INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar were the two powerful currents in the social and political history of India. Both of them strove to give new meanings to the social and political life of India. No doubt scholars have made independent studies of the socio-political ideas of Gandhi and Ambedkar but a comparative study of their thoughts and actions has been rare. Hence in this thesis an attempt is made to compare not only their social and political views but also their contribution for restructuring the Indian Society.

Both Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar had their admirers and detractors but few from either group really felt the need to make an objective study of what they had preached or practiced, said or written. Half a century after these two great men passed away, we are not sure whether we are wiser than what we were about knowing them or their contribution. Prejudice continues to cloud reason so that today we seem to bait Ambedkar to bash Gandhi and vice versa. In the process there is little or less understanding of the great legacy which these two towering personalities have bestowed on us. The present study is conceived as a humble effort in this direction.

A comparative study of Mahatma Gandhi and Babasaheb Ambedkar in the light of their contribution to the theory and practice of social justice and national reconstruction encompasses almost wholly the
study of the social and political history of India in the first half of the present century for, ever since these star personalities entered into the public and political life of India, they occupied the driving seat, as it were, in guiding the course of events and the destinies of the people, each in his own way. Both of them emphasized the dignity of individual and believed in the equality of human beings. Establishment of a new social order was the mission of both and both decried the system of untouchability. While Ambedkar dedicated his whole life to overthrow the existing social system in India, Gandhiji declared himself to be a “Social Revolutionist.”

But though they had a common objective of social change, their approach to the problem was different. While Gandhi talked as Reformer, Ambedkar’s tone was that of a ‘Revolutionary’. They differed in many respects and held diametrically opposite views in matters of religion, untouchability, caste and political setup. But the fact remains that even when they crossed swords on occasions, they had profound respect for each other.

Both Gandhi and Ambedkar had many differences which can be traced to their socio-economic backgrounds. But though they differed in their approach they had the same goal and same mission. A society free from exploitation and oppression was close to their heart and both wanted a new Indian polity united and integrated.

Gandhiji and Ambedkar visualized a new social order based
on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Their whole life was but a mission based on reason and morality. They were not mere thinkers, but a dedicated activists. They thought not only of their community, but of the nation as a whole. They gave to India a new vision, a new philosophy and a new way to march on. However, Babasaheb was misunderstood by the caste Hindus in general. Even, the academicians have not given due attention to his thoughts. Today the nation needs his thoughts in order to solve the problems before it.

In this thesis, I have tried my best to explain Gandhi and Ambedkar's concept of 'Social Justice'. The thesis consists of eleven chapters. And there is repetition of some facts, but it is inevitable.

In this venture, I had to go through several books on their life and mission published so far. I would like to place on record my indebtedness to those learned authors whose ideas have enabled me to complete my research work.

Finally, I hold myself responsible for any errors and shortcomings that may be there in my work.