CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

The process of social and political development of Scheduled Castes has attracted serious attention from all the leading reformers of Indian social and political set up. The approaches developed by two prominent activists of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, deserve special consideration. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar were very much concerned about the impact that continued deprivation of the scheduled castes could have on the socio-political fabric of India. They realized that the strongly emerging aspiration and forces of national liberation could achieve the target of political emancipation from colonial imposition only if the 'outcast' groups were uplifted and integrated to the national mainstream. This demanded urgent redress of the deplorable plight of the socially excluded segments on the basis of well-defined methods of promotion.
and protection of their interests. In course of their analysis and study of the downtrodden populace both Gandhi and Ambedkar developed their unique and specific paradigms. These relate to the socio-political structures that prevailed, their inadequacy and degenerative content therein. In all their reformatory prescription both Gandhi and Ambedkar projected a future model that should be worked out to promote social cohesiveness and to consolidate the emancipatory struggle against domination and exploitation by the divisive imperial state system in the country. The approach of both these leaders was objective in nature and normative in spirit and content. Mainly the question addressed was whether social alienation shall be sufficient justification for demanding political segregation and consequent separation into demarcated exclusive groups? This proposition, and explanation for it, had a great significance in the act of mobilization against alien impositions in society, for the Indian society and political milieu were at critical crossroads when solutions were suggested for the removal of centuries old sore or bane of untouchability and practice of social ostracism.
The method of ordering of Chapters followed is very elaborate in the thesis. A familiarization of the background is attempted by examining the sources of influence on the models of development suggested by Gandhi and Ambedkar. Chapter Two deals with the early life and influence on Mahatma Gandhi. A brief survey is done to show the intellectual influences on Gandhi. Variety of factors is responsible for shaping and determining the approach of Gandhi. Hailing from a commercial family background he imbibed certain pious humane traits from his mother, a religious woman. His father, who was advisor to provincial rulers, too left certain impact on young Gandhi. During early phases of life he encountered religio-spiritual instructions at home along with formal studies in school. Later during the phase of higher education he experienced a widening of his intellectual horizon. And he came into close contact with the theoretical base and working details of capitalism, liberal forms of Government and Western civilization. Works of Thoureau, Blavatsky, Ruskin and host of other thinkers enabled him to acquaint himself with different streams of thought. Experiences in England and South Africa made him conscious about the non-utility of parliamentary form
of governance and the reactionary content of racial discriminatory practices. Also he developed his weapons of social and political mobilization and action during his period of stay in South Africa.

A detailed scrutiny of the perception of Gandhi on social organization and its ideological essence is undertaken in Chapter Three. Gandhi floats two profound ingredients of societal structure as truth and non-violence. The sole purpose of social living was cited as the attainment of fullest moral and spiritual advancement of the human being. This led him to demand a thorough re-ordering of the Indian social order. In his observation glorifying the aspect of truth he says that, “It is the struggle for truth – for self-expression... the truth force – the permanent element in human nature, constantly struggling to find itself, to know its Maker”. Thus, he stressed the need for abolishing all those hindrances in the way of individual attaining communion with truth in social living. Caste and

untouchability, thus, was shown as the predominant impediment in this process. Hence, Gandhi described hierarchical caste divisions and related inhuman practices as irrational and unethical, devoid of any sense and scriptural sanction. So he pleaded for a regeneration of society and norms governing social life through the means of moral purification and by enlightening the soul. Towards the aim of social uplift he had definite programmes to suggest. In his opinion, "it is only ceaseless effort that can raise the downtrodden fellow-beings from degradation, purify Hinduism and raise the whole Hindu society and with it the whole of India"\(^2\). The whole practice of caste division and superior-inferior placing of atomic groups was found to be repugnant by Gandhi. It was held to be a sin and incompatible with true human nature. He reflected on this as, "But it is not a matter of right to regard any man as untouchable because of his birth. That is a gross injustice and heinous sin"\(^3\). Promoting of social cohesion was found to be

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time specific and need of the prevailing situation in India, integrative measures through eradication of social evils were stressed as a pre-requisite for political liberation as well as for material and moral redeeming of the 'castaway' groups in society. Emphasis was on forging consensus and unifying the diversified strata. It involved both purely remedial measures and sincere moral reformation on the part of the dominant sections (upper castes) in the power structure of the community. The social process, to Gandhi, shall aim at harmony and amalgamating of the antagonistic groups, i.e. the touchable and untouchables. And the requirement was to have a whole change of attitudes on the part of the self-arrogated upper castes. Commenting on this dimension of Gandhian approach Dr. Coupland says that, "A life long champion of the outcastes, he had always regarded them as an integral part of Hindu community and had pinned his hopes for their advancement not on division and antagonism between them and caste Hindus but on awakening in the latter a sense of social justice and duty".4

4 Coupland, R., "The Indian Problem", 1833-1935, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1943, p-128.
Political proposition in Gandhi was very profound and they were never tied down to any particular 'ism'. He made a happy blending of politics and religion, and outlined the details of a state with sound bases in morality. The domineering stature of the state system was disallowed and politics was to be free of power games and manipulations. What matters in the management of politics was the primacy of 'means' and subordination of 'ends' to 'means'. Spontaneous political expression devoid of calumny and hatred born out of partisan, sectarian concerns were presented as the model by Gandhi. It was no state-centric politics, nor was competitive in nature. The anarchist in Gandhi was very strong; he even doubted the very efficaciousness of democracy, which was held to be byword for freedom and liberty. He rather preferred a morally enlightened order than a participatory pattern controlled by law or legal norms; for mere participatory democracy had inherent dangers. To him, "The line of demarcation between democracy and mobocracy is often thin but rigid and stronger than steel unbreakable. The one leads to life and progress, the
other is death pure and simple.\(^5\) Legitimacy of the political system hence, flows from the voluntary obligation rendered by the citizen. It becomes legitimacy proper for the state and obligation untainted by compulsion when morally enlightened citizen provide willing compliance without any extraneous influences and in Gandhi's opinion, "a citizen obeys laws voluntarily and never under compulsion or fear of punishment prescribed for their breach.\(^6\) Facilitating utmost freedom and spiritual realization shall inform all structures of the state system and all of its actions shall be directed towards this end. A suppressive state system, whatever be the ideological justification and goals projected to be achieved, is inimical to human progress and is bound to weaken the whole of collective life. In his view, "the loyalty of the slave is no loyalty. He only serves. If a slave can be loyal, that must be due to coercion.\(^7\) Free participatory nature of democracy is stressed

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here, it shall not be under manipulated schemes of articulation and expression. Equally concerned was Gandhi about the canons of nonviolence in politics and the processes therein. This was brought forward as a progressive and dynamic view by making it the foundation on which all political activity shall base. He held that this will lead to unhindered self-government and broaden the base of politics transforming restrained monistic sovereign practice into vibrant popular sovereign expression. He expressed that, "Swaraj by non-violence must be a progressively peaceful revolution such that the transference from a close corporation to the people's representatives will be natural as the dropping of a fully ripe fruit from a well-nurtured tree". Decentralization and autonomy of the grassroots level where self-governance would be the institutional expression was to be ordained for this. This is how he puts it; "The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is

inconsistent with non-violent structure of society.

Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to Indian politics has been immense. His philosophy depends on his premise about absolute truth and satyagraha, and fundamental conception about man, society and the state. Unlike the Western Political philosophers, Gandhi was reluctant to worry himself to propound a systematic theory of the state.

A seeker after truth, Gandhi had implicit faith in a good deed producing a good result. He lived and acted in the present dealing with problems as they arose, concentrated not on the fruits thereof. This is the central teaching of Gītā. Gandhi believed in the universality of God, hence he accepted the theory of equality of all.

The social and political slogans of emancipation of the excluded segments are transmitted through the paradigm of Ambedkar. Early life and experience of Ambedkar are shown in

Chapter Five to explain how these moulded the role of an emancipator. The hardships he had to undergo as an outcaste Mahar and denial of equal status and opportunity with fellow students made him aware of the locational disadvantages of the untouchables. Spiritual and devotional environment at home and exposure to progressive humane ideas while studying abroad provided sufficient insight to the social and political problems confronted by Indian society of his times. He also surveyed the backlog of legacies, social and cultural, in developing his future plans and approaches to these.

At the societal level he ardently pleaded for an order enthused with social humanism. The caste practice with its negative injunctions attracted frontal attacks from Ambedkar. Chapter Six deals with these in elaborate. Social mobility depended on the levels of integration attained by society. To him, "there is no integrating force among the Hindus to counteract the disintegration caused by Caste". The retrograde forces operating in the form of caste hierarchy was

traced to be the main cause of social stagnation. Social cohesion never prevailed in the Hindu order; this became aggravated as a result of intervention by the colonial order. He, hence, diagnosed the absence of egalitarian spirit responsible for social morbidity. This weakened the social fabric. Freedom of the people, who lived in bondage was held to be the foremost requirement, once this was achieved freedom of the country could easily be achieved. The practice of graded inequality shall be replaced by equality and fraternity for attaining this goal. In his opinion, "...Hinduism is inimical to equality, antagonistic to liberty and opposed to fraternity". The concern for socio-cultural solidarity of the nation and its unity was very evident in his approach. Through religious and social reforms and through education common national identity and cultural unity was sought to be achieved by him. In opting out for Buddhism he aimed at maintaining the cultural ethos in tact but at the same time erase out the evil of social segregation based on caste. He treated even the very act of religious conversion as a short cut method.

The faith of Ambedkar in liberal democratic principles, parliamentary system of Government, adherence to basic freedoms of the people, primacy for liberties in the political order is elaborated in Chapter Seven. He had immense trust in the ability of the state in effecting socio-economic transformation. This was to be realized through a democratic order informed with liberal ideology. He never endorsed totalitarian principles that negated the very personality of the individual. Hence, a constitutional state system with fair commitment to social engineering without sacrificing the fundamental freedoms of the people was his choice. He said that no state should “deprive any person of life, liberty and property without due process of law; nor deny to any person with in its jurisdiction equal protection of law”\textsuperscript{12}.

Extreme individualism and ensuing competition in society was not his preference. This, he held that, would jeopardize stability and harmony at the political domain.

\textsuperscript{12} Ambedkar, B. R., "State and Minorities: What are their rights and How to secure them in the Constitution of Free India". Thacker and Company, Bombay, 1947, p-09.
Individualism of the unrestrained type will only produce deep schism in an already divided political community. A balancing between the needs of the individual and that of common weal was the most desirable proposition at the level of political priorities. In his view "... Individualism would produce anarchy. It is only fraternity, which prevents it and helps to sustain the moral order among men. Of this there can be no doubt." A flourish of democracy with all attendant features was projected as the most suitable model for Indian conditions. Only the operational devices of a democratic system can overcome the rigour of inequality and domineering politics by the monopolistic groups in society. For democracy brings in open participatory channels and transparency in political practice. Vehicles of articulation and representation are political parties. They are the most perfect means for unrestrained flow of popular will. Democracy shall transcend the limited corridors of governmental structures and promote socio-cultural vibrancy. He held that, "Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint

communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen\textsuperscript{14}. Political empowerment of the hitherto excluded segments of society through a well-defined scheme of constitutional arrangement needs to be worked out. In this political democracy and democracy at the social and economic levels shall converge in fine blending.

Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar recommended the removal of untouchability. With a view to purify Hindu religion, Gandhi declared: "Untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat... None can be born as an untouchable. To consider so is to support rank irreligion fit only to be destroyed\textsuperscript{15}.

Gandhi advocated 'Sarvadharma Samabhava' i.e. reverence for all religions. It is that deep ardent hunger in the

\textsuperscript{15} Gandhi, M.K., From Yerwada Mandir, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1954, Ch.IX, p-32.
man's soul, which earnestly and constantly seeks union with the universal soul – God. The human spirit calling to the spirit, which eternally pervades everything, is the essence of what Gandhi called religion. It is for us to act according to the teachings of Gandhi and Ambedkar which alone will pave the way for establishing a spirit of brotherhood with other peoples of the world.

A comparison between the two approaches of Gandhi and Ambedkar is sketched in Chapter Eight. Differential levels of treatment of the problems at hand and differing styles of conceptualization are closely examined. Ultimate purpose remains the same in both the schemes, i.e. the creation of an invigorated socio-political order purged of prevailing reactionary and counter productive structures and value premises through the means of moral, cultural, social, spiritual and political reforms.