and social status and itself having historical recognition or warrant, Gandhi did admit that it had no historical warrant.

Changes like these in Gandhi’s perspective towards Caste and Varna had happened only after listening to the marathon deliberations.
and discussions that he heard from people like B.R. Ambedkar at Round Table Conferences (1930-1932). Further the pathetic plight of the untouchables as 'outcastes' within the Hindu fold and the consequent B.R. Ambedkar's demand for 'separate electorate' which resulted in the 'Communal Award' declared by the British (Ramsay Macdonald); then the intervention of Gandhi through "fast - unto - death" against it; announcement of new Reservation policy through "Poona Pact" (1932) as an alternative to the 'Communal Award' that was not even expected by B.R. Ambedkar, all these also contributed to the U-turn (ideological shift) in Gandhi's perspective towards Caste, Varna and untouchables.

The contrast between Gandhi's and Ambedkar's view of Varna and inherited vocations was heightened by their respective relations to the most radical reform - Hindu movements. The Arya Samaj founded in 1875 criticized sharply the multiplicity of castes based on birth alone and other conservative Hindu practices and precepts. The Jat - Pat - Todak Mandal (caste breaking society), around 1930, dedicated itself to promoting a casteless Hinduism by advocating inter-marriages between people of different Varnas.

In his weekly 'Harijan' he wrote, "Caste must go. Varna Ashrama Dharma of the shastras (Scriptures) is today non-existent in practice. The present caste system is the very antithesis of Varna Ashrama Dharma. The sooner public opinion abolishes it the better"\textsuperscript{49}. According to Gandhi "There prevails only one Varna today. That is Shudra's or you may call it Adi-Shudras\textsuperscript{50}.

Gandhi would evoke this 'all Hindus to become Shudras', idea from time to time, "my own opinion is that the Varna System has just now broken. There is no true Brahmin, or true Kshatriya or Vaishya. We are
all Shudras. i.e. one Varna. If this position is accepted, then the problem becomes easy if this does not satisfy our vanity, then we can call ourselves Brahmins. Removal of untouchability does mean root and branch destruction of the idea of superiority and inferiority. Further he insisted, “There is utter confusion of Varna and I wish that all the Hindus will voluntarily call themselves Shudras.”

All religions in this world are essential for the growth of spirituality in human life. But Gandhi considered castes as unnecessary. He said, “Castes are against religion. I don’t know how castes have originated. It is also not necessary to know about its origin. But I have known the presence of castes is an obstacle for spiritual growth and national development.” Mr. Manmadhanath Gupta in his book has said that Gandhi insisted the same idea in 1945 also, “Castes prevents the growth of real religion. Until the caste is abolished, there won’t be any growth of religion. Abolition of such castes is of paramount importance, thus Gandhi has clearly expressed his views.

In order to abolish untouchability prevailing in Hindu religion, Gandhi Considered that abolition of caste is essential. “Abolishing untouchability cannot be done by mere preaching. Only by doing selfless sacrifice untouchability can be removed. For this fasting is the chief method. We have to remove caste if at all we wish to remove untouchability.”

His opinion that on this culture of work being associated with one’s caste, will also be removed once and for all (Completely). His idea was stated clearly in his Padayatra (Walking tour) notes. “Gandhi supports inter – caste marriage. On the day, when the society becomes casteless, the question of majority of the vocations remaining in the hands of particular castes, won’t rise at all.”
Gandhi believed that “if we want to eradicate untouchability, we should abolish caste”\(^{57}\). Our efforts to eradicate untouchability will remove castes also. “Abolition of untouchability is demolishing all the social inequalities. If untouchability is abolished at the same stroke, caste hierarachy will also go”\(^{58}\). He also further warned in a different note, “We should not forget, it is no easy task to eradicate untouchability. But there is no doubt that God himself will take lead to abolish untouchability or Hindu religion”\(^{59}\). Gandhi believed that in order to create a casteless India and Hindu Society. And he declared that, “The idea of inferiority and superiority has to be demolished. The four divisions are not a vertical section, but a horizontal plane on which all stand on a footing of equality, doing the services respectively assigned to them”\(^{60}\).

In this context Ambedkar said that, Gandhi advocating the caste system and terming it the Varna system of following ancestral calling is causing confusion. The real reason why Mahatma Gandhi is suffering from this confusion is probably to be traced to two sources. The first is the temperament of the Gandhi’s real spirit. And the second is the double role which Gandhi wants to play of Mahatma and a Politician.

Gandhi believed that all the internal quarrels would come to an end, if the Hindu society could be brought to his view of compressing all into one varna 'Shudras or Athi - shudras'. According to Gandhi all quarrels arising out of religion, caste and economic differences will be ended if one considers oneself as the trustee of one's property instead as the owner of the property. Trusteeship is that accepting only that much for oneself as one has earned with his (Physical) labour.
Gandhi found caste to have nothing to do with religion. It is a custom whose origin Gandhi doesn't know. But he found caste to be harmful both to spiritual and national growth." And he declared that, "Soil corrosion eats up good soil. It is bad enough. Caste corrosion is worse, it eats up men and divides men from men."

Gandhi said that caste as it was understood then must go if Hinduism was to survive. He favoured inter-caste marriage and said that this question did not arise when all become casteless. And when this happens the monopoly of occupations would go. According to Gandhi all castes were no better than convenient social groups. And Hindus of all varnas and castes could be aptly described only as shudras.

Even after 60 years of freedom, no one can refuse the fact that still in many places of India the cruelty of untouchability is in vogue. Is it right on the part of Gandhi to suggest the abolition of castes in order to eradicate untouchability? Is his idea, that by means of increasing the number of inter-caste marriages castes will be abolished true?. All the Social thinkers should take into consideration all points of Gandhi related to that of caste abolition.

When Gandhi encouraged and advocated inter-caste marriage he had ‘Casteless’ society as his ultimate aim. And he wanted all to become one caste- ie. ‘Harijan’, among Hindu masses. Gandhi’s ideological shift from ‘no to inter-caste marriage’ to ‘only inter-caste marriage’ owes its origin and base to his ultimate aim of ‘casteless society’. 
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