CHAPTER V
GANDHIJI ON CASTE AND UNTOUCHABILITY

In this Chapter, we shall spell out Gandhiji's view of two major social phenomena, caste and untouchability which have oriented and articulated social actions of Hindus throughout since last two thousand years or more.

Observers and scholars of Hindu social institutions have been impressed by the all-pervading influence of caste in social, religious and ritual activities. Maxweber in his analysis of Hinduism found caste as the stumbling block (it is the greatest prop and support for traditionalism) to the development of the western type of economy. That his analysis was textual rather than contextual has been aptly shown by Milton Singer. The scholars like Ghurye and Srinivas have shown that Caste in India has to be studied as evolving and adapting phenomenon, rather than as a static social force. To Gandhiji, caste was something which one has to live into because Gandhiji did not look upon caste from the sociological standpoint but from the point of view of its impact on the lives of the masses. In order to understand Gandhiji's view of caste, therefore, one must try to explain it not in terms of any theoretical model but in terms of how Gandhiji viewed caste contextually. Our analysis, therefore, will be limited to two different spheres (viz., (1) Gandhiji's
view of Hinduism and (2) Gandhiji's view of Caste in relation to untouchability.

Gandhian approach to Caste:

Gandhiji was very much influenced by the Hindu scriptures. His understanding of caste system is very much related to the interpretation found in the scriptures. Gandhiji's socialization in a highly traditional and religious family had its effects on his thinking and perception on the Hindu social organisation. He had deep faith in Hinduism as sanatana dharma. This also energised his emotional leanings towards the traditional social system. Reading of the scriptures and the epic Mahabharata created in him deeper faith in the traditional ordering of social life through Varnashrama.

Vedas, Dharmasastras and the epic Mahabharata trace the origin of Varna to the functional necessity of maintenance of order in society. An organic conception of unity and dependence of social groups has been visualised. For instance, the Purusha Sukta of Rigveda metaphorically describes the four Varnas (Chaturvarnyam) as forming the mouth, arms, the thighs and the feet of the Paramapurusha (Supreme Person) or Brahma.¹

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1. Brahma nosya mukha masid bahu rajanyah kritah
   Uru tad asya yad vaisyah padbhyam sudro ajayata.
The four varnas seemed to have emerged as a result of sharing certain common characteristics among the members of a varna. These characteristics are delineated as 'gunas'. A conception of varna arising out of individual's qualities (gunas) is to be found in Bhagavadgita.\(^2\) The three gunas - Sattvik, Rajasik and Tamasik i.e., goodness, passion and dullness seem to determine an individual's personality and activities.\(^3\)

A Brahmin is said to have Sattvik qualities, a Kshatriya Rajasik qualities and a Sudra Tamasik qualities. Accordingly, the theory upholds that it is one's aptitudes that determine what functions he can perform in society. The occupational pattern of the four varnas came to be established and strict adherence to one's occupation was considered a sure step for self-realization. The concept of dharma and karma play a significant part in an understanding of the varna order. Adherence to one's duties according to one's varna and ashrama was considered dharmic or morally sanctified. Karma refers to the effect of past actions on the individual's life. 'What you sow so shall you reap' is the substance of karma doctrine. Scientifically analysed it refers to causation of things.

Gandhi accepted the original Indian conception of natural classes (vyanas). But he was critical of the latter conception of castes which he regarded them as an undesirable excrescence of the original ideal. The four varnas as functional groups were natural. Gandhi considered varnashrama as a gift of Hinduism. Varna

\(^2\) Chaturvarnyam maya srustam guna karma vibhagasah.
\(^3\) Hindu Social Organisation, Pandhari Nath Prabhu, p. 322.
mainly referred to the calling of an individual decided by his aptitudes. So far every individual has to perform certain functions depending upon his or her qualities and aptitudes, all functions were considered equal. "I believe that everyman is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of these limitations the law of varna was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations the law of varna admitted no distinctions of high and low; on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours and on the other it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to." 4

Gandhiji considered the law of heredity as the law of varna. According to this, varna refers to men's different callings. The ideal of varna is not superior status but superior service. On the meaning of varna Gandhiji said, "... it simply means the following: on the part of us all the hereditary and traditional callings of our forefathers in so far as that traditional calling is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics, and this only for the purpose of earning one's livelihood. I regard 4. Selections from Gandhi, N.K. Bose, p.233.
this as the law of our being..."5

The power of ideas is evident in social change. In
this the role of charismatic leaders in innovation and
diffusion of ideas is also an established fact. In the
history of social thought such leaders have appeared on
the social horizon and have persevered to re-interpret
the norms and values of a society. Gandhiji too was
a moral innovator so far he could understand the tradi-
tional social system and re-interpret some of its norms
and values as per the needs of Indian society. He
interpreted varnashrama as standing for equality and
brotherhood. Accordingly, he envisaged certain reforms
and expected transformation of Indian society from
within. From this view point, he stands as a reformer to
vouchsafe the downtrodden.

An understanding of traditional Indian social
system will have no meaning without reference to varna-
shrama. Gandhiji recognised the functional significance
of varna ordering. He happened to be a conservative and
a radical at the same time. So far he considered the
four varnas as ideal functional divisions he was
influenced by the traditional interpretation of chatur-
varnya provided in the Hindu texts. But his conception
of varna was radical enough to plead for equality among
the four divisions. He believed that exclusiveness and
social distance which have cropped up on account of

5. Young India, October 20, 1927.
ceremonial purity need not come in the way of provision of equal opportunities. Callings could be natural and they need not strengthen inequalities. The ideas of superordination and subordination that have petrified the Indian social organisation will have to be overcome by recognising the dignity of human personality. By championing the cause of bread labour Gandhi Ji conceived that equality could be maintained inspite of natural differences among individuals and their groupings. From this perspective he considered untouchability as outside the pale of varnasrama. "My varnasrama enables me to dine with anybody who will give me clean food, be he Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi, whatever he is. My varnasrama accommodates panchama families with whom I dine with the greatest pleasure, to dine with whom is a privilege. My varnasrama refuses to bow the head before the greatest potentate on earth, but my varnasrama compels me to bow down my head in all humility before knowledge, before purity, before every person, where I see God face to face...."

Gandhiji tried to distinguish varnasrama and caste system. He considered caste (as referring to innumerable divisions and sub-divisions that have cropped up) as a drag upon Hindu progress. "...There is nothing in common between varnasrama and caste. Caste, if you will, is undoubtedly a drag upon Hindu progress, and untouchability is as already I have called it or described it an

6. Young India, September 22, 1927.
excrecence upon varna... In this conception of varna, there is absolutely no idea of superiority and inferiority.... that "... for me, it (caste system) is not the same as varnasrama. Whilst the caste system is an answer to the social need, varnasrama is based upon the Hindu scriptures. While there are innumerable castes (some dying out and new ones coming into being), the varnas are, and have always been, four. I am a firm believer in varnasrama. I have not hesitated before now to consider it as a gift of Hinduism to mankind. Acceptance of that dharma is, so far as I have been able to see it, a condition of spiritual growth.... The four varnas 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...."

Gandhiji gave utmost importance to the maintenance of order or equilibrium in society. This can be had only when there was some sort of functional division of labour among groups. From such a perspective, he considered varnasrama as ideal. He knew that the caste system as existed reflected grave limitations. Yet he wanted to overcome these limitations and not end the system. He was confident that untouchability could be eradicated without demolishing caste ordering. He considered that so long as untouchability was attached to occupation but not to birth it became hygienic but

if it was attached to birth all problems of superiority and inferiority emerged.\(^9\)

Perhaps the fear of confusion and anarchy in social life if caste ordering was destroyed might have made Gandhiji champion the cause of caste system despite its evil effects. He knew that the system had great bearing on all the Indians. What sociologists call "Vertical solidarity"\(^10\) which integrated the whole village into one group on the basis of Jajmani system gave a village a community ethos and Gandhiji was much impressed by this village community feeling.

"I do not believe the caste system, even as distinguished from Varnashrama, to be an 'odious and vicious dogma.' It has its limitations and defects, but there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability; (he exhorts the type of untouchability based on sanitation and hygiene) and if it is a bye-product of the caste system, it is only in the same sense that an ugly growth is of a body, or weeds of a crop.........

\(^9\) Young India, Aug.13,1925.

\(^{10}\) "Vertical solidarity" refers to solidarity arising out of common customs and beliefs followed by different castes including Harijans in an area. The concept is developed by Prof. M.N.Srinivas. Social Change in Modern India, p.9.
Untouchability is the product, therefore, not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is thus an attack upon this 'high and Low'ness. The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true varnasrama, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other, each as necessary for the whole body of Hinduism as any other.¹¹

Gandhiji found the rationale of varnasrama in the concept of dharma that envisaged strict adherence to one's duties depending on one's varna. In the economic field it will not lead to severe competition and at best it encourages spiritual perfection. "Varnasrama, as I interpret it, satisfies the religious, social and economic needs of a community. It satisfies the religious needs, because a whole community accepting the law is free to devote ample time to spiritual perfection. Observance of the law obviates social

¹¹. Harijan, Feb.11, 1933.
evils and entirely prevents the killing economic competition. And if it is regarded as a law laying down, not the rights or the privileges of the community governed by it, but their duties, it ensures the fairest possible distribution of wealth, though it may not be an ideal i.e., strictly equal, distribution.... "12

Gandhiji maintained that Hinduism does not believe in caste in its present form. He considered caste as an "institution of the devil"13 in so far it is based on untouchability, it has to be got rid off at any cost. But paradoxically Gandhiji believed that caste and untouchability were not parallel developments. So far the varna ordering was more natural, it had flexibility. But the caste system as came into operation later on encouraged rigidity based on strict adherence to norms of purity and pollution. So long such norms persist, untouchability may not disappear. Gandhiji's effort "to detach varna from caste, and caste from untouchability is untenable. It is the all-India spread of the varna organisation which has traditionally served as the frame work for the hierarchical ordering of castes in the

various regions of the country. *Varma* has thus been intimately connected with caste as an organising principle and as scriptural sanction. The attempt to separate them therefore lacks both historical and sociological validity. To treat untouchability as merely an 'ugly growth' on the caste system is even more difficult to accept."

So long as caste rigidities persist, untouchability cannot be easily eliminated. Even after 25 years of independence, the country has not been able to overcome the evil of untouchability. We come across cases of maltreatment and exploitation of Harijans in different forms. Legislative enactment to prohibit the practice of untouchability has not fully eradicated the evil practice. In this we have nothing to blame Gandhiji. Instead, the nation has to be grateful to him for he has brought to limelight the sufferings of a section of the Indian community for no fault of theirs. Gandhiji's contribution in this regard, has to be objectively analysed and constructive efforts will have to be made to completely wipe out the evil practice.

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Caste as seen by sociologists:

Stratification has been found to exist in some form or the other in all societies. Stratification may be either class-oriented or caste-oriented. Indian society has been noted for its caste system. The status of an individual in a caste-oriented society is determined by his birth in a group. Caste may be considered as a 'status group' in which individual behaviour is largely regulated in terms of the expected and accepted norms of the caste in which the individual is born. B Ranking and allocation of status-roles as per the locus of a caste influence the structural relations of different groups as well as the interactional relations of individuals belonging to different groups. "A status group is a collection of individuals who share a distinctive style of life and certain consciousness of community... Each status group pursues a particular style of life by which it can be differentiated from the others. In general the style of life of a higher order segment is more homogeneous and distinctive than that of a lower order one." 15

15. Pattern of Status Groups, Andre Beteille, Seminar, 70.
Caste as a status group reflects structural distance in the form of restrictions on interdining, inter-marriage, and social interchange in general. A caste group is a closed one and the status of an individual in the group is ascriptive. Conformity to accepted norms of the group is kept up by ritual and legal sanctions.

There are differing viewpoints as regards the origin of caste system. It is beyond the purview of the present work to go in detail about different theories propounded by sociologists and anthropologists from time to time. The modern castes may not reflect all the features of four varnas and in the place of four broad groupings such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra there are innumerable castes and sub-castes found to exist. However, the varna system is supposed to be the frame of reference of the caste system as it defines the status hierarchy and social distance between groups.

The characteristic features of Indian caste system as enumerated by G.S. Ghurye are as follows:

1. Segmental division of society.

2. Hierarchy

16. Caste, Class and Occupation: G.S. Ghurye
3. Restrictions on feeding and social intercourse.
4. Civil and religious disparities and privileges of the different sections.
5. Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and
6. Restrictions on marriage.

The characteristics mentioned above indicate that caste system leads to exclusiveness on the basis of ceremonial or ritual purity. It is believed that the Indo-Aryans who migrated to India from Central Asia were mainly responsible for developing a social organisation through which they wanted to maintain their physical purity and cultural integrity when they came into contact with the aborigines. The aborigines were called as Dasas or Dasyus and the term 'Sudra' is identical with Dasa or Dasyu. ".... The various factors that characterise caste-society were the result in the first instance, of the attempt on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilizations to exclude the aborigines and the sudras from religious and social communion with themselves. That the sudra class was largely formed by those aborigines who had accepted the overlordship of the Indo-Aryans and had entered into their service is more than probable...." \(^{17}\)

\(^{17}\) G.S. Ghurye, ibid. p. 169.
In course of time "the attitude of respect for details that was fostered in connection with ritual became the prevailing attitude in social behaviour. Adherence to detail of social and customary etiquette became the distinguishing mark of membership of a group. Distinction in any detail tended to be translated into separateness of membership and hence of a group."\(^{18}\)

In an analysis and understanding of modern caste system the two concepts of purity and pollution are considered as of great importance. Certain castes are recognized as pure and others as polluting. Certain food stuffs are considered to be pure and certain others polluting. On account of purity-pollution dimension, interdining is restricted either to one's own caste or permitted with a particular caste-group.

Prof. M.N. Srinivas maintains that through varna model we will not be able to analyse the modern caste system. "... Varna frame is too rigid to fit the facts of inter-caste relations, and it may be assumed that it was always so rigid. According to varna, caste appears as an immutable system where the place of each caste is fixed for all time..... But caste system has

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p.176
always permitted a certain amount of mobility..."  
Further he states that "concentration on varna also meant stressing the attributional or ritual factors in mutual caste ranking at the expense of economic and political factors. There is evidence to show that the ritual position of caste has changed following on the acquisition of economic or political power, whereas, thanks to varna, it is tacitly assumed that ritual factors are primary and others secondary."  

Further reiterating on the difference between varna and caste, he points out: "The varna scheme refers at best only to the broad categories of the society and not to its real and effective units. And even as referring only to the broad categories of the society it has serious shortcomings. It has already been seen that the untouchables are outside the scheme, but as a matter of actual fact they are an integral part of the society. The fact that they are denied privileges which the higher castes enjoy does not mean that they are not an integral part of the society."

Prof. Srinivas has made use of the concept of 'Sanskritization' to delineate the changes that have occurred within the framework of caste. "It is a

19. From Introduction to "Caste in Modern India and Other Essays".
process of cultural change that refers to a 'low' Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changing its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born caste'...

The process of sanskritization that has occurred for a long time has made the purity-pollution complex all-pervasive.

Change within the system than of the system

It has already been noted that Gandhiji gave cognizance to varna framework but not caste system that has given rise to untouchability. He believed that once untouchability is removed, caste system will be purified.

The fact that the caste beliefs and practices are not obstacles to modernization has been very well brought out by sociologists through their empirical studies. Prof. M.N. Srinivas and Milton Singer succintly point out to the flexible or dynamic aspects of caste. Caste is in no way anti-modern or anti-change. Prof. Srinivas has considered that it is impossible to detach Hinduism or Hindu religion from the caste system. From this perspective 'modernization of religious beliefs' (an expression used by Milton Singer) will necessarily make caste more and more dynamic and adaptive. This process has been going on since the

22. Social Change in Modern India, p.6.

23. 'The Modernization of religious beliefs' in "Modernization; the Dynamics of Growth", Voice of America Forum Lectures.

24. Caste in Modern India and Other Essays - p.150
nineteenth century. A process of re-interpretation of traditional values in the context of modern influences has made the Indian society more and more flexible. The process of secularisation has been going on with the result that the hold of the ritual is under decline though its practice has not disappeared. This process of adaptation is described by Milton Singer as 'an active, dynamic continuity that consists of people reacting to new conditions and trying to adapt to them. For example, most of these industrialists (in a study of leading industrialists in Madras) have tried to re-interpret such basic Hindu doctrines as the belief in rebirth, the belief in Dharma or moral duty, the belief in personal fate or karma, in such a way, that it applies to their industrial careers. To cite one or two examples, one of them said that when he is going to be reborn he would prefer to be an industrialist again, except that instead of taking a B.S. in Geology he would prefer to have a B.A. in Economics. Prof. Srinivas likewise sees in Indian religion (it is rather difficult to bifurcate religion and caste) a source of the dynamics of social change through his concept 'sanskritization'. Sanskritization is a process by which the so called low-castes take over from those of the upper class, the beliefs, ritual, styles of life and certain other cultural items. The higher castes on the other hand take to modern ways. Srinivas considers Sanskritization and westernization as linked processes, one leading to the other.

25. Ibid,
Gandhiji maintained that caste had nothing to do with religion. So far he distinguished between varna ordering and caste ordering this may appear logical; as he considered chaturvarnya as natural classes and modern caste system as unwanted outgrowth. His belief that caste system will be purified with the elimination of untouchability, however, supports the adaptive and dynamic forces inherently seen in Hindu religion and the caste institution.

In spite of his preference for a four-fold division of society on varna lines, Gandhiji did not explain how the present society can switch on to varna frame. "He did not give us a complete programme by means of which he proposed to reinstate the four old orders. It is not quite clear whether persons would be assigned to one of the other of these classes on the ground of their birth in a particular caste or on the strength of the occupation they now follow. Yet he laid great stress on birth and heredity and subscribed to the view "once born a Brahmin is always a brahmin", he would no doubt rather rearrange the other castes into their proper groups on the basis of birth." Such an effort may lead to great strife that too when individuals in different lower categories have become conscious of their disabilities. They will try to prevent the continuance of such disabilities with all their might. This has been proved

by the anti-Brahmin movements that appeared in South in the early decades of this century. Thus "the criterion of birth in a caste for the purposes of the proposed fourfold classification is found to be quite unsatisfactory. If the actual occupation of an individual is to be the test of his status, how are the modern occupations to be accommodated in this old scheme of fourfold humanity? Even if we successfully adjust the claims of all persons and classify them properly, it is an open question if marriage between the classes is to be permitted or prohibited, or if any social restrictions in the matter of food, etc., are still to continue. Altogether it appears to me that a return to the fourfold division of society is impracticable and even if accomplished would serve no more useful purpose than that of reminding us of our past heritage." 27

Gandhiji's attitude towards caste was of a social reformer rather than that of a radical thinker. He wanted to bring about changes from within the society and not of the society. Thus his championing varnashrama did not amount to an acceptance of the status quo. At least in this sphere (in reform) he tried his best through his speeches and writings to publicise the social abuses and in the process of overcoming them, he was greatly responsible for purifying the Indian social system. He might not have

27. Ibid, pp.306-07
succeeded in this. But "it is probably more than failure of Hinduism than of Gandhiji."  

Gandhiji considered untouchability a great sin so far a large number of Indians were given a declasse status with worst disabilities. They were considered unfit for social intercourse along with other castes. As a result they were outcasted and were outside the purview of common assembly, worship and all other civic amenities. The caste Hindus found justification for the segregation of untouchables for their unclean habits etc. They sought religious sanction for what in course of time became a customary practice. The social reformers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did their best to protest against the evil practice. But it is with the advent of Gandhiji on the Indian scene that successful efforts began to be made to bring about mass awakening about the evil practice in the country. He urged equality for Harijans (Gandhiji called untouchables as Harijans or people of God) and wanted to see that they are totally integrated with the rest of the community. In the various programmes chalked out by the Indian National Congress, elimination of untouchability was given top priority. Gandhiji's epic fast on September 30, 1932 against separate electorates for Harijans meted out by the British created a stir among all the sections of Indian community against the evil custom of untouchability.

28. Dr. Madan, op. cit.
The work of Harijan welfare was taken up with a crusading spirit. Gandhiji knew that deep-rooted prejudices based on orthodoxy and conservatism were at the root of untouchability. He believed that a change of attitude could be brought about through contacts among different sections of Indian population. Accordingly, he undertook an all-India Harijan tour from November 7, 1933 to July, 1934.

Harijan Sevak Sangh, with the main task of Harijan welfare, came into being in 1932 under Gandhiji's influence. Later efforts made by Indian Government through legislation and efforts by voluntary organisations vindicate Gandhiji's influence.

Despite changes that go against untouchability, the evil custom has not yet completely disappeared. Urbanization and effect of improved communications have made the practice of little significance in the city life. The evil practice is persisting in the rural areas. This is firstly due to the unreasonable attitude of a few orthodox people especially in villages and secondly due to the attitude of Harijans themselves. Even today there are Harijans who feel that it is their lot to be in such a state. Like other common men, India Harijans too firmly believe in the theory of karma that justifies their existence as untouchables because of their own past deeds in previous lives. Due to ignorance and apathy they have not been able to come out of the age-old restrictions and inhibitions. For any ordinary observer it is a common
thing to find Harijans refusing to draw water from the common community well, nor enter the village temple in spite of all safeguards provided by the State.⁹²⁹

After independence, practice or abetting of untouchability has been made a punishable offence under law. Untouchability (Offences) Act of 1955 was passed by the Centre to eradicate the evil. Thus today there can be no legal discrimination against Harijans. But as matters stand, untouchability has not been completely wiped out from the society. This only shows that mere legislation unaccompanied by public opinion will not create a favourable climate for elimination of any social evil. Gandhiji recognized this and hence he made significant efforts to educate the Indians on the evil custom. Continuous efforts will have to be made at home, in the school and on the playground to overcome the custom at least to wipe it out from the minds of the future generation. "The problem of the removal of untouchability belongs more to the sphere of social reform than one to be treated as a matter of administrative and legal measures. It is a problem of social distance, group prejudice and certain social attitudes and stereotypes."³⁰

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²⁹ The writer makes such bold statements on the basis of his observations in his village. He has not found much change in the days-to-day intercourse between Harijans and other caste people. They take water from the well separately set apart for them. As in the past, they have not made use of the temple visited by other castes in the village. Of course, other changes such as Harijans becoming members of Grampanchayat, etc., have occurred.

³⁰ Factor in Social Tensions: R.N. Saksena; Seminar: 70
Influence of Gandhiji is to be perceived in the light of various efforts made by the government and voluntary agencies to wipe out untouchability. Gandhiji's experience in South Africa in fighting the segregation policy of the government stood him in good stead to launch his campaign against untouchability in this country with all vigour. He held the view that Harijans were part and parcel of Hindu society and any effort to alienate them was against Hindu religion. He considered all men as equal and as long as untouchability prevailed India cannot rise its head. His conception of functional division of society based on hereditary occupations and his advocacy of equality among all groups seems to be contradictory. However, if we see his conception of varnashrama as laying down that men are not born with equal potentialities but it behoves the society to provide equal opportunities for all without discrimination on the basis of birth in a group is logically tenable. This is what the preamble to the Indian Constitution embodies the resolve of the people of India to secure for all citizens:

Justice, social, economic and political.

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship.

Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all -

Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.
Article 17 of the Constitution when fully implemented, will fulfil Gandhiji's goal of abolishing untouchability in toto. The article says: Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

It is a matter of history that the social reform movements started in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created great uproar against social evils in the Indian society. All reformers had one idea of purifying the Indian social system by way of eliminating the evils arising out of caste patriotism, religious fanaticism etc. Among the reformers some wanted to reject everything of the past as a measure to purify the Indian social system. Some were inspired by the past and were bent on protecting the cultural heritage of the society. But it is to the credit of Gandhiji that a synthesis of the traditional values and modern values came to be achieved. Gandhiji was also stimulated by religious inspiration like his forerunners in the field of social reform. But the earlier reform movements were mostly localised and they did not inspire the masses throughout India. It is a creditable achievement of Gandhiji that he could hoist a mass movement inspiring both the intellectuals and the masses. "He must be considered as the product of all that went before him. Several social and political reformers and thinkers had appeared
on the Indian scene during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but none of them had succeeded in arousing the emotions of the masses as Gandhiji did." M.S. Gore referring to the impact of Gandhiji on India and the people points out: "the positive aspects of this influence can also be measured in terms of great strides that the people of India made on these questions that had been agitating the minds of the social and religious reformers. The secret of this influence lay in its appeal to the heart rather than to the mind. This is not to deny the clarity with which Gandhiji argued every position he took but only to reaffirm that his leadership in the social as well as the political field was essentially of a charismatic character. Its strength lay in the emotions it stirred rather than in the analysis with which it was supported."

Thus in a study of social change in India, it is pertinent to consider that how far Gandhian ideas have found place either in the State policies and programmes or how far Indians have tried to focus their attention towards them. In certain spheres of national life, Gandhiji's influence has been marginal and in certain others he has left deep marks. In the case of elimination of untouchability, his ideas have prevailed over the government and the people. "The impact of Gandhi's influence is felt in the various temple Entry Acts that were enacted in the country from 1936 onwards, ultimately

leading to the Untouchability Offences Act of 1955 by the Parliament of the young Republic of India. The various constitutional safeguards provided by the Constitution as well as the special facilities provided by the government to scheduled castes and other neglected and weaker sections definitely indicate that Gandhi's views have prevailed. "... The practice of Gandhiism is greatest in relation to untouchability. In no area was the observance of Gandhi's ideas found gratifying but significantly it is at the point of brotherly solicitude that men appear most concerned to follow him."  

Thus, it can be stated that the Gandhian approach to social change was both functional and dysfunctional. To the extent, it did not conflict with the post-Independence planned approach of the Government and dovetailed with that policy, it remained functional, but if it did not coincide with the accepted approach it became dysfunctional. The manifest function of the Gandhian change was the creation of a new society based on simple and self-sufficient economy, but its latent function turned out to be the generation of ambivalence among his followers. The planned change and the Gandhian approach to change have thus given rise to conflict and contradictions and a double standard of morality.

33. A.M. Muzumdar, op.cit. p.72