CHAPTER -IV
TRANSFORMATION -GANDHIAN APPROACH
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SECTION -A) PROBLEMS FACED BY GANDHIJI AND HIS SOLUTIONS

Gandhi decided to set up an ashram or place of spiritual retreat at Kochrab, Ahmedabad, so as to have a home for the Indian boys who had lived at the Phoenix farm in Africa and for others of his friends and helpers in his various causes.

It was known as the Satyagraha Ashram and was started with twenty-five people. Soon, because of an outbreak of the plague, it was forced to move to another site at Sabarmati, also near Ahmedabad. With its new start it grew to 150 acres. Various buildings were added gradually, including living centers, a dairy farm, a library, and a dining-room; farm land also was later acquired.

One day Gandhi decided that the Satyagraha Ashram should accept a family of untouchables, a father, mother and daughter. The Ahmedabad supporters as well as some of the asharam members objected to this policy, so Gandhi announced that he would live among the untouchables of Ahmedabad and work as a labourer.

An untouchable did not belong to one of the four main castes of India, that is, he was considered to be outside them and thought worthy of doing only menial work, such as removing refuse, known in India commonly as scavenging. Gandhi and other enlightened Indian leaders hated untouchability, which today is banned under the Constitution of India.
Gandhi, of course, could have no patience with such a system as untouchability. "Given a proper conformation with the rules of cleanliness, there should be no scruple about dining with anybody," he wrote later in his famous weekly called Harijan, borrowing the name he gave to the untouchables.

The ashram received a gift of 13,000 rupees from a wealthy Ahmedabad Muslim businessman, this compensating for the loss of support from those inside and outside the ashram who objected to the family of untouchables.

Even Kasturba has opposed the Harijan family, since she was an orthodox Hindu. Gandhi had tried to convince. He realized, however, that her feeling was so deep-seated that it would be difficult for her to overcome it. But when her husband told her she should abandon her objection or return to Porbander, she accepted the family. She was still an obedient Hindu wife. Also, she had come to be less and less surprised at her husband's beliefs and more respectful of his judgment.

The family at the centre of the controversy consisted of Dudabhai, a former teacher in a school for his miserable people in Bombay; his wife, Danibehn, and Lakshmi, their small daughter, whom later Gandhi was to adopt as his own child. Not all the untouchables appreciated Gandhi's attitude towards them, however.

The Satyagraha Ashrama had set of rules which Gandhiji drew up. These regulations were of a type that were then and are now still practical in an underdeveloped country like India, but would not be practical in every way in such highly industrialized countries as the United States and the United
Kingdom. It must be remembered that a foreign government was then in control of India, the caste system was stronger than it is today, and educated people at that time did not like to do manual work, thinking themselves above it.

The members of the ashram agreed to:

1. Tell the truth.
4. Oppose untouchability.
5. Do manual work.
6. Be courageous.
7. Be honest.
8. Do their own work.

Kasturba was much upset, as she had been by the untouchable family's arrival and by her husband's willingness to do dirty work himself, especially if he was in this way serving a person considered of a low caste. Gandhi insisted that Kasturba should assist in his scavenging.

She was going about the work of cleaning the chamberpots one day but was showing how much she hated doing it. Gandhi said that she ought to do it cheerfully.

"I will not stand this nonsense in my house," Kasturba said. Unlike his usual kind self, Gandhi lost his temper, took her by the hand and pulled her
to the gate, intending to put her out of the compound. By then she was crying.

"Have you no sense of shame? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. For haven's sake, behave yourself and shut the gate."

She remained at the ashram and continued to assist Gandhi in the cleaning up.

Gandhi's willingness to do this mean type of work was his contribution to the efforts to get rid of the untouchability system. He disliked the idea that one group should be saddled with this job, so all the inmates of the ashram took part in it. And he tried to show those who did it that it was socially important and called for proper training to do the job in the right way.

But not all went perfectly well at the ashram even when the difficulties with Kasturba were settled. Mira Behn found it not to be the unified place she had expected. Few of Gandhi's followers were really selfless and devoted to their common cause and ideals. The men had a variety of reasons for joining the group, not always the most admirable ones. Their wives did not always agree, and the children could not be expected to understand the unusual philosophy of the place.

Gandhi was, of course, aware of all this, but would not have it differently, since this should be a typical group of people, and thus better subjects for experimenting with social theories. The difficulties only spurred him on.
SECTION B - GANDHIJI EXPERIMENTS-SATYAGRAHA CONDUCTED AND / OR SUPPORTED BY GANDHIJI TO IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS OF THE UNTOUCHABLES.

We are concerned with one of the different items in this programme of constructive work, that which relates to the Depressed Classes. Gandhiji wrote that at that time of the day when it would be unnecessary to dilate upon the necessity of the removal of the blot of untouchability upon Hinduism, congressmen had certainly done much in the matter. But he was sorry to have to say that many congressman had looked upon this items as a mere political necessity and not something indispensable, so far as Hindus were concerned, for the very existence of Hinduism. If Hindu Congressman took up the cause for its own sake, they would influence the so called sanatanis for more extensively than they had hitherto done. They should approach them not in a militant spirit of friendliness. So far as the Harijanas were concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation- such isolation as perhaps the world had never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnessed in India. He knew from experience how difficult the task was. But it was part of the task of building the edifice of Swaraj. And the road to Swaraj was steep and narrow. There were many slippery ascents. They had all to be negotiated with unfalattering steps before we could reach the summit and breathe the fresh air of freedom. This is all about the removal of untouchability envisaged in the constructive programme which was devoted to social reform.
The first and foremost item of this reform was the removal of untouchability. This reform was needed not only in Hindu society; other religious communities needed it too. Besides this reform had its national importance. Untouchability is a cruel and inhuman institutions. It violates human dignity. It deadens the sensibility of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Untouchability is against the spirit of democracy which makes no distinction among citizens, it also raises economic problems. The untouchables were the poorest section of Indian society. Their avenues of employment were strictly limited. They lived apart, in unhygienic surroundings, on the outskirts of villages and cities. Though they were Hindus and believed in and worshipped Hindu Gods and Goddesses, they were not allowed to enter Hindu temples. Public institutions like schools, hotels, hostels etc. were closed to them. Gandhiji felt that they who denied justice to those who suffered injustice at their hands had no right to demand justice for themselves from their oppressors.

In tackling the problem of untouchability Gandhiji did not call upon the untouchables to join in the struggle for the assertion of their human rights. They took their lowly positions as having been ordained by God. During the campaign against untouchability, people of the so-called higher castes often visited their lowly homes. If they asked for water from them, they could refuse to give it, saying that it would be Adharma for them to offer water to high-caste people. It was such a degradation to which Hinduism had reduced a large portion of its population. Gandhiji therefore called upon the caste Hindus to make all the sacrifice necessary for the removal of untouchability. He said that they would thus be rendering belated justice for the grievous injury
inflicted by their ancestors on the untouchables through the centuries. The response of the caste Hindus to the call of Gandhiji in this respect was adequate.

But earlier in 1915, Gandhiji as a believer in Varnashrama Dharma did not go to undermine the caste discipline in his Ashram. In his words, “The Ashram has a firm belief in the Varnashrama Dharma. The discipline of caste seems to have done no harm to the country; on the contrary, rather. There is no reason to believe that eating in company promotes brotherhood ever so slightly. In order that the Varnashrama Dharma and caste discipline might in no way be undermined, the Ashram inmates are under obligation, whenever they stir out, to subsist on fruits if they cannot cook their own food.”1 Moreover, his vow against untouchability did not extend to association for purposes of eating, that is, the untouchables were not to take their food from the common kitchen and to eat it in the company of other inmates. Gandhi religiously believed in the Varnashrama Dharma, i.e. in caste division determined by birth and in the caste system based on birth. This is all that Gandhi meant by removal of untouchability. The caste system is a doctrine of inequality. It is the very negation of democracy. It is graded untouchability. Gandhi, like all Hindu saints, denounced untouchability, not on a rational basis but on humanitarian grounds. He guarded caste which was the root cause of untouchability. Gandhiji wrote to a friend that he would sacrifice his life itself to uphold the Sanatana Dharma as he understood it. Gandhiji admitted Dudabhai (Dhed), an untouchable, to the Ashram. The Dhed family consisted of Dudabhai who was a Municipal teacher in Bombay, his wife Danibehn and their daughter Laxmi who was two and a half years old. The
admission of the Dhed family landed the Ashram in trouble. Some Ashramites gave up their evening meal and no man from the Ashram was allowed to draw water from the well. All monetary help was stopped. The family went back to Bombay but Gandhiji adopted Laxmi as his own child in 1921.

During the first week of January 1918, Gandhiji discussed in Bombay with the leaders of the Meghwal (untouchable) community the issue of conversion and other grievances in the presence of two or three Khojas who claimed to be Hindus, Satpanthis. Gandhi, true to his philosophy, asked how they could be called Hindus when their leader, Aga Khan, was the president of the Muslim League.

Dr. Ambedkar opined that it was true that the uplift of the untouchables was an item in the programme. But what was important to know what happened to it. For the Hindus, the Bardoli programme was easy to carry out. For it was not for the removal of untouchability. It was a programme of amelioration which was defined by Disraeli as combination of ancient institutions and modern improvements. The programme openly recognized untouchability and planned to do no more than to provide separate wells and separate schools for the untouchables. The sub-committee appointed to draw up a programme for the uplift of the untouchables consisted of persons who had never shown any hostile to them. Swami Shraddhanand, the one and only person on the sub-committee who could be said to be charged with the desire to do something substantial for the untouchable, was forced to resign. A paltry sum of money was allotted for carrying out the work of the committee. The committee was dissolved without meeting even once. The
uplift of the untouchables was declared to be a work best suited of the Hindu Mahasabha. "Mr. Gandhi took no interest in that part of the Bardoli programme which related to the untouchables. On the contrary, instead of aiding with Swami Shraddhanand he sided with the reactionaries and opponents of swami Shraddhanand, knowing full well that they did not want anything on a big scale done for the untouchables."2

Meanwhile Gandhiji had to express his views on the removal of untouchability and on the caste system. During his Madras tour, the untouchables entreated him to get the age-long social disabilities removed by starting a campaign similar to that of non-cooperation. Gandhiji replied in the Young India of 27th October 1920, that the Hindus had suppressed the untouchables and become themselves pariahs of the empire. If he had a truly national legislature, he would answer Hindu insolence by building special and better wells for the exclusive use of the suppressed classes and by erecting numerous and better schools for them.

Gandhiji felt that there were three courses open to the untouchables: government assistance, conversion to Islam or Christianity and self help. They should reject government aid for it would be used against their kith and kin; the second course was rejection of Hinduism and wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. If a change of religion could be justified for worldly betterment, he would advise it without hesitation. But religion, he said, was a matter of heart. Conversion was no remedy because he believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism; it was rather its excrescence to be removed by every effort. They should choose self-help and join the great national movement; for non-cooperation with the government presupposed
cooperation between sections forming the Indian nation. The Hindu must make common cause with them as they had done with the Muslims. Gandhiji believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism.

One Mr. S.M. Michael termed Gandhiji's arguments as admirable dialectics which might deceive the shallow, superficial reader, Gandhiji replied that when once Swaraj was established by the method of non-cooperation, there would be no paraiah or non-Brahmin problem left to be solved. Gandhi said he adhered to his statement that amelioration of radical social evils meant attainment of Swaraj, but the British government was the greatest of all social evils with which society was cursed.3

Gandhiji was now facing the problem of untouchables and non-Brahmins. At Madras, he told the Missionary conference on 14th February 1916, that the vast organization of caste answered not only the religious wants of the community but also its political needs. In his speech on the caste system at the conference of various communities held in Ahmedabad on 5th June 1916, Gandhiji said that he had devoted much thought to the subject of the caste system and come to the conclusion that the Hindu society could not dispense with it, that it lived on because of the discipline of caste. Societies all over the world were organized on the principle of caste or Varnavyavastha (division of society into classes on the basis of vocations). Our society was organized in this manner for the purpose of self-control, that is, for self-denial. Certainly, there was a difference between Varnavyavastha in the west and among us; but there was Varnavyavastha everywhere. He justified his stand against inter-dining and inter-marriage
by saying that if friendly relations depends on eating together and inter-marriage. Explaining his ideals on caste in an article in October 1916, Gandhiji said that the caste system contained the seed of Swaraj and one could carry out social reform with ease through the agency of the caste system. He observed that he was opposed to the movements which were being carried on for the destruction of the system. Gandhiji opposed inter-dining and inter-marriage because there was a good chance that thereby loose conduct would be kept down. He believed in his mystic way that the process of eating was as unclean as excretion. To him prohibition of marriage with any one not belonging to one's community promotes self-control and self-control is conducive to happiness in all circumstances. The caste system had struck such deep roots in India that he thought it would be far more advisable to try to improve it rather than uproot it. The more numerous the communities, the better it would be. The Hindu caste system was not an inert, lifeless institution. It was a living one and had been functioning according to its own law. So he could not conclude that the system was itself bad.

Gandhiji stated, "Varnashram (caste) is, in my opinion, inherent in human nature, and Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science. It does attach to birth. A man cannot change his Varna by choice. Not to abide by one's Varna is to disregard the law of heredity. The division however into innumerable caste is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine. The four divisions are self-sufficing." Thus Gandhiji believed in caste and at the same time wished to abolish untouchability.
As the pressure of the problem of non-Brahmins and untouchables was increasing, Gandhiji reiterated his views on the caste system in February 1920. To remove the fears of his orthodox followers he said that for years he had taken nothing but fruit in Mohammedan or Christian households. During his tour in U.P., Moulana Bari had engaged a Brahmin cook and made special arrangements for the Hindus of the party. A month earlier, Gandhiji had observed: "I am one of those who do not consider caste to be a harmful institution. In its origin caste was a wholesome custom and promoted national well-being. In my opinion, the idea that inter-dining or inter-marrying is necessary for national growth, is a superstition borrowed from the west." He was of the opinion the eating should be done as private as one performed the other necessary functions of life in private. Inter-dining and inter-marriage were not a bar to dissensions and quarrels. The Pandavas and the Kauravas, Gandhiji urged, flew at one another’s throat although they inter-dined and inter married. He held it to be utterly impossible for Hindus and Muslims to inter-marry and yet to retain their religion intact.

Gandhiji does not agree that retention of the caste system apells ruin for India and that it is caste which has reduced India to slavery. In his opinion, it is not caste that has made us what we are. It is the greed and disregard of Indians of essential virtues which enslaved Indians, he believes that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration. He considers the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural and essential. The innumerable sub castes are sometimes a convenience, often a hindrance. The sooner there is fusion the better. Social pressure and public opinion can be trusted to deal with the problem. But Gandhi is certainly against any attempt at destroying the
fundamental divisions. To him caste system is not based on inequality, there is no question of inferiority, and "so far as there is any such question arising as in Madras, Maharashtra or elsewhere, the tendency should undoubtedly be checked. But there appears to be no valid reason for ending the system because of its abuse. It lends itself easily to reformation."\(^6\)

Gandhiji asserted that the spirit of democracy, which was fast spreading throughout India and the rest of the world. Would, without a shadow of doubt, purge the institution of the idea of predominance and subordination. It (the spirit of democracy) required change of heart. If caste was a bar to the spread of that spirit, the existence of five religions in India Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism- was equally a bar. The spirit of democracy required inculcation of the spirit of brotherhood and Hinduism that was responsible for the doctrine of the caste was also responsible for the inculcation of the essential brotherhood, not merely of man but also of all that lived. Some suggested to Gandhiji that the ideal of heredity in caste should be rejected. But he was inclined to think that the law of heredity was an eternal law and any attempt to alter that law must lead us, as it had led before, to utter confusion. He could see very great use in considering a Brahmin to be a Brahmin throughout his life. If Hindus believed as they must believe in reincarnation, transmigration, they must know that nature would, without any possibility of mistake, adjust the balance by degrading a Brahmin, if he mis-behaved himself, by reincarnating him in lower division, and translating one who lived the life of a Brahmin in his present incarnation to Brahminhood in his next. Gandhiji held that inter-drinking, inter-dining, inter-marrying, were not essential for the promotion of the spirit of democracy. He however
did consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity and if Hinduism was to be recognized as an honourable and elevating religion, the sooner it purged itself of the sin, the better it was for itself.

NAGAPUR CONFERENCE AND GANDHIJI:

The antyajas conference also met at Nagpur under the presidentship of Gandhiji, said that “my method of work is this. The practice of untouchability is a sin and should be eradicated. I look upon it as my duty to eradicate this sin; it is however to be eradicated on the initiative of other Hindus, not the Antyajas. The practice of untouchability is an excrescence of Hinduism. I said once in Madras that I saw terrible Satanism in our empire and that, if I could not mend it, I wanted to end it; likewise, I believe that the practice of untouchability is a great Satanism in Hinduism.”

This practice of regarding antyajas as untouchables was intolerable to Gandhiji. He could not endure it. The Hindus should make a determined effort to purify Hinduism and eradicate the practice of untouchability. He had said to the Hindus, and said it again that day, that till Hindu society was purged of this sin, Swaraj was impossibility. He said, “If you trust my words, I tell you that I am more pained by this evil being a part of the Hindu’s religion than the Antyajas are by them being treated as untouchables. While the practice remains in Hindu society, I feel ashamed and feel unhappy even to call myself a Hindu.”

Continuing his speech Gandhi said that the Antyajas wanted be pass a resolution to the effect that they should to free to enter all the temples. How was this possible? It was in vain that the Antyajas asked that every Hindu should be free to enter a temple right then. It was impossible to get society to accept the proposal. It was not prepared for it yet. He knew from experience that there
were many temples which some other communities besides the antyajas were forbidden to enter. Some of the temples in Madras were not open even to him. He did not feel unhappy about it. He was not prepared to say that it betrayed the Hindus narrow outlook or that it was a wrong they were committing. Even admitting that it was a fact, Gandhiji urged that they should consider the lines of thinking behind it. if their action was inspired by considerations of discipline, he would not say that everyone should be free to go into any temple. There were a variety of section in India and he did not want to see them wiped out. The Hindu society had not fallen because of sects or on account of Varnashram. It had fallen because we had forgotten the beauty of and the discipline which lay behind Varnashram. He argued, "You should understand that Varnashram Dharma has nothing to do with the practice of untouchability. To say that the former is evil, that it is a sin, is to apply western standards, and I do not accept them. It is by accepting them that India has fallen."9

Gandhiji said he himself ate and drank in the company of Antyajas. He had adopted the daughter of an Antyaja family and she was dearer to him than his very life. He should not however tell Hindu society that it might abandon its self-control. He believed the society had a place even for one like him. It had a place for anyone who lived as he did, without being a sannyasi, just as he would eat something offered by a Muslim, if it was otherwise acceptable. So he would accept anything offered by an Antyaj. But he should not like to compel other Hindus to do likewise, for it would mean their casting off-self-control which protected Hindu society. Gandhiji realized that the task was full of difficulties. He felt that our reformers should realize to seek
to eradicate the evil by destroying Hindu society was a futile attempt. They would achieve their purpose only by being patient. If the antyajas asked him to teach them the philosophy of non-cooperation, he was ready to start that very evening. To Gandhiji, non-cooperation was process of self-purification. India was different from other lands and therefore we did not seek to get what we wanted by making things hot for the British. What then was the way to purify ourselves. Hindus said that antyajas drank, that they ate anything and everything, that they did not observe rule of personal cleanness, that they killed cows. Gandhiji said that he did not believe that all this was true, no one who claimed to be Hindu could eat beef. If the antyajas wanted to employ non-co-operation, they should give up drinking and eating beef or at any rate, killing cows.

He did not ask the tanners to give up the work. Englishmen did this work but we did not mind saluting them. He observed, "These days even Brahmins do it. I see no uncleanness in doing sanitary work. I have myself done that work for a long time, and I like doing it. My mother taught me that it is holy work. Though it means handling unclean things, the work itself is holy. Anyone who does it and looks upon it as holy work will go to heaven. You can remain in the Hindu fold without giving it up." Gandhiji knew the Antyajas of Gujarat, knew their nature. He taught them the same thing, that they should end the evil of untouchability by their own strength, that they should live as thorough going Hindus so that other Hindus might honour them instead of despising them. He wanted to get things done through the antyajas or through Hindu society itself. He asked the antyajas to make themselves fit for the rights which they demanded. By saying so he did not wish to suggest that they were not already fit.
When he asked the country to be fit for swaraj he did not imply that it was unfit. He only asked it to be fitter than it was. He told the Antyajas, like wise, that they had a right to be free, to be the equal of any other Hindus, he asked them however to do Tapashacharya and be fitter for those things.

Addressing himself to the Hindus other than Antyajas, Gandhiji said that the Hindus should be brave and get rid of this sin of theirs. He believed that he was a religious man, people might even say that he was superstitious. He believed that so long as the Hindus had not rid themselves of this sin, had not begged forgiveness of the antyajas, they would be visited with no end of misfortune. He asked the Hindus to realize that the practice of untouchability was a sin. If they could, by their own voluntary effort, to purge themselves of the evils in them, they would have freedom for the asking. The point was that the problem could be solved only through the sincerity of caste Hindus and the Tapashacharya of Antyajas. Gandhiji prayed to God to give wisdom and patience to the Antyajas so that they might not turn away from the path of Dharma. On behalf of the Hindus, he prayed to God that, he might save Hindu society from this sin, from Satanism.

BELGAUM CONFERENCE AND GANDHIJI:

In the last week of December 1924, Gandhiji presided over the Belgaum session of the congress. Addressing the untouchability conference, he said that it was the prayer of his heart that if he should fail to obtain Moksha in this very birth he might be born as a Bhangi in his next. He believed in varnashram both according to birth and Karma. But he did not regard Bhangis in any sense as of low order.
On the contrary he knew many Bhangis who were worthy of reverence. On the other hand, there were Brahmins going about whom it would be difficult to regard with any reverence. Holding these views therefore, if there was a rebirth in store for him, he wished to be born an pariah in the minds of pariahs because thereby he would be able to render more effective service to them and also be in a better position to plead with other communities on their behalf. But just as he did not want the so-called untouchables to despise the untouchables, so also he did not want the latter to entertain any feeling of hatred and ill will towards, the former. He did not want them to waist their right by violence as was done in the west. The trend of world opinion was against such violence. He could clearly see a time coming in the world when it would be impossible to secure rights by use of force. So he told his untouchable brethren as he told the government, that if they resorted to force for the realization of their purpose, they should certainly fail.

Gandhiji wanted to uplift Hinduism. He regarded the untouchables as an integral part of the Hindu community. He was pained when he saw a single Bhangi driven out of the fold of Hinduism. He did not believe that all class distinctions could be obliterated. Instead, he believed in the doctrine of equality as taught by lord Krishna in the Gita. Gita taught us that member of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis.

It did not prescribe the same Dharma for the Brahmin as for the Bhangi but it insisted that the latter should be entitled to the same measure of consideration and esteem as the former with all his superior learning. It was therefore our duty to see that the untouchable do not feel that they are despised
or looked down upon. As regards to the question of inter-marriage, it did not arise in Gandhiji's case. It was sufficient for him that his scheme did not include inter-marriage. He argued, "let me tell you that in my own clan all the members do not interdine. In certain cases among over vaishanva families they do not use each others utensils or even cook food on fire fetched from others kitchens. You may call this practice superstitious, but I do not regard it as such. It certainly does no harm to Hinduism." The reform contemplated in the untouchability movement did not remove the restriction as to interdining and inter-marriage. Gandhiji said that he could not recommend whole sale abolition of these restrictions to the public, even at the risk being charged with hypocrisy and inconsistency. He did not want to employ diplomacy in his dealings with the Antyajas or for that matter with any one. He did not want to keep the antyajas under any illusion or win there support by holding out temptations. He wanted to remove untouchability because its removal was essential for swaraj and he wanted swaraj. But he would not exploit the antyajas for gaining any political ends. The issue with him was bigger even than swaraj. He was anxious to see an and to untouchability because for him it was an expiation and a penance. It was not the untouchables whose shuddhi he wanted to effect-the thing would be absurd, but his own and that of Hindu religion Hinduism had committed a great sin in giving sanction to this evil and he was anxious to purify it of that sin by expiating for it on his own.

"The only way by which you and I can wean orthodox Hindus from their bigotry is by patient argument and correct conduct. So long as they are not converted, I can only ask you to put up with your lot with patience. I am willing to stand by you and share your sufferings with you. You must have
the right to worship in any temple in which members of others castes are admitted. You must have admission to school along with the children of other castes as without any distinction. You must be eligible to the highest office in the land not excluding even that of the viceroy's. That is my definition of the removal of untouchability" he declared.

Gandhiji made certain proposals for restoring peace between two warring groups of the congress after his release from jail in 1924 on health grounds. According to Dr. Ambedkar, here was an opportunity for Mr. Gandhi to advance his anti untouchability campaign. He could have proposed that if a Hindu wished enrol himself as a member of the congress he should prove that he did not observe untouchability and that the employment of an untouchable in his household should be adduced in support of his claim in this behalf and that no other evidence would be allowed to be tendered. Such a proposal could not have been impracticable for almost every Hindu, certainly every high caste Hindu, kept more than one servant in his household. He said, "if Mr. Gandhi could make the Hindu accept spinning and boycott as a franchise for membership of the congress he could also make acceptable the employment of an untouchable in a Hindu household as a franchise for membership of the congress. But Mr. Gandhi did not do it."13

According to Dhananjay Keer, Gandhi defended and gave justification for caste, the caste system, reincarnation, transmigration of souls, and the doctrine of heredity, opposing inter-dining and inter-marriage. He pointed out that Europe had class, and if caste produced certain evils, class had not been productive of anything less. The beauty of caste was that it did not base
itself upon distinctions of wealth and possession. Caste was an extension of the principle of family. Both were governed by blood and heredity. The experience of many lands went against the doctrine of western scientists who were busy trying to prove that heredity was an illusion and that milieu was everything. Yet it was very easy. Said Gandhiji, to prove that milieu could be conserved and developed more through caste than through class. Caste was the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress. It was a system of culture.

This was the social content of the political movement of Gandhiji whose social philosophy was not much discussed during the hectic days of the struggle against British imperialism. Gandhiji belonged to a caste which stood high in the social hierarchy. He defended the caste system and the doctrine of heredity which kept the Brahmins and Vaishyas at the top of the ladder (there being, according to them, no Kshsatriyas but all Shudras) but kept large masses at the bottom of it to rot, depriving them of any chance to grow. Gandhiji was thus an orthodox reformer who white-washed a dilapidated house! Frankly, he shared the views of the ignorant masses on whose credulity he banked for his leadership.

Gandhiji's Varna was determined not by a man's innate qualities but by birth and the profession of a Varna was determined by the principle of heredity. In ancient Indian society Varnavyavastha could maintain harmony so long as it continued to be non-hereditary and flexible. When it accepted heredity as its base it became rigid, intolerant, narrow-minded, and a religion of inequality. Gandhiji used Varna as another name for caste.
A man who believed in the gospel of caste by birth-cum-hereditary vocation and disapproved of inter-caste marriage, under the soothing but deceptive balm of the principle that all professions were equal, but shoe-makers must remain shoe-makers, scavengers must remain scavengers, carpenters must remain carpenters, washer man must remain washer man, from father to son, from generation to generation, so that the God-ordained caste system might prevail, can hardly be called a lover of social equality and social justice. The governing fact about Gandhiji was that he looked at society from the angle of a humanitarian and not from the angle of social revolutionary. He arrived at the problem of the removal of untouchability through humanitarianism and not from the social and rationalistic angle.

Gandhiji thus put back the hands of the clock of progress made by the galaxy of social reformers and revolutionaries who all said that caste grows by fusion and is antagonistic to national union and democracy; caste is the curse of India, the bane of Hindus. And yet Gandhiji said he was opposed to the destruction of caste which was sogged with social injustice, inequality and misery and deprived large masses of any chance of growth. Instead of helping the progressive social forces that were working for the re-organization of society on deeper and broader foundations, he like Tilak, defended the antiquated and unjust, defective and decaying institution of caste which was injurious to growth, solidarity of the people and contradictory to the aspirations of true nationalism and democracy.

On 31 March 1924, a Satyagraha was launched by the non-Brahmin leader, K.P.Keshva Menon, at Vikom in Travancore state vindicating the rights of the untouchables to use a certain road to which they were forbidden entry.
Gandhiji rightly supported their non-violent struggle but warned that the anti untouchability movement did not aim at inter-dining or inter-marrying. He blamed the Arya Samajists for their Shuddhi movement although he kept mum of the Tabligh. In his opinion, there was no such thing as proselytism in Hinduism as it was understood in Christianity or to a lesser extent in Islam. The fact was that the Shuddhi movement was a reaction to the missionary movement and to the Tabligh movement started for the conversion of the Hindus by unlawful inducements. Gandhiji was not frank enough to say so.

To save the cow, the Hindus should befriend the Muslims and leave it to Muslim honour to save the cow. Hindus, living as they did in glass houses, Gandhiji continued, had no right to throw stones at their Muslim neighbours. Because the Hindu denied even elementary rights to the untouchables, God had punished them. God's ways were inscrutable, and their woes were due to the black sin of untouchability.

Gandhiji wanted to work his way into the people's hearts silently as far as possible. Meantime the Vikom satyagraha proved effective. It had a good effect on their opponents and on the Travancore government. Towards the end of May the barricades were removed and all prohibitory orders were withdrawn. The Satyagrahis continued their patient struggle in the hope that all roads would be soon thrown open for the use of the untouchables. Ultimately they succeeded in January 1926 when the roads surrounding the temple were declared open to the unapproachables also. Gandhiji then requested K.Kelappan Nair, the leader of the Satyagrahis, to cultivate public opinion in the matter of the temple entry and work for the welfare of the untouchables.
Gandhiji was fully opposed to separate electorates for the Harijans. He was fully convinced that the question of separate electorates was a modern manufacture of a Satanic Government. The separation of Harijans as apolitical group was doubtless the next logical step in the progress of the application of the doctrine of divide and rule. Gandhiji made it clear that the only thing needed was to put them on the voters' list and provide for fundamental rights for them in the constitution. He was fully convinced that separate electorates and separate reservation was not the way to remove that bar sinister and he did not want on the register and census untouchables classified as separate class. He would not sell their vital interests even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. He said that he did not mind the untouchables being converted to Islam or Christianty, he could and should tolerate that, but he could not possibly tolerate what was in store for Hinduism if their were two divisions set forth in villages. He pointed out that the Harijans were not the minorities in the same way as the caste Hindus were not. During a speech at the Indian Students' Majlis in London, he said: "Separate electorates to the 'untouchables' will ensure them bondage in perpetuity. The Musalmans will never cease to be Musalmans by having separate electorates. Do you want the 'untouchables' to remain untouchables or ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of untouchability and when you have done it, he bar sinister which has been imposed by an insolent 'superior' class upon an 'inferior' class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the bar sinister, to whom will you give the separate electorates?"
His whole soul rose "against the political exploitation of a social evil, by creating a perpetual bar sinister between a so-called minority and a so-called majority by putting as under those God hath really united in one vast Hindu community." So he undertook the famous epic fast on the 20th September, 1932, an event of epoch-making significance which changed the whole face of Indian struggle for national emancipation. This fast ended in the conclusion of the Poona pact where by the number of seats for the Harijans in the legislature under the new constitution of 1933 was doubled.

In jail, Gandhiji wanted all the facilities of doing Harijan work that he had been given during the previous incarceration. If he did not get permission to do so, he would deny himself all nourishment except salt and water. He wrote to the government that life ceased to interest him if he did not do Harijan work without let or hindrance.

Now aged sixty-five, he started on a whirlwind Harijan tour of nine months on 7 November 1933 from Wardha, declaring open some private temples to Harijans, collecting money for the Harijan fund and telling people that it was blasphemy to say that God resided in a temple from which a particular class of the same faith was excluded. He was glad that he had started his Harijan tour from Wardha, the geographical centre of India. He pleaded that the untouchable Hindus should have access to all public institutions, such as schools, roads and public wells.

**HIS TOUR IN SOUTH INDIA:**

On 16th December, Gandhiji commenced his Harijan tour in Southern India by addressing a meeting of the Harijan workers in Andhra. He told
them that their purity and suffering would not fail to touch the hearts of the orthodox. If they missed this God-given opportunity to purge themselves of the curse of untouchability, they would have to pay for it with bitter tears. During the three day visit to Madras, he addressed meetings of women, students and workers exhorting them not to make distinctions of high and low between man and man.

On the eve of his departure Gandhiji told a Harijan deputation that untouchability was a dead thing, but being a monster, it still seemed to be taking breath. But it was the last breath. Gandhiji continued into Andhra, visiting Guntur, Ellore, Rajahmundry, Vizagapatem, and other places and entered the Mysore state on 4 January 1934. on 10 January 1934, he commenced the tour of Malabar, the blackest spot on the 'untouchability map' of India. Gandhiji told the people there to wipe out the shame of untouchability so that it would bring all Indians together all humanity nearer to them.

On 20 January 1934, when he entered Trivandrum, he was glad to see that the Travancore state had already declared open public roads, wells and Chtrams to all classes of people. He congratulated the state on the reform it had introduced recently. Everywhere he heard the wails and woes of those who were ground down by social tyranny. He said he had become a Harijan and he would like to suffer with Harijans.

When Gandhiji was at Calicut on the night of 15 January 1934, the terrible calamity of earthquake overtook in Bihar, destroying thousands of lives and lakhs of houses and about 6 million wells up to a distance of a
thousand miles. Gandhiji declared in a statement in Harijan of 2 February 1934: "Let the anti untouchability reformers regard the earthquake as a nemesis for the sin of untouchability. I share the belief with the whole world, civilised and uncivilised, that calamities such as the Bihar on come to mankind as a chastisement, for their sins. I regard untouchability as such a grave sin as to warrant divine chastisement".16 Gandhiji visited Patna and toured Bihar from 11 March to 9 April 1934, inspecting the relief work and cheering the grief-stricken people. He then toured Assam on foot from 10 April to 3 May. There he told the people that no human being could be unclean by birth and only he was pure who walked in the fear of God and his creatures. The Sanatanis were observing the activities of Gandhiji with anger, dismay and even hatred. They tried to break his meetings, obstructed his movements, staged black flag demonstration and raised controversies in the papers. To meet all this, Gandhiji decided in May 1934 in Puri (Orissa) to cover the rest of his journey in Orissa on foot but he was mistaken. He went to Poona to state his tour of Maharashtra on 25 June. While he and his party were on the way to Municipal Hall, a bomb was thrown at them. In August 1934, his Harijan tour ended. During the tour some women gave him bangles, some necklaces and Gandhiji’s Harijan expressed his gratitude for and delight at these gifts.

In Bihar, while referring to his Harijan tour, Gandhiji said that the “spiritual message is self propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the Harijan tour has been the latest forcible illustration of this”.17 Gandhiji believed that he had succeeded in bringing to the caste Hindus the realization that the injustice perpetrated against the untouchables through the ages had
to be stoned for. He also believed that a consciousness of their rights was growing among them and the revolution had begun. But all that he did for the Harijans was suspect in the eyes of Ambedkar and the Harijans leaders of his way of thinking. It is true that Gandhiji could not devote all his time to the Harijan cause as he was busy in planning a campaign to win Swaraj. In his opinion, the good of the whole included the good of the part and as the Hinuds were the slaves of the British, slaves could not emancipate slaves. He believed that his preaching and the charity and zeal of the HindUs were sufficient panacea for all ills of the untouchables.

In his two articles entitled 'Dr. Ambedkar's indictment', Gandhiji in his unique style of damning his enemy with faint praise, said: "Whatever label he weares in future, Dr. Ambedkar is not the man to allow himself to be forgotten.18 Saying that Dr. Ambedkar was challenge to Hinduism, Gandiji further observed that Varna taught the Hindus to earn their bread by following the ancestral calling and added that every known religion would fail, if judged by the standard of Ambedkar. He concluded that a religion that produced chaitenya, Jnyanadeva, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar, Ramkrishana Parmahams, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Maharshi Devendranth Tagore, Vivekananda and host of others would not be devoid of merit as made out in Ambedkar's thesis. To many a Hindu Gandhiji was an oracle, so great that when he opened his lips it was expected that the argument must close and everyone must listen.

Gandhiji has rendered notable service to India which deservedly entitles him to eternal gratitude of all lovers of India, and that is his service to the outcastes. While at various periods in the past, religious reformers have
attacked the caste system, no one has so successfully revolutionised the attitude of India's thinking men and women towards untouchability as Gandhiji. The open sore of India is still an open sore. It refuses to be healed because of its association with traditional Hindu religion. But the conscience of Hindu India has been awakened, castes main citadels have been shaken, it is now only a matter of time before they will crumble to dust. Opinions may differ as to the methods Gandhiji has followed in attacking the evil. All may not agree - Even the classes that benefited- in the results achieved. It is however undoubtedly true that the attitude of India to the problem of the outcastes has changed during the last twenty years and not a little of this result must be recognized as due to Gandhiji. According to B.Pattabhisitaramayya: "Gandhiji's constructive programme is a three-fold one-economic in Khaddar, social in the removal of untouchability and moral in the abolition of drink." Gandhiji himself observed, "Lastly, we may banish by statue, as we must, the evil consequence of untouchability. But we cannot have real independence unless people banish the touch me-not spirit from their hearts. The masses cannot act as one men or with one mind unless they eradicate untouchability form their hearts." According to R.R.Diwakar, Gandhiji's approach to social reform was radical. He had the boldness to preach that untouchability was a blot and could not be a part of Hinduism and that it must be rid of that curse. He never thought of cutting himself adrift from the Hindu fold or of founding a new sect or cult, as some reformers did, but insisted that all defects and evils which could not stand the test of reason and moral sense must be shed so that the original Hindu teaching could shine as brilliantly as ever. He adopted an untouchable girl Laxmi as
his own daughter and ultimately got her married to a Brahmin boy. This is an example of not only creative thought but also of creative action.

Gandiji maintained that India's great faiths, equally dear to their respective votaries, were all-sufficing for her. What was wanted was living friendly contact among the followers of the great religions of the world and not a clash among them in the fruitless attempt on the part of each community to show the superiority of its faith over the rest. Through such friendly contact it would be possible for us all to rid our respective faiths or short comings and excrescences.

He was certain, "..... India is in no need of conversion of the kind I have in mind. Conversion in the sense of self-purification, self-realization is the crying need of the times. That however is not what is ever meant by proselytising. To those who would convert India, might it not be said, 'Physician, heal thyself'"[21]

Gandhiji's great campaign against the social evil was really the beginning of the end. It is true that untouchability did not die but the main resistance to its removal was broken and the Sanatanis were demoralized. The uprooting of an old and established inequitous system root and branch in all its aspects, economic, social, religious and conventional, takes a long time and persistent work. He knew that a vast majority of them did not want to abandon their religion is spite of the fact that they could have equality with other citizens by merely changing it. Then, even the Hindus would not regard them as untouchability has been abolished by law after independence. Its practice has been made a penal offence. All public institutions including temples,
schools, hotel, hostel, wells etc. are by law open to the untouchables. His movement after independence has the backing of a democratic government. If the government is vigilant and prepared to enforce the law without fear or favour, it is hoped that this blot on Hindu society will soon disappear.

According to Thakin Nu, the former Prime Minister of Burma, among the great causes with which Mahatmaji's name could be linked was that of the Harijans. India was fighting against a ruling caste of conquerors from another clime, but within herself Hindu India maintained an ancient caste system which forbade the 'Depressed' classes even to tread on the shadows of men of higher castes, or to use the wells and temples used by them. “It became the mission of his life to purge Hinduism of this feature. The struggle had not ended when he died though he had compelled the Congress to adopt it as an integral part of its programme.”

SECTION -C

POLITICAL SOLUTION: GANDHIJI'S OPPOSITION TO SEPARATE ELECTORATE

In 1925 Gandhiji was politically silent. His career was then at best a plateau reached after a steep ascent and now stretching toward a nebulous horizon: whether there would be another ascent was then hard to know. He had witnessed the danger of redoubled violence in the wake of hastily applied non-violence.

Gandhiji was took active steps for the removal of untouchability after 1930. In 1930 came the Round Table conference and Gandhiji joined the deliberations of the conference in 1931. Referring to the question of the
untouchables in the very first speech which he made in the Federal Structure Committee on 15th September 1931. Gandhiji said that the congress had from its very commencements taken up the cause of untouchables. There was a time when the congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the social conference to which the late Ranade dedicated his energies, along with his many other activities. The social Conference gave a prominent place to the removal of untouchability. But in 1920 the Congress took the further step of making removal of untouchability a plank in its political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity to be indispensable for the attainment of swaraj "so also did the Congress consider the removal of the curse of untouchability as indispensible condition for the attainment of full freedom. The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains the same today; and so go you will see the Congress has Attempted from its very beginning to be what it described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term."23

On 17th September 1931, making a statement on the question of election of members of the federal legislatures, that is representation by special constituencies of special interests. Gandhiji as a spokesman of the Congress, said that the Congress had reconciled itself to the special treatment of the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh tangle. There were sound historical reason for it but the Congress would not extend that doctrine in any shape or form. He listened to the list of special interests. So far as the untouchables were concerned, he had not yet quite grasped what Dr. Ambedkar had to say; but of course the congress would share the honour with Dr. Ambedkar of representing the interests of the untouchables. They were as clear to the Congress as the interests of any other body or of any other individual throughout the length
and breadth of India. Therefore he would most strongly resist any further representation. This was nothing but a declaration of war against the untouchables.

Gandhiji was particularly furious over the recognition given to the untouchables as a separate political entity in the Minorities pact. He said in the Minorities Committee that he would like to repeat what he had said before, that while the Congress would always accept any solution that might be acceptable to the Hindus, the Mohammedans and the Sikhs, it would be no party to the special electorates for any other minorities. He said "one word more as to the so-called untouchables. I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables, that time is the 'unkindest cut of all.' It means the perpetual bar-sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India." Gandhi claimed to represent the vast mass of the untouchables. Mere he spoke not merely on behalf of the congress but also on his own behalf, and he claimed that he would get, if there was a referendum of the untouchables, their vote, and that he would top the poll. And he would work from one end of India to the other to tell the untouchables that separate electorates and separate reservation was not the way to remove their bar-sinister, which was the shame, not of them, but of orthodox Hinduism.

Gandhiji wished this committee and the whole world to know that there was a body of Hindu reformers who were pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. These reformers did not want on their register and on their census untouchables classified as separate class. Sikhs might remain as such in perpetuity, so might Mohammedans, so might Europeans. Would
untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? He was firm: "I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. Therefore, with all my regard for Dr. Ambedkar and for his desire to see the untouchables uplifted, with all my regard for his ability. I must say in all humility that here the great wrong under which he had laboured and perhaps the bitter experiences that he has undergone have for the moment warped his judgment."\textsuperscript{25} It hurt Gandhiji to have to say this, but he would be untrue to the cause of the untouchables, which was as dear to him as life itself, if he did not say it. He would not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. He was speaking with a due sense of responsibility, and he said that it was not a proper claim which was registered by Dr. Ambedkar when he sought to speak for the whole of the untouchables of India. It would create a division in Hinduism which Gandhiji could not possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever. He did not mind untouchables, if they so desired, being converted to Islam or Christianity. He should tolerate that, but could not possibly tolerate what was in store for Hinduism if there were two divisions set forth in villages. Those who spoke of the political right of untouchables did not know their India, did not know how Indian society was then constructed, and therefore he wanted to say with all the emphasis that he could command that, if he was the only person to resist that thing, he would resist it with his life.

This was a surprise and puzzle to the friends of Gandhiji. Inside the Round Table Conference, Gandhiji's defence was that the Hindus had seriously taken up the cause of the untouchables and that therefore there was no reason to give them political safeguards. Outside, in defence of his position Gandhiji said that Muslims and Sikhs were well organized. The
untouchables were not. There was very little political consciousness among them and they were so horribly treated that he wanted to save them against themselves. If they had separate electorates, their lives would be miserable in villages which were the strongholds of Hindu orthodoxy. It was the superior class of Hindus who had to do penance for having neglected the untouchables for ages. That penance could be done by active social reform. To Gandhiji special representation of the Muslims and the Sikhs was a necessary evil but it would be a positive danger for the untouchables in the form of perpetual bondage. So he advocated adult franchise to give the untouchables complete security.

In the minorities committee Gandhiji had said that it the committee chose recognize the claim of the untouchables, he would abide by the decision. But when he learnt that other minorities had agreed to support the untouchables, he resorted to intrigue. But the Muslims refused to disgrace themselves by playing into his hands. Gandhiji returned home disgusted with the conference. He was put in jail for his alleged threat of civil disobedience. Though in jail, not swaraj but the untouchables were on his mind. Long before any decision was given by the Prime Minister, Gandhiji said in his letter to sir Samuel Hoare, the then secretary of state for India, that the question of these classes was predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it was, dwindeled in to insignificance their. He should favour their representation in the legislatures, and every one of their adults male and female might be registered as voters irrespective of education or proper qualifications, even though the franchise might be stricter for others.

Gandhiji had been interested in the condition of these classes from his boyhood and had more than once staked his all for their sake. He said this
not to pride himself in any way. He felt that no penance that caste Hindus could do could, in any way, compensate for the degradation to which the Depressed Classes had been consigned for centuries. But he knew that separate electorate was neither penance nor any remedy for the crushing degradation they had groaned under. On 17 August 1932, the decision of the Prime Minister on the communal question was announced granting separate electorate to the Depressed Classes. Gandhiji first tried to get the terms of the Communal Award revised through his letter to the Prime Minister as follows. "I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda. This fast will cease if during its progress the British government, of its own motion or under pressure of public opinion, revise their decision and withdraw their scheme of communal electorates for the Depressed Classes whose representatives should be elected by General Electorate under the common franchise, no matter how wide it is." 26

Gandhiji’s move was replied to by British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, regretting that the government’s decision could not be changed except by an agreement of the communities themselves to substitute other electoral arrangements for those that government had devised.

The fast created a problem, and that problem was how to save Gandhiji’s life. It was a baffling situation for Dr. Ambedkar whose leadership of the untouchables of India was not only not questioned by Congressmen but was accepted as a fact. Dr. Ambedkar had to make a choice between two different
alternatives. There was before him the duty which he owed as a part of common humanity, to save Gandhiji from sure death. There was before him the problem of saving for the untouchables the political rights which the Prime Minister had given them. He responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Gandhiji by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Gandhiji. This agreement is known as "Poona pact". The Poona pact gave the untouchables 148 seats, while the Award had given them 78, but it took away the right to double vote which was a priceless privilege.

II. Gandhiji's Views on Religion and Politics

A great spiritual leader, Mahatma Gandhi, was not a highly speculative thinker, rather, a strong man of action; whatever he preached was not to form any theory, rather he, practiced that in his life. He was a religious reformer and political leader. Generally, people think that religion has nothing to do with the politics but for Gandhiji, politics divorced from the religion, will be dragged to the destruction. His political philosophy is the practical implication of his religious belief. To be religious is to be virtuous, to be a moral man.

A religious life is a purified life with strong social and political impact. To be religious is to be virtuous. Religion tames the savage nature of man. It purifies human motive and conduct and stimulates the co-operative and sympathetic nature of man. Politics is not a game that is to win by the politicians rather it is a great service to the people. Hence, without purified motive and conduct, a man cannot go ahead in the political field. That's why Gandhiji made religion and morality the basis of politics. In his words, "for
me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity.

A faithful practice of moral vows of non-violence, truth and love can only ensure religion in politics and only that will be a non-violent politics - a peaceful politics not a power politics. This faith and devotion in truth brought him to the politics. Therefore, that cannot be violent.

Gandhiji accepted socialistic pattern of democracy as a political theory that may be known as Gandhijism. He was a spiritual thinker and a moral thinker. Nothing could satisfy him unless it was guided by moral principle, this religious ideal found concrete shape in his political activity. He himself told - "I could not be leading a religious life, unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide, social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury' signifying nothing."27 This is the essence of Gandhijism.

Gandhiji never believed in power politics. Politics for him, is a means for the upliftment of all. Therefore, the State should provide an atmosphere in which individuals can get equal opportunity of right and justice, equal opportunity of self-development. After Independence, when the Congress took the charge of the Government, it was the duty of the Congress to provide a suitable atmosphere for which the people of India was claiming. The
Congress had vehemently criticized the paternalistic rule of British Government that had destroyed the initiative of the public. But declaring the State a welfare State they tried to turn over everything with power. Naturally inevitably dependence on the State was bound to come. It can rightly be said that in that State the people become a herd of sheep, always relying on a shepherded to drive them on to good pastures; the shepherd's staff soon becomes a rod of iron and the shepherd's turn into wolves.  

"The system is for the people. Hence, it can never be more important than man."

In the first stage, the Planner of the Nation were much interested in national building. Their aim was to make India great and powerful by adequate military potentiality with big industries and business to make it modern and up-to-date. Ganghiji could never accept this plan of the Congress and said, that it was no secret that the Congress willingly said good-bye to non-violence when it accepted power.

This concept of democracy is based purely on people's will. He has rightly defined it, "The art and science of mobilizing the entire physical, economic, spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in the service of the common good of all" The work of a Government is to face the problems of life through its own collective effort. In a real form of democracy, people will learn their hard experience of work. Gandhiji was a born democrat. In the Western democracy, 'the good of the greatest number' is given the primary importance but in India, the democracy will have to fight for the good of all. He told, 'my notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.' It is a Government of the people, by
the people and for the people. That is pure Ahimsa. What he meant for freedom is not only right of the strongest; rather, the right of the weakest, too. He believes in a non-violent State based on moral principle of co-operation and fellow-feeling and not on coercion. The State will interfere as minimum as it can do.

The State should promote a non-violent atmosphere, this political ideal was to establish Swaraj, self-government and that is not possible by force. Of all the countries in the world, India's uniqueness lies in its non-violent way which is its unbroken tradition and this mission will be far from violence.

Gandhi was a great political leader in the history of the Freedom Moment in India. His fight for the political freedom is the first step of his activity and his planning for social and political development was the second step of his activity. His political concept or political ideology is the outcome of his moral principles. His religion lies in his insatiable love for the millions of his countrymen and of this world. That's why he worked for the freedom of all. First is the political freedom, then social and economic freedom and finally all together, will lead to a Sarvodaya Samaj for self-realization. Adlous Huxley has rightly told that, 'Gandhi like Jefferson thought of politics in moral and religious terms.'

Politics without moral base will be degenerated. It will give birth to a dictator and give birth to a armament race crushing all whatever is valuable in the individuals. This Political ideology strengthens the idea of nationalism. But his nationalism is not restricted within the geographical boundaries rather it transcends the line of nationally and rises to the International morality.
The cause of unrest and strife today is the absence of faith in each other. War can be abolished only if national armies are abolished but that is an absurd imagination. Nations are very much ambitious and self-centered today. What we need today is purer roots of action and deep awakening that can only eliminate war.

The chief purpose of the state is to promote the well-being of the individuals. The Government should fulfill the interest of the Government rather than governors. H.G. Wells has rightly told, "modern democracy is not only legalism and equalitarianism. It is socialism, it sets its face against all abuse of the advantages of ownership." But Gandhiji advances one step forward when he utters that modern democracy is not only socialism and not only it abuses the advantages of ownership rather equates politics with morality. Though his theory has been sometimes criticized but everywhere, he has strongly advocated the non-violent basis of State. He suggested disarmament on the part of the democratic power as the only solution. He has rightly told, "I am as certain as I am sitting here that this would open Hitler's eyes and disarm him". He further added, "perhaps, but it would save the world from the butchery which seems impending." The hardest metal yields sufficient heat even so must the hardest heat melt before the sufficiency of the heat of non-violence, and there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat.

History of Freedom Movement was brought for Swaraj. Gandhiji for that goal took the weapons of non-violence, morality and religion. His idea shaped the density of the state after getting Swaraj. He was a political thinker and leader, never believed in absolute power. Absolute power corrupts
absolutely. He was more a spiritual thinker and social reformer.

He was a great optimist who succeeded in his goal through the non-violent means, Satya and Ahimsa. The problem was great but he vigorously fought it with his foresightedness and achieved it. He has been exemplary not for the country but for the world also. His political theory also aims at the same upliftment of all. His services rendered, will ever rewarded as the top, the best and the finest for the man of the world as a whole.

He was a born democratic who saw God in humanity and humanity in God. His concept is based on pure-non-violence. He was confident that Indian democracy can only be established by decentralized pattern of Government and Swaraj. That is, Home Rule, as the centralized system of Government is the root of coercive power. Therefore, power must be decentralized for the successful performance of the activity. In its own jurisdiction States will have their autonomy and the Centre will not interfere in each and every activity.

The non-violent movement though approved by Gokhale, yet Gandhiji derived the things of important moral values from it. He was a man of religion, so he turned to politics and looked upon life as a whole. He has been the champion of Freedom Movement. Due to his national character of leadership, he tried to penetrate into the minds of Indians for the cause of political freedom.

Swaraj means own Government. It is self-rule or home rule but Gandhiji elaborates Swaraj as 'every country is free to eat, free to drink, and to breath even so is every nationa free to manage its own affairs, no matter how holdly.' His emphasis on Swaraj was profound enough to elaborate independence
according to him swaraj and mere independence are different of one another. Gandhiji believed in freedom of the country means freedom of its own men in which there is no place of any kind of bondage. He clearly dreamt of Swaraj for one and all, not only this, but the real Swaraj is for poor man's Swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by prices and married man.35

Gandhiji never believed in anarchy, no such anarchism was his political ideal. His ideal state is, 'an ordered anarchy' or a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbors. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state.36 It is sure that a Government no where a state can exist. From practical point of view, some sort of Government is essential but it must be non-violent Government, that Governs least, a nearest approach to the self-governed stateless society. He was not in favour of excess state interference in the life of the individual. State should provide atmosphere for the all-sided development of the people. Therefore, Gandhiji stressed on democratic self-government. But Indian Government should imitate neither British, Russia, Italy not any other country. They have systems suited to their genius, we must have ours suited to ours.37 For him, the power of the government should be de-centralized.

The power should not be collected at one point or at one place. Centre should delegate its powers to the Stats and from Stats to the villages. True democracy can be realized in village Swaraj. From political point of view, it is Panchayat Raj. In his opinion, India is a country of villages, hence the power
should be given to Panchayat Raj. Self-help is the way of self-dependency and this can be achieved by agriculture. Small Scale Industries of a village through Panchayat Raj. In the year 1908, he wrote in the Hindu Swaraj, that he advocated rehabilitation of village polity and economy and took the constructive programme. He was confirmed that it was only through the self-sufficiency of the village communities through decentralization of power that would assure national reconstruction and through the reconstruction of its villages. A nation can only develop through its reconstructive programme. India lives in villages, hence village upliftment and constructive programme can only assure its development. For the development of our villages, we need village Development Programme for construction. "The problem of rural reconstruction in India is not the same as was the problem of reconstructing the devastated areas of France and Belgium after the Second Great World War. Their problem was only that of constructing the brick-walls of houses destroyed by common shells and bombs. The problem of the Indian villages is not so much to rebuild the tumbled down houses and mud huts as it is but to revive and develop the village life as a whole in all the aspects - socially, culturally, economically and from the point of view of sanitation and health."38

First of all, National unity should start from village. There should be no communal clash. Unity is the only strength of the Nation but that unity can never be established with social disparity. A nation's development needs the removal of disparity in all respect. The weaker section of the society should get maximum attention. There should not remain the term untouchables; weaker section may be very harmful for the stronger one, like the quick sand to the elephant. By providing equal opportunity to all - weak and strong,
male and female, rich and poor, the unity can be strengthened. Sanitation, education, village industries, service to the backward; all are the parts of the constructing programme.

The political structure of Independent India was to be not a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. In the Panchayat Raj, the toiling labour and the rich capitalist would be treated as equal. The village Panchayat will govern the village and will act as judicial, legislature and executive body combined together. The Punchas will be elected by the village people on the basis of adult franchise. Every Panchayat of five members (men and women) shall form a Unit. Two such Panchayats together, will elect one leader. After 100 Panchayats the 50 elected leaders, will be known as First Grade Leader and among themselves, elect a Second Grade Leader and work under him. In this way, Panchayats shall cover the whole Nation. These leaders will act for their own respective areas and jointly serve the village and whole nation. Gandhiji's was the aim to organize the whole country on the basis of Panchayat. The leaders will have direct contract with the villagers.

Village agriculture, sanitation, hygiene, education, legal qualification, adult franchise and self-dependency, will be developed in a proper and disciplined way. Villagers will be politically conscious and try to solve their problems themselves. It was Gandhian dream of self-managing village republic which is really a co-operative organization and only them, the evils of centralized form of Government can be abolished and whole nation can march towards progress.
Among the town and villages, Gandhiji thinks that cities are sucking the village life like blotting papers. He writes that Indian cities as 'blotting sheets of London and other western cities which consciously prey upon villages and share with you in exploiting them by becoming the commission agents of England." A big country like India, whose vast population is living in the villages, can only save it from foreign dependency if it harness all its energies for the realization of the constructive programme in the villages. Therefore, what we need today is the revival and reconstruction of the rural communities. Gandhiji was confident that only from decentralized pattern of village republic the villages can regain and restore its lost self-sufficiency and self-reliance and villages will rise to the highest form of development in social, political and economic field and will be an ideal village.

Gandhiji's repeated emphasis on decentralization is only to create equality and consciousness from the very bottom so that people from the very beginning, can understand their problems and can solve it by their own level. In these small groups, people will work out of love and cooperation. Centralization stress on the technique of regimentation, decentralization is the fundamental feature and vital force of democracy. Centralized power derives the minority of a nation and it checks the liberty of the individual.

Gandhiji was an idealist but not theoretical but practical idealist. His ideals were spiritual and moral values. His ideals were analysis of spiritual and moral values and was the synthesis of practical philosophy of all the religions. Hence his ideas of politics were based on trial and practices. Therefore, his politics was non-violent based on Satyagraha for a decentralized
non-party state and economic and social justice to all. His Rama Rajya was for one and all based on Karma.

The concept of state, according to Mahatma Gandhi, was a kind of freedom for all in which every individual will have equal saying. Gandhiji's view on society was not based on origin of society but he stressed on some kind of contract entered upon by individuals who saw that it was not possible for them to have anything for themselves and that some kind of understanding with others was essential for a healthier and more peaceful life. He tried to avoid strife and quarrel of the society. That is to say that he wanted a society which was to avoid violence, his society thus consisted non-violence and self-sacrifice. He, in this contest, tried to achieve general will for general good because that will be an opposition between individual good and social good. If thus originates a society of self-sacrifice then only a harmony between individual can be considered for the good of the society. This social organization meant for the development on the basis of theory for achieving co-operation without struggle for the value of work and labour of social purpose. Gandhiji's social ideas aimed at the establishment of a society in peace and happiness will reign supreme if individual including man and woman could realize their status and duties in the society.

The concept of Ramrajya is a symbol of ideal state based not only on political and economic ideal but it represents the fructification of the moral spirit, free of tension, conflicts and egoistic interests and characterized by harmony. By Ramrajya, his was not the mission to establish a Hindu Rajya rather a State with sovereign moral authority.
Adonned will religious basis of politics, Gandhiji began to utter about the greatness of the religion and his religion thus became the axial of his politics. With all greatness as a leader and his power of the pen, Gandhiji cannot in fairness be considered a systematic social and political of the type of plato and Hegel. Gandhiji's greatness lay in his lofty character, his political and moral leadership, his inner intuitive experiences and his message of Truth and Ahimsa.\textsuperscript{40} It is in this basis he meant to say that absolute truth in the hand of the Government will make the Government a tyrant one and in this situation, a public welfare will simply be a matter of imagination.

His concept of democracy was very clear. Democracy for him is a means for freedom but only when twisted with non-violence. A genuine democracy will provide equal opportunity to all. Violence should never be allowed to develop under the form of democracy that will be democracy but exploitation. A genuine democracy will minimize exploitation and coercion. That's why Gandhiji defined it 'the rule of unadulterated non-violence'.\textsuperscript{41} He has rightly told that, '... constitutional or democratic government is a distant dream so long as non-violence is not recognized as a living force an inviolable creed, not a mere policy.'\textsuperscript{42}

Gandhiji advocated a spiritualized democracy based on non-violent revolution. Opinion of the majority will be of great consideration but the opinion of the minority must be honoured, even the opinion of an individual should be honoured if that is sound. Thus a real democracy should discard the tyranny of the majority if it offends the moral sense.
A non-violent state or democracy must be secular. Generally, people think that religion and politics are two different things. Really it is so, if religion is a particular form of religion and politics is free of non-violence and truth. In reality, religion is inner purification, love and non-violence. To be religious, is to be virtuous in that case it is common to all the religions and the politics is the ground for the proper development of a nation. Therefore, it is only through religious guidelines that man can work in a proper way, in a right way wherever he belongs. Gandhian concept of religion in its broad sense accepts secularism. In a extraordinary way, he never uttered about any particular religion, like Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. For him Truth is God, that's why, even he could draw the atheists charismatic spell of truth. It is the unique feature that he thoroughly realized truth and it became the embarrassing weapon of politics. The realistic approach of Gandhiji to a man, for a man, of a man, is purely secular, progressive and for all round progress of mankind.

A secular man is not irreligious, if so, it mere negative approach because a religious man of any religious is not beyond determination but in a very real sense religion of that person is the religion for all in respect of love and faith. If anyone thinks that secularism is a particular type of religion that will be a false imagination. It is nothing but faith in universal principles of religions of this world. His belief in man is not for religious approach but on the basis of religion the 'reconciles himself with self-realization with service to society" He stressed on the holiness of the living and holiness in every action whether it is in the politics or in the social field. Holiness and inner
purification are the basis of religion. He insisted more on morality. The basis of religion, he has rightly remarked - 'True morality consists not in following the beaten path but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearless following it.' It promotes inner discipline in man. To him secularism is not a belief in a particular religion.

Secularism is not a belief in a particular religion, neither it means to deny the religion. India is a big country where believers in different religions live together and we know it well that religion is a faith in higher superhuman values. Man cannot live without religion hence by accepting the one we cannot deny the other. Secularism means no privilege on the basis of religion in social, economic and political life. Each one has the same right to live according to his religious faith but at the same time, none has the right to abuse the other religion to which one, he does not belong and for this we need religious tolerance.

India is a secular country, it does not mean that secularism is its religion. It means people of India are free to accept religion but are not allowed to abuse anyone, neither can deserve any privilege on the basis of religion. Rather it is religious tolerance and religious and religious equality. Morality is the basis of secularism which is the underlying principle of all religions.

Gandhiji defined God as Truth - God can be found in inner purification and in love. "God cannot be found in temples or idols or places of worship built by man's hand nor can he be found by abstinences. God can be found only through love, not earthly but divine."
The whole political and religious philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi moves round one important point - 'Satyagraha'. It is the moral pressure for the sake of truth, is a natural outcome of the supreme concept of truth. It is the power of truth. He was a votary of truth and had firm determination to establish the supremacy of spiritual values. Satyagraha is the force of the human soul against any kind of political, social and economic injustice domination that denies the truth. The life of Harischandra, and Prahlad are the stories for the vindication of truth. They are great Satyagrahies. Satyagraha is a spirit of resistance that Gandhiji inherited from his family tradition. His father was the Dewan of Porabandar when a political agent in Rajkot insulted the ruler of Rajkot. His father, Karamchanda Gandhi first time resisted against that insult. At first he used this Satyagraha in South Africa where Indians and many Asians were facing the inhuman treatment by the then African Government. His strong religious faith made him bold and brave enough to resist the unjustified authority.


Fasting is an important form of Satyagraha but it has to be applied only against those who are bound by ties of close personal affection or are responsive to moral persuasion. By this Gandhiji wants to say that fasting is a method that can be applied against one has love and sympathy. It cannot be fruitful if applied against a tyrant. In 1924, for Hindu-Muslim Unity, he
observed 21 days fasting. For self-purification it is the best way he thinks. For self-purification he observed 21 days fasting in 1933. For communal unity he observed fast in Calcutta and in Delhi in August 1947 and January 1948 respectively. It purifies political and economic influence but conditioned that it should be used in a proper way. Gandhiji was categorical in his view that fasting should be used as the last resort when all other techniques have been explored but have proved wanting. It has to be restored to only when absolutely necessary.46

Next non-violence, technique of Styagraha is Picketing. Gandhiji advocated the use of picketing for liquor opium and Foreign-Cloth. The volunteers will try to convince the owners of liquor, opium, wine and foreign-cloth, not to sell these things. In his articles, 'How to do picketing', published in Young India, he advocated that the volunteers should appeal the dealers and the purchasers both. They should all first go in a deputation to the Dealer and appeal to him to desist from carrying on the traffic and present him with leaflets setting forth facts and figures regarding drink or foreign-cloth as the case may be.

Gandhiji never supported underground activity to destroy rails, telephone connection, post offices and thana etc. this was a path of violence, he never could appreciate.

Thus it may be said that in his political philosophy, Gandhiji advocated non-violence and morality as the basis of politics. In the State the people will have the right to protest the unjustified and coercive authority. He was truly a religious person- Satya and Ahimsa were the two strong weapons for him
and Satyagraha was the path leading to that goal of freedom. He was true supporter and a votary of democracy. In his non-violent democracy, lofty aspiration of the individuals can be attained. His political concept provides equal opportunity of right and justice to all through decentralization of power that is self-government or Home Rule. His concept of Panchayat Raj is a noble aspiration to promote social justice and political rights to all from corner to corner of the Nation. He has rightly told, "democracy comes naturally to him who is habituated normally to yield willing obedience to all laws human or divine. I claim to be a democrate both by instinct and training."47

The entire philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi is derived from the principle of spiritual unity. His mission was to establish human relationship through non-violence, love and co-operation. "A country where social co-operation and social solidarity resigned at least within case, within villages and with Urban areas, has been entirely disrupted and distinguished by unlimited and uncontrolled competition."48 Hence we need a mutual relationship based on co-operation, not on blind competition. This is only possible through a disciplined life of the individual in a society in a Nation. He had a firm conviction of discipline and for the welfare of the society, for the common good, he was bold enough to resist the coercive authority wherever it crushed the human right and justice. His was the motto to establish a socio-economic structure of non-violent state based on justice and morality, not on power and violence. Dhawan has rightly examined the idea of Gandhian philosophy. It is only through the path shown by Gandhi that can be the path guide for the Nation and the World.49 If the World is to be saved from the triumph of authority, over liberty and justice, if peace and democracy are to prevail, leaders of unquestioned integrity and a courage vigilant civic sense in the mass are indispensable.50
SECTION -D

RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS

Meaning of Religion

Gandhi considers himself to be a Hindu, his concepts of religion point to a general religion which is common to different religions. Gandhi said that when he speaks of religion, he does not mean any conventional or usual religion, but that religion which is at the root of all religions and that this fundamental religion harmonizes the historical religions and makes them valid. "Just as a tree has one trunk but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect religion, although it is divided into many as it appears through a human intermediary."

Gandhi looked in the historical religions for a common factor. This is the true, generally valid, religion. This for its part is criterion for the justification of the historical religions, at least in such a way that they must not conflict with the universal religion.

One of the things that may have given a push to Gandhi's search for a universal religion was the fact that he wished—for ethical and political reasons—to unite all Indians. One of the great obstacles to Indian independence was the difference of religious customs. Gandhi also tried to replace the concept "God" by the word "Truth". As a young man he said "God is Truth" but as the years went by, he changed this to "Truth is God", inverting the subject and predicate. According to Gandhi's logic, this exchange made no difference, but, as Professor Datta explains, this change was meant to appeal psychologically to every man." Truth is in principle approved of by all, including the atheists.
It is characteristic of the central metaphysical concepts of the universal religion that as many people as possible can accept them on moral grounds.

Gandhi briefly defines religion as trust in the moral organization of the universe. The goal of man's life is to conquer evil in himself and reach the good. The influence of religion can be found in daily social intercourse.

Religions are different roads to the same goal. For this reason, one must not reject other religions, but anybody belonging to any religion can receive from others what is good in them. The thought of the fusion of the historical religions is also evident when Gandhi considers the central teachings of Buddha to be nowadays incorporated in Hinduism.

Gandhi considered religion to be a very personal matter. It is based upon the individual's own experience and ability to understand. Religious writings and tradition, however, form the "surroundings of growth" but religious concepts learnt by rote are of no help in the most difficult situations. At such times only personal faith is of any help. This true wisdom cannot be communicated to others through books; it must be personally realized in one's life and experience. Faith publishes itself and it is not necessary to spread it in order to convert. Gandhi considers it better to achieve perfection in the practice of one's inherited religion than to accept another religion.

Gandhi considers that the "holy books" of all religions are generally "inspired" but there are two dangers in interpreting them first, they are received through human prophets and second they are explained by interpreters.
If, Gandhi goes on to say, we are ourselves imperfect our understanding of religion is always developing and may be reinterpreted. Shastras are always growing and each one is the result of the needs of its times. Thus, the historical religions with their traditional texts can help the searcher other truth, but cannot be absolute authorities, Authority resides in the individual and he must develop himself in order to become a better interpreter. "The writings cannot go beyond reason and Truth. They exist to purify reason and illuminate Truth".

Religion is to be distinguished from (religious) customs. A custom may change but religion remains unchanged according to the demands of historical conditions is religious custom. Behind custom, however, there is a true generally valid and unchanging religion.

Gandhi considers it the duty of every civilized man and woman to read with sympathy the writings of every religion. Two colleagues of Gandhi, Vinoba and Pyarelal, studied Arabic and Koran in prison. Gandhi considered that their Hinduism had been enriched as a result.

We cannot say, in fact that Gandhi supported any historical religion in its contemporary form. He took a cool view of the idea of compulsory confessional education in schools by teachers paid by the state. He said that he believed that religious education should be uniquely the task of the religious community. He pointed out that he was not fundamentals of ethics were common to all religions. He was of opinion that general ethical teaching should unquestionably be the task of society as a whole. By ethics, Gandhi seems to have meant in this case the normative aspect of religions which is in principle common to all of them.
All religions are of equal value. In order that things should be correctly understood in their contexts, Gandhi points out that the Koran is to be read through Muslim eyes, the Bible through Christian eyes and Gita through Hindu eyes. Gandhi is prepared to be critical especially towards Hinduism, because he is himself a Hindu has been brought up in its culture and is more familiar with it than with other religions. He is ready to accept from other religions that which seems to him to be good, but he hesitates to criticize them because he is uncertain of his knowledge of them. Thus, his criticism of the historical religions is principally directed towards his own.

This evidently includes both a study of his own philosophy and an enquiry into the justification for it.

Gandhi's religiousness does not exclude or reject the criticism of religion, since the recognition of the fundamental equality of all religions does not destroy the distinction between religion and irreligion. We must not tolerate irreligion. Sanctifying a cruel custom is not religion, but irreligion. Religion which does not take the practical things of life into account and does not try explain them is not true religion.

GANDHIJI ON RELIGIOUS SOLUTIONS:

Gandhi considered himself a Sanatani Hindu and believed in cow protection and the central fact of Hindusim which tells everyone to worship God according to his own faith or Dharma. As regards the origin of untouchability, Gandiji said that when cow protection became an article of faith with our ancestors, those who permisted in eating beef were excommunicated. Social boycott was applied to the recalcitrants and their
sins were visited upon their children also. The practice which had probably its origin in good intentions hardened into usage, and even verses crept in our sacred books giving the practice a permanence wholly undeserved and still less justified. Gandhiji said whether his theory was correct or not, untouchability was repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity and love. A religion that established the worship of cow could not possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And he should be content to be torn to pieces rather that disown the suppressed classes. Hindus would certainly never deserve freedom, nor would they get it if they allowed their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. He said "And as I love Hinduism dearer that life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not dany God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing."

On 16 April 1945, Gandiji declared that he wished to say that caste in Hinduism was an anachronism, must hinder the growth of true religion and must go, if both Hinduism and India were to live and grow from day to day. Gandhiji told English and American missionaries that he did not believe in people telling others of their faith, especially with a view to conversion. Faith did not admit of telling. It had to be lived and then it became self-propagating. To him a practice which was good enough in particular period would, it blindly repeated in another, land people into the slough of despondency. He asked because we discarded a section of humanity one day, should we brand their descendants today as outcastes? He said that unlike christinaity or Islam, Hinduism did not invite persons of other faiths to join its fold it enjoined all to follow their own religions. There was no question of anybody embracing Hinduism. Everybody could practice Hinduism.
According to him "Varnasharma is a law. The practical question is the caste system. Castes are subject to increase and decrease (in number) They come into existence and they disappear. Only the man himself can leave Hinduism, though he may be expelled from the caste. Excommunication by the caste is a mode of punishment and ought to be available to every community". He felt that even a blind man could see that the practice of untouchability was contrary to Dharma. The long existence of this practice did not permit us to see the Adharma inherent in it. Gandhiji said that to make some persons crawl on their stomach, to segregate them, to drive them to live on the outskirts of the village, not to be concerned whether they live or die, to give them food left over by others all this certainly could not be religion. This was Dyerism. There was no self-control in the practice of untouchability. By treating Bhangis and others as untouchables, we only tolerated filth and bred diseases. If we looked upon untouchables as touchables, we should see to it that he limb of ours remained clean. It was the abuse of caste that should be combated, not the thing itself. Religions like nations were being weiged in the balance. God's grace and revelation were the monopoly of no race or nation. They descended equally upon all who waited upon God. That religion and that nation would be blotted out from the face of the earth which pinned its faith to injustice, untruth or violence.

About temple entry Gandhiji said that it was the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables and assure them that they were not outcasts before God. It was not a question of Harijanas asserting their right of temple entry or claiming it. They might or might not want to enter a temple even when it was declared open to them. But it was
the bounded duty of every caste Hindu to secure that opening for Harijans. In consonance with these views, Gandhi made it a point not to enter a Hindu temple which was not open to Harijans. He observed, “When caste Hindus have of their own inner conviction and therefore voluntarily got rid of the present day untouchability, we shall be called Harijans, for according to my humble opinion, caste Hindus will then have found favour with God and may therefore be fitly described as His men.”

To Gandhi, Harijan service was religious obligation. There was no room in it for cunning. It had to be absolutely truthful and non-violent. It could be accomplished only by sacrifice and penance. Gandhi was afraid that we might not be able to win the trust of Harijans without self-purification. It should not surprise us if the untouchables looked upon all we did with suspicion and distrust. Hitherto we had been riding their shoulders, We must dismount. We must regard them as we regard other Hindus.

Gandhi declared that the real hunger of the Harijans which needed to be satisfied was for decent living as self-respecting, equal citizens, for a square deal as human beings, for freedom from fear, inculcation of clean and sanitary habits, thrift, industry and education. This required perseverance, self-sacrifice and patient, intelligent labouring on our part. If people gave Gandhi money to feed Harijans, he should refuse to accept it. For he did not want to make beggars and idlers of them. According to Gandhi, no one was high and no one was low in this world; he who thought he belonged to a high class was never high class, and he who believed himself to be low was merely a victim of ignorance. Virtue would always command respect. But when a man
of virtue thought much of himself, his virtue ceased to have any significance for the world. Talents of all kinds were a trust and must be utilized for the benefit of society. Gandhiji observed that we lived unto ourselves fully when we lived unto society. The position in ancient time notwithstanding, the world was now wide awake. There was ever increasing realization that all were equal as human souls. The fact that we were all creatures of one God ruled out all ideas of high and low. When we said that no one was high-born or low-born, it did not mean that all had or ought to have equal talents. All did not have equal talents, equal property or equal opportunities. Still, all were equal like brothers and sisters of different dispositions, abilities and ages.

Gandhiji asked that if we were children of the same God, how could there be any rank among us? The very first mention of Varna in the Vedas likened the four varnas to the four main parts of the body. Was the head superior to the arms, the belly and the feet, or the feet superior to the other three? What would happen to the body if these members began to quarrel about rank? He observed, "The law of Varna is one of absolute equality among all the creatures of God. It is the basis of all the religions of the world. The verses in the smritis about Shudras deserve to be summarily rejected as being contrary to the spirit of humanity."74

"The world cannot be refashioned into one country with one religion, one race, one language, one culture; the world will at best be a federation of countries, religions, races, languages, culture—all anxious not only to live and let live, but to imbibe all that is best in their compeers."75
This, to Gandhiji's mind, obviated the necessity of conversion in the sense of a change of religious labels. Cases of voluntary conversion there might be, but they would be very rare. He said the Hindu mass mind would not take kindly to conversion. If he was able to wean the Muslims or Hindus from the error of conversion, they might give it up. Otherwise they might preach their own religion, but must not convert people by force of arms. Forcible conversions he categorically refused to recognize. He objected to the mass conversion of Harijans and other poorer classes carried on by Christian missionaries in India for similar reasons, and he minced no words in conveying this view to the missionaries whenever they showed their willingness to hear him as in fact they often did. C.Rajgopalchari writes, "Mahatma Gandhi has made it clear that he disapproved of seeking to convert people from one religion to another. Conversion would mean asking them to give up the use of names, symbols and rituals in which they were brought up form childhood and inducing them to adopt a new set of names, symbols and rituals."76

Gandhiji said: "......Untouchability is a hydra-headed monster, appearing in many shapes. Some of them are very subtle. If I have jealousy for any human being, that also is a species if untouchability. I do not know if my dream about the removal of untouchability will be fully realized while I am living."77

"It is as wrong to destroy caste because of the outcaste as it would be to destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it or of a crop because of the weeds. The outcasteness, in the sense we understand it, has therefore to be
destroyed altogether. 78 Gandhiji maintained that if the untouchables were the outcasts of the Aryan society, so much the worse for that society, and if the Aryans at some stage in their progress regarded a certain class of people as outcaste by way of punishment, there was no reason why that punishment should descend upon their progeny irrespective of the causes for which their ancestors were punished. That there was untouchability even amongst untouchables merely demonstrates that the evil could not be confined and that its deadening effect was all-pervading. The existence of untouchability amongst untouchables was an additional reason for cultured Hindu society to rid itself of the curse with the quickest dispatch.

To Gandhiji all religions were more or less true as they had proceeded from the same God. But they were all imperfect because they had come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality. The real Shuddhi movement should consist in each one trying to arrive at perfection in his or her own faith. In such a plan character would be the only fact. What was the use of crossing from one compartment to another, if it did not mean a moral rise? He asked, "What is the meaning of my trying to convert to the service of God (for that must be the implication of shuddhi or Tabligh) when those who are in my fold are everyday denying God by their actions? 'Physician, heal thyself' is more true in matters religious than mundane. 79

Gandhiji was against the modern method of proselytizing. A years experience of proselytizing both in south Africa and India had convinced him that it had not raised the general moral tone of the converts who had imbibed the superficialities of European civilization, and had missed the
teaching of Jesus. He wanted to refer to the general tendency and not to brilliant exceptions. According to him, the indirect contribution of Christian missionary effort was great. It had stimulated Hindu and Muslim religious research. It had forced us to put our own houses in order. The great educational and curative institutions of Christian missions were also counted amongst indirect results, because they had been established, not for their own sake, but as an aid to proselytizing.

To Gandhiji proselytizing under the cloak of humanitarian work was unhealthy and resentful. He asked, "why should I change my religion because a doctor who professes Christianity as his religion has cured me of some disease or why should the doctor expect or suggest such a change whilst I am under his influence? Is not medical relief its own reward and satisfaction? Or why should I whilst I am in a missionary educational institutions have Christian teaching thrust upon me? In my opinion, these are not uplifting and give rise to suspicion if not even secret hostility." Faith is not imparted like secular subjects. It is given through the language of the heart. If a man has living faith, it spreads its aroms, as the rose its scent. Because of it invisibility, the extent of its influence is far wider than that of the visible beauty of the colour of the petals. He said, "I am, than, not against conversion. But I am against the modern methods of it conversion now a days has become a matter of business, like any other. I remember having read a missionary report saying how much it cost per head to convert and then presenting a budget for the next harvest."
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