CHAPTER - III
THE SOCIAL MATRICES IN GANDHI

The notion of non-violence forms the base of social organization in the Gandhian scheme. A social order based on truth, equality and love is treated as the ideal. The plan of social order in Gandhi was in response to the exploitative stance of the colonial state and the contradictions in Hindu social order. In it there is no place for class antagonism, caste oppression, privilege for few and discrimination for many on any pretext. Gandhi's view on social order is closely linked to his notion of human nature which he regarded dynamic. He observes that "Human nature either goes up or goes down". A social order informed of harmony and around symmetry devoid of sectarianism,

provincialism, casteism and communalism was the vision in Gandhi. This was an innovative contribution by Gandhi when Indian society was at a stage of subjugation and fragmentation due to colonial imposition.

The core of Gandhi's views on society is 'Sarvodaya' i.e. the 'uplift of all'. It denotes everyone performing his Dharma as a service (seva) so that Loka-Samgraha (the welfare of all) especially that of the downtrodden is ensured. Social order of Gandhi's vision is informed by the absence of untouchability. Gandhian Ashrams, in this context were experimental centers of social change, transformation and development through an ascetic approach. Ashrams were established as centers of social engineering where all could live without prejudices of caste divisions. Most of Gandhi's ideas on society are extensions of his moral convictions and ethico-moral approach to the problems of humanity. A total criticism of modern civilization and
the distortions it has brought to human life forms part of it.

The fundamental premises of perfectibility of human nature form the base of his views on social life. In the course of travel from the beast to the divine societal environment is an important milestone. Conditions of social life shall be such that they shall expedite this travel from the beast to the divine. In defining the goal of society Gandhi neither rejects the phenomenal world, nor totally divorces the spiritual categories, he effects a fine balancing between mind and body, between material and spiritual, between individual and society. This underlies his basic notion of society. Gandhi professed that any social transformation shall start by transformation of the individual. He advocated no social change through violence. In this context he observes, "I feel that violence was no remedy for India's ills, and that her civilization required the use
of a different and higher weapon for self-protection\textsuperscript{2}. Thus, violence was seen as a by product of modern Western civilization and, hence repugnant to human progress.

In Gandhi it is a social view that upholds whatever and all that are humane. A social order that aims only at the material side of life is not the one that Gandhi prescribed. He was never ready to accept an acquisitive social order, which can be of use only for satisfying more and more of material desires. He held that if self-interest is made the center of gravity of society it is bound to produce caste, class and group antagonisms. There was a holistic approach in Gandhi, for him the social arrangements were never to be detached, in an

atomic way or manner, from the influences of religion, ethics and spirituality. In this he expresses that "Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aims of vision of God"\textsuperscript{3}.

A societal order devoid of exploitation of any kind was the dream of Gandhi. Gandhi held that the whole concept of social order should be based on service if the spark of divine flame in man is to be realized. Here he found the Hindu view acceptable, which treated the unity of all life without discriminations on the basis of phenomenal consideration. Commenting on this Gandhi says, "now when we talk of brotherhood of man, we stop there, and feel that all other life is there for man to exploit for his own purposes. But Hinduism excludes

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Narayanan, Sriman (Ed.): opp. cit., p-114.
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all exploitations⁴. A hierarchically ordered social arrangement found no acceptance in Gandhi. It was to be a society of equals, free to preserve the individual, and free to realize one's essential nature. Social order shall be non-competitive and non-exploitative, it shall promote harmony, equality and free participation of all, and a casteless society of non-vertical divisions that never promotes class war was his ideal. It was to be based neither on predatory, atomized individualism nor on the rigours of totalitarian regimentation. He stressed on interdependence, co-operation and harmony. Gandhi believed that neither caste nor class has the solidarity and naturalness of a family, they can produce only evil and, hence, cannot be depended as stable methods of social organization. Society is to be based on service and accommodation of

commonweal along with individual personal interest. Self-restraint in material domain forms a key component of Gandhi's ideas on social order. To him, the guiding principle shall be, "Tenatyaktena Bhumjithā" (one who has given up enjoys) is a mantra based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbours.\(^5\)

He held on to a dynamic view of social organism. Gandhi regarded social change as the very order of a living social organism and it is proof of its resilience. Social stagnation was seen or treated as contaminating the whole being of the

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individual, in turn defeating and derailing the purposes of Society. So reform at the social sphere was welcome provided it does not rob the vitality of social process. Gandhi says, "I am an impatient reformer. I am all for thoroughgoing, radical social reordering, but it must be an organic growth, not a violent superimposition". Gandhi valued freedom as the basis of human existence. Hence, the worth of any ideology shall be verified with human situations. No theory of society that is abstract and absolute will satisfy this requirement. Gandhi observes in this context that, "One may live in a cave in certain circumstances, but the common man can be tested only in society". This lead him to disbelieve in the

infallibility of ideas and individual, he firmly held that the center of civilization shall not be a person, but the supra personal notion of 'truth' ('Satya'), so he preferred the 'Sanatana Dharma', a principle of eternal value, to be the basic foundation of social order.

Caste as a reference point in social organization received a detailed treatment in Gandhian approach. Gandhi counted caste as different from Varna, caste is treated as a drag upon Hindu progress and untouchability an excrescence upon Varnashrama. Clearly demarcating between caste and untouchability Gandhi held that caste serves the limited purpose of social and moral restraint. Allowing no superiority or inferiority based on caste Gandhi wanted a purging of the social order and did not endorse any segmentation beyond the four divisions. But he was never for a total coercive abolition of caste division pure and simple. Nor did he allow the blocking of social and economic reform
by caste interpretation. The evil of caste untouchability was perpetrated by the high caste and to Gandhi, they have to do penance, not as creditors and benefactors, but as debtors, to the oppressed in society. Reform of the evils of caste system and consequent untouchability shall be effected with the wholehearted acceptance by all sections of society. And in this no proposition that was opposed to Truth, Ahimsa and humanism was to be tolerated even if they had scriptural sanction. Religion is not to be despised, the fall out of caste practices like untouchability is to be opposed, and for it solution is the eradication of caste distinction. He firmly believed that in a caste-ridden society religion alone couldn't promote social cohesion. He pointed out prevalence of distinction between lower caste and upper caste converts in Christianity and Islam in this regard. He held that caste in its essential sense is not one of arrogant superiority, it is the classification of different systems of self-culture, and it is the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress.
He opines that, "a caste does not connote superiority or inferiority. It simply recognizes different outlooks and corresponding modes of life". Caste, hence, is to be denounced in so far as it produces corrupt and degrading social effects. A purer and functional caste system, only with professional connotation was the one which Gandhi found acceptable, not the one that was practiced at the social level, with untouchability, discrimination, unapproachability and above all justifying economic and moral exploitation. He was ready to accept the positive side of caste system, i.e. imparting of specialization in profession and repudiated untouchability that was inhuman and degrading, he counted the difference between 'caste' and 'untouchability' as not one of degrees but of kind.

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In the context of social relations the two aspects of 'caste' and 'varna' are well differentiated by Gandhi, he held that 'varna' system has nothing to do with caste divisions. 'Varna' has only vocational implication and the scavenger as well the Brahmin (spiritual teacher) is on equal footing. 'Varna' system does not promote hierarchical social order. That means that on a horizontal level 'varnashrama' was acceptable as a form of social organization. It promoted social compactness and cohesion by warding off unnecessary unhealthy competitions in professions and by making people follow their traditional calling without any superior-inferior juxtaposing of different segments. 'Varnashrama' is the result of continuous search for truth, here social exclusion by vertical ordering of society is absent, nor categorization into clean and unclean professions are allowed. In this regard Gandhi observes that, "Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children, and every student of modern medicine is a tanner... but we consider theirs
to be sacred occupations. Varna imposes a duty, it is not a human invention, and it is the immutable law of nature. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its invention, so also the law of 'varna', this contributed to tremendous spiritual advancement of Hindu social order. Gandhi used the concept of 'varna' to prevent abject commodification and commercialization of profession and economic activities. Promotion of professional competence based on positive sides of traditional wisdom was the aim of Gandhi, i.e. promotion of skills and vocational competence suited to the needs of India. Varna will pay dividend, only if it is put in the proper perspective, if it is equated to caste the whole law of nature is violated, the whole social edifice will collapse. This shows that Gandhian scheme had a

strong point for social mobility, for he readily agrees that qualities attendant to 'varna' can be acquired, *i.e.* acquisitive qualities had sufficient space in his perspectives on society. In the social order division of labour is acceptable, not the attendant artificial conflict and exploitation. To Gandhi, 'Varnavyavastha' shall justify differences in kinds of responsibility but not in degrees of responsibilities. Gandhi observes that, "Varna is nothing more than an indication of the duty that has been handed down to each one of us by our forefathers"\textsuperscript{10}. He viewed caste as defining functions-'Varnashram'. The abilities and contributions of the four varnas shall reinforce each other. In social matters orthodoxy was never acceptable to him. He strongly resented the equating of 'varna' with 'caste' and he regarded

'caste' as a degradation of 'varna'. 'Varnavyavastha' is positive in content and its degradation makes it caste based. 'Varnavyavastha' symbolizes the fourfold division of social order and all the divisions are members of one body, so inferior-superior relationship does not arise. To Gandhi, class antagonism and civil strife can be ended only if 'Varnavyavastha' is truly realized and implemented. 'Varnashrama' is sanctioned by the shastras, it has a scientific base, it is a condition for spiritual growth, the fourfold division is not vertical, it is horizontal and all stands on equal footing, so there is nothing repugnant. Also, attached to 'Varnashrama Dharma' there are only duties, not privileges. He regarded untouchability as an aberration of 'Varnadharma'. The varna system is acceptable because it is both ethical and economic, if it fails to measure up to noble ethical standards, it is a corruption of varna concept, so caste is a corruption, if it fails to meet or satisfy the economies of scale it is to be treated as corrupt.
Untouchability and its eradication occupy a prime slot in the scheme of Gandhian social order. In his approach towards the problem of untouchability Gandhi was very firm and resolute on the basic principles. Untouchability was found to be of no spiritual, religious, moral, scriptural or social justification by Gandhi. He believed that once caste discrimination is erased out emotive and religious attachment would prevent the spread of untouchability. This is made clear by him through his declaration that, "Socially they are lepers, economically they are worse, religiously they are denied entrance to places we miscall house of God". For instance, temple entry was not merely a movement for physical entry but was meant for placing the untouchables on equal par with other segments of society, socially and economically. Gandhi was not aiming merely at individual and

group mobility, basing itself on separatism, but on fundamental changes. He was neither a revivalist, nor a system-breaker or innovator. He was a system maintainer attacking only what was wrong in the order. Fully identifying himself with the downtrodden he wrote to Rajbhoj in a letter dated the 20th September 1932, "...if you will not resent my saying it, I would like to say that as I am a "touchable" by birth, I am "untouchable" by choice". Holding untouchability as the stark and true side of social organization Gandhi asked for a change of attitude on the part of the so-called highborn Hindus. Gandhi treated himself as a rebel child of Hinduism and he was for curing Hinduism of its diseases without rupturing its fabric or destroying it in full. Exclusive claims to scriptural interpretation and priesthood were renounced by Gandhi, for he wrote that,

"untouchability is not a sanction of religion, it is a device of Satan. The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth"\textsuperscript{13}.

Gandhi viewed the practice of untouchability as unnatural and he used the word 'Harijan' in a peculiar sense, as men of God and those practiced untouchability were named 'Durjan' men of evil. In this Gandhi had a personal and individual commitment. In \textit{Young India} of 04-5-1921 he wrote, "If I have to be reborn, I should be born an 'untouchable', so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavor to free myself and them from that miserable condition"\textsuperscript{14}. Gandhian social paradigm


\textsuperscript{14} Gandhi, M.K., \textit{Young India}, 04.5.1921.
was a comprehensive one, where he emphasized the purifying of the minds of caste Hindus and also Harijans attaining self-sufficiency in their own rights. In a discussion with Harijans at Ahmedabad in 1933 he exhorted them, “this is a movement for the purification of Hinduism. Think what contribution you can make to it... Depend on yourself, stand on your own legs and work your own salvation”\(^\text{15}\). Gandhi was no armchair ideologue in the realm of social reforms. He opened two fronts of struggle, one against the imperial power and at the same time against contradictions in Hindu society. Removal of untouchability either before or along with the gaining of freedom formed the main plank of his manifesto, for he believed that if untouchability survived into the post-independence period the plight of the untouchables would be worse under swaraj. Untouchability was crueler than mere caste division;

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it involved the treating of one human being by another as below as animal. Gandhi had a deep perception about Hindu scriptures and he found no place for social exclusion in them. The limited knowledge he had even at the age of 12 made him realize that the practice of untouchability was un-Hindu in content and character. He held the view that Hindu society never deserved freedom from alien rule, nor will it come to them unless they purge their noble religion of the taint of untouchability. He equated the suppressive misdoing of the caste Hindus to that of the English misrule in India. So the winding up of the colonial rule in India involves along with it the adopting of a sane and just social order. Gandhi was fully aware of the designs of the colonial state and how it worked to sustain itself by exploiting the contradictions in the Hindu social order. So, to him, economic and political betterment of the downtrodden is bound to follow the moment untouchability is eradicated. Establishment of a free equal society was not to be the content or essence of
abolition of untouchability in his scheme, it is only a
prelude to the creation of a just, moral and spiritually
elevated community fully informed by humanism,
love, truth and Ahimsa.

In Gandhi’s view ‘swaraj’ is linked to the
removal of untouchability. He treated untouchability
as irreligion masquerading as religion, ignorance
appearing in the guise of learning. Gandhian model
was a peaceful one and also a consensual one. So
he exhorted satyagraha against untouchability.
Deploring of untouchability formed the core of his
approach to social order. And he fully identified
himself with their cause, for he observes “though I
am not an untouchable by birth, for the past fifty
years I have been an untouchable by choice”¹⁶. He
held untouchability as inhuman and degrading
because it is enacted in society keeping the

¹⁶ Gandhi, M.K., Quoted in Shirer, William, L., “Gandhi – A
untouchable' outside the pale of society, and hence it is totally illogical and inhuman. Here he says, 'untouchability itself has no reason behind it. It is an inhuman institution. It is tottering and it is sought to be supported by the so-called orthodox party by sheer brute force". So Gandhi demanded a thorough revival and restructuring of the Hindu social order. A whole lot of remedial measures, social, economic, political and spiritual were to be initiated for this. He further observes that, "it would be only out of the ashes of untouchability that Hinduism can revive, and thus be purified and become a vital and vitalizing force in the world".

Destruction of caste system was not the sole aim of Gandhian scheme of societal organization.


Outcaste is a fallout from the caste system, outcaste is not its (i.e. of caste system's) true worth, so outcasteness is to be annihilated and the moment outcasteness or untouchability is removed caste system will be purified of these perversions. So he pleads that, "untouchability as at present practised is the greatest blot on Hinduism. It is (with apologies to sanatanists) against the shastras. It is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, be forever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseable".

He found that untouchability springs from subcastes and once the practice of untouchability is removed caste system is bound to go. The problem of untouchability was not merely a religious question alone in the perspective of Gandhi; it was a question of social, economic and political rehabilitation. The

religious aspect was only collateral one. So he insisted on enough of educating public opinion in favour of it, as well legal provisions for removing the legal difficulty through ample legislation. Gandhi says that "...unless we remove the scourge of untouchability from our hearts Hinduism is doomed. The shastras do not warrant the neglect of a single human being in the way in which, we have neglected over 40 millions, and if we repent our sins I would like to have an army of voluntary workers, drawn from the so-called higher classes, offering to teach and take care of Harijan children".\(^\text{20}\) The pernicious effect of untouchability on the social fabric is well grasped by Gandhi. And how it can have a disintegrative impact is well expressed by him, when he says that, "keenly and deeply as I feel the taint of untouchability and deeply I feel convinced that if this untouchability is not removed with root and

branch from Hinduism, Hinduism is bound to perish.\textsuperscript{21} Gandhian scheme was assimilative and integrative in essence. A social order based on non-violence devoid of injustice and discrimination toward individuals and groups was his prescription. Solutions to social evils like caste oppression, untouchability were to be applied without disturbing the social fabric and also by ensuring social mobility. The task of removal of untouchability was not to be treated as a burden of the downtrodden; this responsibility shall be that of the caste Hindus who have sinned by ill-treating their brethren. Establishing educational facilities for the downtrodden, granting the due share for them in matters of temple entry, jobs and other opportunities were to be the inseparable components of this process. On this he expressed his opinion as "I am willing to stand by you, to share your sufferings with

\textsuperscript{21} Gandhi, M.K., Harijan, 26.01.1934.
you. You must have the right of worship in any temple in which members of other castes are admitted. You must have admission to schools along with children of other castes without any distinction. You must be eligible to the highest office in the land... That is my definition of the removal of untouchability.” For the removal of untouchability, the requirement was a purificatory process, it is predominantly a moral and religious issue; political aspect of it is very feeble and only secondary. It invites a solution not at the superficial political levels, but a permanent one requiring a change of heart. To quote Gandhi, “it is a movement purely and simply of purification of Hinduism. And that purification can only come through the purest instruments.” When Gandhi realized that community was gaining maturity in its fight against

22. Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 22.01.1925.

he ardently propagated the idea of inter-caste marriages. He favoured caste Hindu boys selecting Harijan girls as well caste Hindu girls marrying Harijan boys. To cite Gandhi "if I had my way I would persuade all caste Hindu girls coming under my influence to select Harijan husbands. That is most difficult I know from my experience. Old prejudices are difficult to shed. One cannot afford to laugh at such prejudice either. They have to be overcome with patience". Ending of temple untouchability was treated as an important component of fight against social untouchability. Denigration of the poor and untouchables and destruction of Hinduism and Hindu temples were not the forte of Gandhian principles of social reform, no thorough dismantling of institutions and structures without judging their merits and defects formed a part of this approach. Religious conversions, as a

panacea for untouchability, never were acceptable to Gandhi, untouchability was viewed as a unique phenomenon transcending religious barriers, and, hence, segregating Harijans from the mainstream was no solution to undo their plight. Segregation of any kind was not acceptable to Gandhi, he found that segregation on social, political, economic and religious counts would only make the Harijans branded and alienated from the social order. Special educational facilities exclusively for Harijans was stressed by Gandhi, so that they can have the same standard of education as enjoyed by the well-off segments with special care for the Harijan boys and girls, also the poor and needy can be imparted practical training in crafts so as to help them to obtain honest livelihood after finishing the course. Also, in these special institutions half of the students shall be Harijans enjoying free board and lodge and the other half shall be 'savarnas' paying fees. Gandhi was for extending satyagraha, for social uplift to the private domain if untouchability is to be
fully removed. This shows the social visionary in Gandhi, who had a full-developed scheme of his own with in-built balance and harmony of its own. Gandhi entrusted the Harijan Sevak Sangh with this kind of task.

Gandhi was against the untouchables or ‘Panchamas’ converting their religious identity. Conversion, to Gandhi, can be justified only if untouchability formed an integral part of Hinduism; neither the scriptures nor the vast body of Dharmasastra literature endorsed it. Gandhi was well conscious of the compulsive machinations of the colonial state. As a solution for the ending of untouchability Gandhi vehemently turned down the use of threat or wholesale conversions. In his opinion, “Those who use the threat (of conversion) do not. in my opinion know the meaning of religion. Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change religion as he changes his garments. He takes it with him beyond the grave. Nor does a man
profess his religion to oblige others... It is a matter of the heart. An "untouchable" who loves his Hinduism in the face of persecution at the hands of those Hindus who arrogate to themselves a superior status a better Hindu than the self styled superior Hindu, who by the very act of claiming superiority denies his Hinduism. Therefore, those threaten to renounce Hinduism are in my opinion betraying their faith"25. Gandhi held that persecution has always been a part of religious order. And if Harjans withstand this persecution they shall be triumphant in the end, reformers in Hinduism will fight for their cause and bury the corpse of untouchability. In the 'Harijan' of 23-03-1935 he observed that, "Religion is essentially a personal matter, it is one between oneself and one's God. It should never be made matter of bargain"26. He held so because of belief

25 Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 27.10.1920.
26 Gandhi, M.K., Harijan, 23.3.1935.
that a mere change of religious faith under political expediency cannot deliver the goods to downtrodden segments. A legal transfer of Harijans from the Hindu fold to some other was not his suggestion. If they are cut up into mutually competing and conflicting religious orders Harijans will not be able to attain any progress, and he feared that attempts for mass conversions of Harijans from Hindu fold would spell disaster for society. He observes in this context as, "For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important through it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue". Thus he believed that true liberation and emancipation, freedom and equality of social status for the suppressed lot would come when the

untouchables more closely identify with the larger Hindu whole, and no change of label can avail anything. Incorporation of attitudinal changes for promoting social cohesion was stressed by Gandhi, in this, he found, religion only of limited role, the cultural ethos, civilizational acquisitions and moral values have to all make decisive contributions and assistance.

Social reforms and development were the components of the Gandhian scheme. Along with the spiritualized moral uplift the material requirements of the vast undone lot was of equal concern to Gandhi. Untouchables, are to initiate their own uplift through moral assertion and hardwork and by displaying self respect and self-reliance, state need play only a supplementary role in this respect, the Harijan Sevak Sangh was founded in 1932 with this aim in mind. It was to be a self-sustaining network of branches at village, taluk and district levels with its own wherewithal, its own funds. The really needy at the
lowest level were to be adopted by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, and the uplift programme shall not be a sole Harijan programme, the whole savarna segments shall be drafted into the programme. Thus, it can be seen that at the developmental domains the role of non-governmental organizations were of prime importance in the Gandhian model. Gandhi was fully reform oriented. Every reform was not only a limited political reform alone, it touched the root of the problem, reform was not to be limited at the levels of services alone, it was a holistic approach in him. It was for erasing out the line of demarcation into Harijans and non-Harijans or for treating all as Harijans (i.e., the Son of God). Social reforms and the developmental programmes were not to be tainted by the political colour in his perception. The stress, therefore, in Gandhi is not on populism and propaganda but on grass root level silent reforms. He wanted the Harijan Sevak Sangh to spearhead measures for facilitating representation to the Harijans, along with high caste Hindus in Grama
Panchayats, Municipalities and Legislatures, it is a clear political approach to secure political share for the neglected sector, instead of carrying them to the camps of political parties and factions. He was emphatic that the autonomy and separate identity of Harijan Sevak Sangh shall be ensured, he never allowed it to become a part of the Indian National Congress. He wanted the control of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to be fully in the hands of the Harijans. It indicated that the political actions too were not peripheral; they were of fundamental kind in Gandhian plan. He propounded that in the process of developmental activities by the Harijan Sevak Sangh real participatory honorary work shall be rendered by caste Hindus as a penance.

The constructive programme of Gandhi involved the social practice of caste, the disability arising out of it, and absorbing all of outcastes into one integrated social whole. The all approach in Gandhi was based on indigenous values. This observation
of Gandhi makes it very clear; "Swadeshi is that spirit in us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion in order to satisfy the requirements of definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects." Gandhi suggests regeneration and reconstruction through the means of 'Swadeshi' that can provide both spiritual and material emancipation. For this whole villages are to be penetrated by the constructive programmes, thus, ensuring proper guidance and productive employment for the village folk who are predominantly the weaker sections. Also, instead of change of religion, redress solely from government, resorting to violence the depressed.

shall depend on self-reliance, self-purification and reform of Hindu mind and social order to undo untouchability.

Gandhi had a positive plan to re-organize the social order afflicted by caste divisions. Caste discrimination can be conclusively be ended by turning all men into *sudras*, the lowest, perform the domestic manual and mechanical physical labour. Gradually the other three 'varnas' will emerge from it, Brahmins the spiritual and educational guardians, *Kshatriyas* the protectors, both will be very few and the largest bulk will be *vaishyas* who include traders, artisans, and peasants. *Sudras* will be very few and no service will be required from them. So strong was his commitment toward the eradication of untouchability, for he observes, "what I want, what I am living for, and what I should delight in dying for, is the eradication of untouchability root and branch. It is in order to achieve this, the dream of
my life for the past fifty years". Though the urban-rural divide or conflict was highlighted by Gandhi he never suggested a solution through means of the agristic peasantry or rural areas encircling the urban rich and capturing state power, but by uplifting the villages, through autonomous village republics and by rejecting the machine civilization, panchayat will be its institutional form and satyagraha its political weapon. He observes that, "...Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure". This shows that social

29 Gandhi, M.K., Quoted in Mukherjee, Prabhati, 'Beyond the Four Varnas': 'The Untouchables in India', (Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Simla), Motilal, Banarsidass, Delhi, 1988, p-11.

transformation through fullest participation by the masses was the gist, but transformation to come was to be wholesale, not piecemeal and unwilling. In this forced violence or instrumentalities of the state were not to be employed. For Gandhi states that "...where Panchayath Raj is established public opinion will do what violence can never do ... In a Panchayath Raj only the Panchayath will be obeyed and a Panchayath can work only through the law of its making."\(^{31}\) Along with this Gandhi wanted the removal of untouchability and attendant social reforms were to be of immediate concern and priority along with the attainment of swaraj. He held that "...we may not wait till eternity for this much belated reform of grace, probation, preparation and tapasya. It is a reform not to follow swaraj but to precede it."\(^{32}\)


\(^{32}\) Gandhi M.K., Young India, 19-01-1921.
Elevating of social status of the downtrodden was the main plank of Gandhian social reform. He used temple entry movement as a symbol in this direction; he used this mode of reform with an integrative purpose. Hence, force and legal compulsion were never to be adopted for effecting social reforms if dissent prevails in the community. He was for change of heart of the orthodox and for maximum exertion by the dispossessed through moral force. His perceptions were so clear that he envisaged the future scenario after the removal of untouchability. The hitherto 'untouchables' after its abolition will become a fully integrated and indistinguishable part of the non-Brahmana Hindu society. They will become, the all non-Brahmin segment included, classified, as sudras, not as Adi-sudras, equal possessors of even rights, Gandhi wanted social reform to have a consensual base and content. In the 'Harijan' of 20th March 1936 he reminded the satyagrahis of this and wanted them to maintain transparency in their actions. At the critical
juncture of freedom struggle he never wanted wide schism in society harming the very freedom struggle. He wanted for instance, the state (Maharaja of Travancore) or political apparatus to come in between the savarnas and untouchables, not with coercion, but for creating consensus. Confrontation between divergent groups and coercive intervention by the state, reforms to be doled out by political power was not his scheme; he was for social cohesion leading to political mobilization, not the other way round. In short, every approach of his was clearly political, involved equations for rapprochement without concealing anything; never divisions were allowed to be aggravated in society or politics. This is proof of a clear perception of the interplay of socio-political forces in a colonial society, in Gandhi. There was no partisan political motive, political end in store was the untouchable and their socio-political and emotional integration into the main body politic. He was for a revitalized homogeneous society, motivated by integral
nationalism, the solid foundation of which will be autonomous village. He was meticulous in forging unity between the forward and backward and also between different denominations of backward. He never allowed politics to strain social cohesiveness, instead, it (politics) shall have a positive promotive role. He emphatically observes that "separate electorates to the untouchables will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Mussalmans will never cease to be Mussalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the untouchables to remain untouchables forever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability and when you have done it, the bar sinister, which has been imposed by an insolent "superior" class upon an "inferior" class
will be destroyed". This was meant for forging unity between the depressed untouchables and the self-arrogated caste Hindus for promoting social cohesion and mobility.