CHAPTER – II

MAHATMA GANDHI AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction

The concept of Social justice is highly discussed by almost all the leading and eminent personalities in various academic disciplines. The reforms made by leading scholars and statesmen are noteworthy and none the less much remains to be done. For India’s future great personalities like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Mandela tried their best to at least minimize the injustice that had been unleashed towards the downtrodden section. In this study we may not forget the invaluable role played by Mahatma Gandhiji in South Africa. Gandhi’s ideology such as Truth, Satyagrah and Ahimsa almost has touched all the nations in the modern world for furtherance of peaceful existence. Recently in America the Government planned to name a district in memory of Mahatma Gandhiji. Such a reputation and admiration was widely acclaimed by all the nations and it is because of Gandhiji’s policies and ideas regarding weaker sections or minorities. This chapter has made
efforts to portray Gandhian perceptions on behalf of the downtrodden people.

**Social discrimination**

In Indian society the caste systems untouchability is fairly old which generated social hatred and discriminatory feelings of high and low caste and as a result of this the latter category suffered for centuries in the hands of the former. Time and again, ceaseless efforts were made by social reformers to alleviate the status of downtrodden and bring them to a level by which they could breathe and subsist with some confidence in the society. This was, however, a most complex problem, the complete or satisfactory solution of which could not be evolved in spite of efforts by prominent personalities including social reformers, educationists and political leaders of our society. For example, Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Nanak, Dayanand and others played their social and religious role at some time or the other to reform the Indian society besides; numerous socio-religious reform movements had deep linkage with the cause of the untouchables who were labelled with a serious stigma on the fair name of Hinduism. It should be noted that almost all reform movements who tried to liberate the Indian society from the caste
systems have resulted in to castes, like Bhuddism, Jainism, Sikh, Arya samaj, Bramho samaj, etc.

The idea of social discrimination dawned on Gandhi in South Africa where he engaged himself against the discriminatory attitude of the South African government against Indians. The problem was akin to that of untouchability as the migrants were treated as inferior to the local population which enjoyed numerous basic rights legally denied to Indians. As a young lawyer Gandhi began to realize of the impact of their life which had weakened their social and moral fabric essential for the growth of physical and economic faculties of human beings. In India, too he was confronted with this problem when he came back to his motherland in 1915, during the second year of the First World War. Ghandijis entry in the congress, and Indian politics was too late, as the reform movement against the domination of the upper caste and Brahminsm, was attacked by Jotrao Phule (A gardener) by caste, who created a revolution against the Upper caste, and he was the first reformer in India who belonged to non-white collar and had developed a mass awakening. It was 1873 he established a platform to echo his ideology from Sathya Shodhak Samaj (Truth Seeking Society) in Pune, a centre of learning in
Maharashtra. Even Ghandiji after his arrival in Indian politics had accepted the importance of reformation of the caste system in India. It is in this context he called M.G. Ranade as his Guru.

For him the reconstruction of the life of the nation was of utmost significance. This could be achieved by alleviating the social status of the untouchables. He always called untouchability as a cruel and inhuman institution which violated human dignity. He did not believe that the Imperialistic ambitions of Britain were alone responsible for our slavery, but it was the neglect of our national duty which was primarily responsible for it. A reformed India, he stated, would be a free India.

Untouchability in its extreme form always caused him so much pain, because he considered himself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism. He always regarded it as an excrescence in Hinduism, and had even did not hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. To remove untouchability was a penance that caste Hindus owned to Hinduism and to themselves. Thus the purification required was not of untouchables, but of the so called superior castes.
In fact, untouchability in India, as the race and color problems in the West, rested upon the idea of the superiority of one section of people over another on account of their birth. A Brahman might be as poor as the untouchable, but he was not ill-treated by our society on that account. The Mahatma called these so called religious sanctions as a serious stigma on the fair name of a society which has deep-rooted culture and historical traditions to support its identity.

Gandhi called Harijans as men of God and always kept in view their social plight which he endeavored to uplift by devising schemes for a change in their status.

“Harijan means ‘a man of God’. All the religion of the world describes God pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, help of the helpless and Protector of the weak. The rest of the world apart, in India who can be more friendless, helpless or weaker than the forty millions or more Hindus of India who are classified as ‘untouchable’? If, therefore, any body of people can be fitly described as men of God, they are surely these helpless, friendless, and despised people. Hence, Gandhiji in the pages of *Navajivan*, pointed “I have always
adopted Harijan as the name signifying ‘untouchables’ not that the change of name brings about any change of status, but one may at least be spared the use of a term which is itself one of reproach”.

When caste Hindus have of their own inner conviction and, therefore, voluntarily, got rid of the present-day untouchability, we shall all be called Harijans; for, according to my humble opinion, caste Hindus will then have found favour with God and may therefore, be aptly described as His men.”

Hinduism and Untouchability

Gandhi never reconciled himself with untouchability. According to him, ‘untouchability was an excrescence’.

“I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence in Hinduism. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day. I should be ashamed to think that dedication of girls to virtual prostitution was a part of Hinduism. Yet it is practiced by Hindus in many parts of India. I consider it positive irreligion to sacrifice goats to Kali and do not consider it a part of Hinduism. Hinduism is a growth of ages. The very name Hinduism
was given to the religion of the people of Hindustan by foreigners. There was, no doubt, at one time sacrifice of animals offered in the name of religion. But it is not religion, much less is it Hindu religion. And so also it seems to me, that when cow-protection became an article of faith with our ancestors, those who persisted in eating beef were excommunicated. The civil strife must have been fierce. Social boycott was applied not only to the recalcitrant, but 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. Whether my theory is correct or not, untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity or love. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow cannot possibly countenance or warrants a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom, nor get it if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hinduism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing”.2
Gandhi claimed that he was a Sanitanist. For him, Vedas were indefinable as God and Hinduism. The reverent reading greatly strengthened his faith in the Gita. To further elaborate his point of view, he opined:

“I have letters, some of them angrily worded, from those who style themselves Sanatanists. For them untouchability is the essence of Hinduism. Some of them regard me as a renegade. Some others consider that I have imbibed notions against untouchability and the life from Christianity and Islam. Some again quote scriptures in defense of untouchability. To these I have promised a reply through my public statements. I would venture, therefore to tell these correspondents that I claim myself to be a Sanatanist. Their definition of a Sanatanist is obviously different from mine. For me Santana Dharma is vital faith handed down from generations belonging even to pre-historic period and based upon the Vedas and the writings that followed them. For me the Vedas are as indefinable as God and Hinduism. It would be only partially true to say that the Vedas are the four books which one finds in print. These books are themselves the remnants of the discourses left by unknown seers. Those of later
generations added to these original treasures according to their lights. There then arose a great and lofty-minded man, the composer of the Gita. He gave to the Hindu world a synthesis of Hindu religion, at once deeply philosophical and yet easily to be understood by any unsophisticated seeker. It is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it, and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how one can live up to it. And I claim to be a Sanatanist because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book. Whatever is contrary to its main theme I reject as un-Hindu. It excludes no faith and no teacher. It gives me great joy to be able to say that I have studied the Bible, the Koran, the Zend Avesta and the other scriptures of the world with the same reverence that I have given to the Gita. This reverent reading has strengthened my faith in the Gita. They have broadened my outlook and, therefore, my Hinduism. Lives of Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed as I have understood them have illumined many a passage in the Gita. What, therefore, these Sanatanist friends have hurled against me as a taunt has been to me a source of consolation. I take pride in calling myself a Hindu, because I find the term broad enough not merely to tolerate but to assimilate
the teachings of prophets from all the four corners of the earth. I find no warrant for untouchability in this Book of Life. On the contrary it compels me, by an appeal to my reason and a more penetrating appeal to my heart, in language that has a magnetic touch about it, to believe that all life is one and that it is through God and must return to Him. According to the Sanatana Dharma taught by that venerable Mother, life does not consist in outward rites and ceremonial, but it consists in the uttermost inward purification and merging oneself, body, soul and mind, in the divine essence. I have gone to the masses in their millions with this message of the Gita burnt into my life, and they have listened to me, I am quite sure, not for any political wisdom or for eloquence, but because they have instinctively recognized me as one of them, as one belonging to their faith. As days have gone by, my belief has grown stronger and stronger that I could not be wrong in claiming to belong to Sanatana Dharma, and if God wills it, He will let me seal that claim with my death”.

**Temple entry**

Time and again Gandhi pleaded for the temple-entry for the Harijans. He did this exercise through his consistent writing in *Young India* and the *Harijans*. He also practiced it through numerous
public meetings as well as by living amongst them. He opined that temple entry was the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables and assured them that they were not outcastes before God.

Gandhi stated that there should be perfect freedom for Harijans to enter ordinary temples and ordinary schools and to use common wells. He also recommended erection of model schools and model temples specially designed for the convenience of untouchables.

**In the words of Mahatma**

“In the beginning of the movement as I had conceived it on my return from South Africa in 1915, I had thought that it was wholly inconsistent with the movement for removing untouchability to build separate temples or schools for them. But experience taught me that the movement could not proceed upon strict logic, and that we Hindus had so much suppress a third of ourselves that even after the articulate Hindus had with one voice declared for removal. The suppressed brethren would for a long time need the helping hand in a variety of ways. After the theoretical, lip-removal of untouchability, if no special effort was made, the vast bulk of them would not readily take
advantage of the removal and the ignorant mass would not tolerate them especially when the latter would be naturally clumsy in their department or pardonably forward in the enjoyment of long with hold freedom. I am therefore convinced that the two things will have to go hand in hand perfect freedom to enter ordinary temples and ordinary schools and to use common wells, at the same time as erection of model schools and model temples specially designed for the convenience of ‘untouchables’ but open to the others subject always to priority for ‘untouchables’. It was along this line of reasoning that I suggested in the brief note for the Calcutta Municipal Gazette that the Municipalities could foster removal of untouchability by erecting temples and model schools for the suppressed classes side by side with the attempt to have the existing temples thrown open to these countrymen of ours. My note may therefore on no account be taken as an excuse for condoning prohibition against entry into temples etc.”

Among the marks of untouchability to be removed was the prohibition against temple entry by Harijans. In the course of the struggle, it was discovered that the British Courts in India had recognized this evil custom, so much so that certain acts done by
‘untouchables’ as such came to be offence under the British India Penal Code. Thus, the entry by an ‘untouchable’ into a Hindu temple would be punishable as a crime under the I.P.C.

Before, therefore, the movement of temple-entry can make headway, it has become imperative to have this anomaly removed. It is for this purpose that Shri Ranga Iyer has given notice of two bills to be introduced in the Central Legislature.

With due regard to the Sanatanists, it is difficult to understand the cry of ‘religion in danger’. Under neither bill will a single temple be opened against the will of the majority of temple-goers in question. The second bill expressly says so. The first bill takes up a neutral attitude. It does not help a Haijan to force his way into a temple. The reformers do not seek to compel the opponents to their will. They desire, by the fairest means possible, to convert the majority or the minority, as the case may be, to their view of untouchability.

It is said that the Harijans themselves do not want temple entry and that they want only betterment of their economic and political condition. The reformer, too, wants the latter, but he believes that
this betterment will be much quicker brought about, if religious equality is attained. The reformer denies that the Harijans do not want temple-entry. But it may be that they are as disgusted with Caste Hindus and Hindu religion itself as to want nothing from them. They may in sullen discontent choose to remain outside the religious pale. Any penance, on the part of caste Hindus maybe too late.

“Nevertheless, the caste Hindus who recognize that untouchability is a blot, in Hinduism have to atone for the sin of untouchability. Whether, therefore, Harijans desire temple-entry or not, caste Hindus have to open their temples to Harijans, precisely on the same terms as to other Hindus. For a caste Hindu with any sense of honor, temple prohibition is a continuous breach of the pledge taken at the Bombay meeting of September last. Those, who gave their word to the world and to God that they would have the temples opened for the Harijans, have to sacrifice their all, if need be, for redeeming the pledge. Temple-entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the ‘untouchables’ and assure them that they are not outcastes before God”\(^5\).
Several correspondents have taken me to task for advocating temple-entry for Harijans without emphasizing the necessity of temple reform. There is no doubt that temple reform is necessary. But, here, again, there is need for caution. Some of them think that it is possible to replace all the existing temples with new ones. I do not share that view. All temples will never be alike. They will always vary, as they have done in the past, with the varying human needs. What the reformer should be concerned with is a radical change more in the inward spirit than in the outward form. If the first is changed, the second will take care of itself. If the first remains unchanged, the second, no matter how radically changed, will be like a white sculpture. A mausoleum, however beautiful, is a tomb and not a mosque, and a bare plot of consecrated ground may be a real, Temple of God.

Therefore the first desideratum is the priest. My ideal priest must be a man of God. He must be a true servant of the people. He should have the qualifications of a guide, friend and philosopher to those among whom he is officiating. He must be a whole-timer with the least possible needs and personal ties. He should be well versed in the Shastras. His whole concern will be to look after the welfare of
the people. I have not drawn a fanciful picture. It is almost true to life. It is based on the recollections of my childhood. The priest I am recalling was looked upon by the prince and the people. They flocked round him for advice and guidance in the time of their need.

If the septic says such a priest is hard to find now-a-days, he would be partly right. But I would ask the reformer to wait for building the temple of his deal till he finds his priest.

“Meanwhile let him cultivate in himself the virtues he will have in the priest of his imagination. Let him expect these from the priests of existing temples. In other words, by his gentle and correct conduct, let him infect his immediate surroundings with the need of the times and let him have faith that his thought, surcharged with his own correct conduct, will act more powerfully than the mightiest dynamo. Let him not be impatient to see the result in a day. A thought may take years of conduct to evolve the requisite power. What are years or generations in the life of a great reformer? The existing temples can become real Houses of God today, if the worshippers will insist on the priests conforming to the ideal presented by me.”
On the temple-entry Bill introduced by C.S. Ranga Iyer on 24 March 1933, the Mahatma commented thus:

……‘It is said to think that the anti-untouchability measure has been hung up for one year by the Legislative Assembly and that the amendment to hang it up received the support of the Government. But the reformers may not rest till untouchability is blotted out of the Statute Book. Meanwhile, the process of having temples opened by consent of trustees and temple-goers and the general propaganda in favors of opening temples should continue……..

But I observe that a Harijan Conference at Agra has passed the following resolution:

This Jatav Conference . . . considers that the methods and system of work of the movement is not satisfactory. Harijan movement lays stress on the temple-entry problem more than on economic and educational problems. The former . . . will produce slave mentality . . . Hence . . . great emphasis must be laid on
the educational and economic aspect of the progress. Inter-caste marriage and inter-dining must be on the programme of the movement . . .

The economic and educational uplift is no doubt, an essential part of true repentance by caste Hindus. It is a test of the sincerity of their professionals. But the uplift will not be complete without the throwing open of temples. The throwing open of temples will be an admission of the religious equality of Harijans. It will be the surest sign of their ceasing to be the outcastes of Hinduism, which they are today.

It is beside the point that tens of thousands of Harijans do not want to enter temples. If it were properly probed, the fact would be found to be quite otherwise. Thousands of Harijans do want to enter temples. Only they have been so accustomed to the prohibition that the very hope of entering temples had dried up in them. They believe that admission to temples on a part with the other Hindus is impossibility.

But whether Harijans desire the consolation of temple-entry or not, whether, if temples are thrown open to them, they will make use
of them or not, caste Hindus have to perform their simple duty. They have to open their temples for Harijans to offer worship, precisely on the same terms as for themselves. A debtor is not absolved from the duty of payment because his creditor does not care for the payment, or has forgotten the debt altogether.

And when temples are thrown open to Harijans, schools, wells and many similar facilities will be automatically open to Harijans. It is easy enough to realize that untouchability may subsist side by side with economic uplift. Many Ezhawas in Travancore and Namashudras in Bengal possess decent fortunes and are yet treated as Pariahs of society. The bar sinister is all the more galling to them by reason of their flourishing condition. Dr. Ambedkar suffers from the curse in spite of his high educational attainments and his superior economic condition. He is naturally more sensitive to the insult of untouchability. But the reproach will be automatically removed, immediately caste Hindus proclaim the banishment of untouchability by admitting Harijans to their temples in terms of absolute equality with themselves. It will not then become necessary for any Harijan individually to go to temple, if he does not desire to do so. The declaration of the opening of temples will cover him with the rest. It
will be like the abolition of slavery. It will be a vast and glorious step in the much-needed and overdue purification of Hinduism.

Temple-entry permission, to be of use, has naturally to be a voluntary act on the part of Hindus. It has to be, therefore, a genuine change of heart in the caste Hindus. Legislation is nevertheless necessary because of the fact that in law the entry of Harijans into caste Hindu temples is said to be prohibited. Legislation will constitute the seal of approval of the vast mass of Hindus. I personally should not want that legislation in the teeth of universal caste Hindu opposition. My own belief is that caste Hindu, as a whole do not oppose temple-entry by Harijans. I should abide by the result of an honestly conducted referendum. Anyway, let the reformers realize that, whatever happens in the Legislature at Delhi, the movement for temple-entry and the necessary legislation must continue.

“There are other things in the resolution quoted above which call for explanation or criticism. This must be postponed for a future issue of the Harijan.”
The conversion of untouchable to Islam or Christianity was criticized by Gandhi. He favored religious bonds as it was a matter of the heart. Others should not take advantage of the helplessness of untouchables. Conversion’s of castes was dominant feature under the British rule,

The impact of Religion and Conversion’s

“A remedy suggested to ‘untouchables’ is rejection of Hinduism and wholesale conversion to Islam or Christianity. And if a change of religion could be justified for wordily betterment, I would advise it without hesitation. But religion is a matter of the heart. No physical inconvenience can warrant abandonment of one’s own religion. If the inhuman treatment of the Panchamas were a part of Hinduism, its rejection would be a paramount duty both for them and for those like me who would not make a fetish even of religion and condone every evil in its sacred name. But I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism. It is rather its excrescence to be removed by every effort. And there is quite an army of Hindu reformers who have set their heart upon ridding Hinduism of this blot. Conversion, therefore, I hold, is no remedy whatsoever.
Those who use the threat (of conversion) do not, in my humble opinion, know the meaning of religion. Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change religion as he changes his garments. He takes it with him beyond the grave. Nor does a man profess his religion to oblige others. He professes a religion because he cannot do otherwise. A faithful husband loves his wife as he would love no other women. Even her faithlessness would not wean him from his faith. The bond is more than blood-relationship. So is the religious bond if it is worth anything. It is a matter of the heart. An ‘untouchable’ who loves his Hinduism in the face of persecution at the hands of those Hindus who arrogate to themselves a superior status is a better Hindu than the self-styled superior Hindu, who by the very act of claiming superiority denies his Hinduism. Therefore, those who threaten to renounce Hinduism are in my opinion betraying their faith”.

If, afflicted by the persecution and losing hope of ever receiving help from the other Savarna Hindus, the poor Harijans seek the shelter of Christianity, we may not be surprised. And our grief is worse than useless if we cannot turn it into powerful energy. Conversion under the stress of physical discomfort is no spiritual
conversion. But we may not grumble if Harijans change their faith in order to better their material conditions and to secure protection from persecution.

What we need to deplore is the cause of conversion. Let us realize and own that Savarna Hindus are the cause. Will they listen to this advice? Conversions are not one small result of the disease. Remove the cause, and the conversion will cease, as also many other worst results.

Men who threaten to leave their religion, because of some other men, pretending to be of the same faith as they, prevent them from entering temple. Such men cannot be said to be actuated by the religious spirit. Temples are houses of worship. They are for all who believe in them. Religious persecution is not a thing of today. It is as ancient as religion itself. It tries and purifies the persecuted, who prove themselves staunch in their faith. If Harijans can patiently bear persecution, they are bound to come triumphant in the end.

But the threat to desert the faith they have uncomplainingly professed from times immemorial, if their right of temple-entry is not
recognized, puts them out of court. Sanatanists probably do not care if Harijans leave the Hindu fold. Fortunately, there are tens of thousands of Harijans whose faith remains unshakable in spite of persecution.

“Religion is an essentially a personal matter. It is one between oneself and one’s God. It should never be made a matter of bargain”.

‘The apathy of the high-caste Hindus worried him much. He, however, dealt with them as best he could. During his discussion with Harijans, at Ahmedabad, he opined”, “this is a movement for the purification of Hinduism. Think what contribution you can make to it. If you are sure of yourselves, if you shed your unclean habits, if you reform your way of living, irrespective of what the high-caste Hindus do, I assure you their superiority of birth will automatically disappear. Superiority consists in clean and pure living and I assure you that in spite of your unclean occupation you can live cleaner and purer lives than the rest of us. Yours is a service without which the community cannot do. I want you to be conscious of the dignity of your profession, to learn to practice it in a clean manner and I am sure
you will be able to dictate your terms. Depend on yourselves, stand on your own legs and work your own salvation’.

“Gandhi believed that the so called caste Hindus had a personal obligation of fulfill towards the Harijans which they must do unconditionally and it was to be their atonement. ‘Whether in this world or the next, it is for each one to free oneself from bondage by one’s own effort. Harijans should not look upon themselves as lowly, weak or crippled’.

Time and again, Gandhi asked the Harijans to magnify their own faults so that they appeared to be as big as mountains and then make constant efforts to overcome them. In it lay the key to obtaining the rights which they wanted. ‘Never believe that since others have the same faults we need not mind of our own. No matter what others do, it is you dharma to overcome the failings which you find in yourselves . . . . You will not be able, at the behest of others, to overcome what you yourselves do not look upon as failings. Hence, it should be suffice to say that you should shake off whatever faults you can find in yourselves’.

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In the process of regeneration of the nation, Gandhi wages an incessant and systematic war. “If we are children of the same God how can there be any rank among us.”\textsuperscript{12} “For him, there was only one \textit{varna} in India, the \textit{Sudras}. Indeed the \textit{Sudras} are those who serve. He wished that all the Hindus voluntarily call themselves \textit{Sudras}.”\textsuperscript{13}

“He was critical of any person who would claim superiority over fellow-men. In his opinion there was no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority. He was happy and felt satisfied to call himself a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver and a labourer.”\textsuperscript{14} He wrote in the \textit{Harijan}, “I have intentionally described myself as a bhangi. In man made social ladder I want to be at the bottom.”\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{On Untouchability}

“He indeed was much pained to see the appalling plight of untouchables in various regions of the country. Its eradication greatly agitated his mind and he devised ways and means, from time to time, through his speeches and writings.”\textsuperscript{16} He wrote in \textit{Navajivan}, ‘By passing resolutions and talking about their problem we have raised hopes in them. It was absolutely necessary to do this. It was necessary also that hopes should be raised in them and to tell those
antyaja friend that what has happened should be sufficient answer to them. Another answer can be that they lay the entire burden on me. I can understand the sting in their words. They accuse me of being satisfied with the more or less that I do myself and of being gullible enough to be taken in by others who only befool me. However, if I do something, there are others who may be doing less but still they do it.

Untouchability is an attitude of the mind, not a concrete object. To eradicate it, therefore, is not as easy as to persuade pupils to leave schools. No agitation, therefore, like the one with regard to schools can be suggested in respect of untouchability. A change of heart is necessary for this reform, as it is for receipting the principle of non-violence. The movement, therefore, can only be carried on along the same line as that for non-violence. Just as the extent to which the latter has been accepted by the people can be measured from the occasional incidents of violence which occur, so can progress in the removal of untouchability be measured from occasional evidence of its survival. No rule of arithmetic can be applied to judge this. You cannot work out as an arithmetical exercise, ‘If so many Hindus have mixed with so many untouchables within such a period of time, what time will it take for all the cores of Hindus to mix with all the
millions of untouchable?’ – and ascertain the progress from the answer. But we get a measure of the progress from incidents which occur from time to time. The issue was first discussed as a principle in the Gujarat Vidyapith. As a result, the principle of admitting Antyaja pupils in its schools was accepted even at the risk of putting its very existence in danger, and some members who had tendered their resignations on this issue were allowed to leave the Vidyapith.

If, again, the existence of an institution like the Dakshinamurti Bhavan is in serious danger today, the reason is the same. The teachers who are the very soul of the Bhavan are fighting a life-and-death struggle there to get the principle accepted. I cannot claim credit for either of these two results. I would have been defeated if the majority of the members of the Vidyapith had opposed me. But, on the contrary, they themselves believed in the principle independently of my view. In the holy fight which is being waged in the Dakshinamurti Bhavan, I cannot claim to have a hand even as an individual member. It was because of this issue that several preferred donations to the Tilak Swaraj Fund were withheld, but the managers of the Fund did not care for the loss. Antyajas have freely attended hundreds of public meetings in Gujarat and elsewhere. The All-India Congress Committee has sanctioned an expenditure of more than
Rs.50, 000 for *Antyaja* welfare activities at various places. This amount excludes the money already spent by the Provincial Committees. Non-co-operators have thus been working all over India and independently of party considerations. In every province, enthusiastic young men of character have been, with the utmost sincerity of purpose, sacrificing their all in the service of *Antyajas*. This is the first time that in every constituency, *Antyaja* brothers have been elected delegates though they had expressed no such desire.

“This is for the satisfaction of the authors of the latter and other *Antyaja* friends like them who feel disappointed. But, while we may draw their attention to such a movement having spread we must admit at the same time that there is some truth in their complaint. Many persons simply make a show of mixing (with *Antyajas*) in order to hoodwink others, and are not sincere about the matter. Mixing with them in this spirit will yield bitter fruit. The practice of untouchability is against *dharma* and its disappearance will bear fruit only if the prejudice is shed from the heart. The campaign against it is not a political move so that we may do just enough to throw dust in people’s eyes. Nor is the movement undertaken in order to please or bribe *Antyajas*. Our only object is to satisfy our own conscience; our
very conception of this evil is that, as long as Hindu society does not get rid of it, it will continue to block our path invisibly, if not visibly, and will prevent our success in winning swaraj. The consequences of karma are hard to comprehend; its law admits of no exception. We always reap, visibly or invisibly, the fruits of our good and bad deeds, of our sins and virtuous acts.

There is not a shred of doubt in my mind that so long as we have not cleansed our hearts of this evil and have not accepted the path of non-violence, so long as Hindus and Muslims have not become sincerely united, we shall not be free. Our progress in all these three fields is impossible to measure by any visible yard stick. Till we succeed in regard to all three we shall not get swaraj and when we get it, we shall have succeeded in them. So long as Hindu society turns a deaf ear to the six cores of Antyajas crying for justice at our doors, we shall not get swaraj, never.

‘But even if caste Hindus wash off their sins, will Antyajas ascend to heaven in consequence. For that, they themselves should strive. They should give up drinking, refuse to eat left-over, stop eating meat and, though for the sake of service, engaged in the most uncleanly work, remain clean and worship God. All this is for them
to attend to. Others cannot do it for them. To remove poverty among them, they have the spinning-wheel and the handloom at their service. Thousands of Antyajas have taken them up and prospered. The swadeshi movement is such that it feeds and strengthens all the limbs and I, for one, am certain that it is swadeshi which will, in time, end our abject poverty.’

In this analysis of the religious satyagraha there could be no room for aggressiveness, demonstrativeness and any kind of show. Those who happened to participate in it must have equal respect and regard for the religious convictions and susceptibilities of those who professed a different faith from theirs.

The slightest narrowness in their outlook, attitude and behavior was likely to be reflected, magnified multi-fold in the opponent.

To elaborate his point of view, he mentioned the qualities of a true satyagrahi. This was explained by him in the context of the Vykom satyagraha about which he showed much concerned and time and again, he tendered a word of advice to the workers participating it “. . . a satyagrahi cannot go to law for a personal wrong. He sets out with the idea of suffering persecution . . . the satyagrahi seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The
purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore resign himself to being excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully but he must actively love his persecutors... The satyagrahi... does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments, but by penance, self-purification and suffering”. 

Gandhi and Vykom Satyagraha

Undoubtedly Gandhi showed much concern about the Vykom satyagraha undertaken in 1924-25 in order to obtain permission for ‘untouchables’ and ‘unapproachable’ to use certain roads round about the temple at Vykom in Travancore. * In Travancore the satyagrahis did not attack a whole system, but they fought sacerdotal prejudice. The Travancore State came in by a side door as it were. Indeed the Vykom satyagrha had attracted a wide public attention. Though restricted to a small area, it presented so many problems for solution. When George Joseph took over the lead after the arrest of Menon, Gandhi wrote to him thus: “As to Vykom, I think that you shall let the Hindus do the work. It is they who have to purify themselves. You can help by your sympathy and by your pen, but not by organizing the
movement and certainly not by offering *Satyagraha*. If you refer to
the Congress resolution of Nagpur, it calls upon the Hindu members
to remove the curse of untouchability. It was surprised to learn that
Mr. Andrews said that the disease had infected even the Syrian
Christians.”

The use of the road was the final goal of the *satyagrahis*. Gandhi was quite optimistic about the fact that the present movement

* Foot Note:*

Gandhi had his own approach towards reformation of the
society. He was quite aware of the various exploitations of the
upper castes. He was aware of the methods used by them in
exploitation. Hence he had also different approaches to the
Indian society by his preaching’s differently in different
regions. In this context it was Ranade who guided him. Gandhi’s main aim was to bring the masses in the main stream
of National Movement of which Vykom Satyagraha can be an
example.
throughout India was to throw open to the suppressed classes all the public roads, public schools, public wells and public temples which were accessible to non-Brahmins. *Satyagraha* in an Indian State by the Congress for the attainment of its object was forbidden. But *satyagraha* in an Indian State in connection with local abuses could be legitimately taken up at any time provided the other necessary conditions were fulfilled. As in an Indian State, there could be no question of non-cooperation, the device of petitions and deputations was not only always open, but it was obligatory. In a letter to George Joseph, Gandhi explained thus: “You must be patient you are in an Indian State. Therefore, you may wait in deputation on the Dewan and the Maharaja. Get up a monster petition by the orthodox Hindus who may be well-disposed towards the movement. See also those who are opposing. You can support the gentle direct action in a variety of ways. You have already drawn public attention to the matter by preliminary *Satyagraha*. Above all see to it that it neither dies nor by impatience becomes violent.”

At one point of time, His Holiness Shri Narayan Guru, the spiritual leader of the Tiyas, was reported to have disapproved the methods of *satyagraha* practiced by Vykom. He suggested that
volunteers should advance along barricaded roads and scale the barricades. They should enter temples and sit with others to dine. Gandhi did not agree with this kind of suggestion and contradicted it in an article entitled ‘Vykom Satyagraha’ in the issue of Young India dated 19 June 1924. He opined that the action proposed by Shri Narayan Guru was not satyagraha which he professed and preached. He argued that scaling barricades was tantamount to open violence. ‘If you may scale barricades, why not break open temple doors and even pierce through temple walls? How were volunteers to pierce through a row of policemen except by using physical force? I do not for one moment suggest that by the methods proposed the Tiyas if they are strong and are willing to die in sufficient numbers cannot gain their point. All I submit is that they will have gained it by something the reverse of satyagraha; and then too they would not have converted the orthodox to their view but would have imposed it on them by force . . . . “I would, therefore, urge the organizers at Vykom to make redoubled efforts and at the same time keep stricter watch on the conduct of those who take part in the movement. Whether it takes a long or short period to reach the goal, the way being of peaceful conversion of the orthodox by self-suffering and self-purification and no other.”20
At the last stage of the satyagraha, the Travancore authorities practically abandoned the satyagraha abiding to the mercies of goondas. This was euphemistically called the organized opposition of the orthodox section. Besides, the violence of the goondas was said to be of a particularly barbarous type. They blinded the eyes of volunteers by throwing lime into the eyes. At this point of time, Gandhi advised the volunteers not to lose their nerves and instead resort to methods in accordance with his creed and philosophy of non-violence. “The challenge of the goondas must be taken up. But the Satyagrahis must not lose their heads. The khaddar dress of the volunteers is said to have been torn by them, and burnt, to provoke non violence, they must remain cool under every provocation and courageous under the hottest fire. Loss even of a few hundred lives will not be too great a price to pay for the freedom of the ‘unapproachable’. Only the martyrs must die clean. Satyagrahis like Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion.”

Gandhi gave a word of advice and warning to the Hindu reformers who were intent on removal of untouchability. The immediate goal of the satyagrahis was the opening of the roads surrounding the temple, not their entry into the latter. Their
contention was that the roads should be opened to the so-called untouchables as they were to all other Hindus and even-non-Hindus. That point was completely gained. But whilst *satyagraha* was directed to the opening of roads, the ultimate aim of reformers was undoubtedly removal of every disability that ‘the untouchables’ were laboring under which the other Hindus were not. It, therefore, included access to temples, wells, schools etc. to which other non-Brahmins were freely admitted. *Satyagraha* is never adopted abruptly and never till all other and milder methods had been tried. The reformers of the South have to cultivate public opinion in the matter of temple-entry etc. This is, moreover, a disability not peculiar to the South but unfortunately and to our shame, it must be admitted, common, to more or less extent, to Hinduism throughout India, “I, therefore, welcome the decision of Sjt. Kelappen Nayar who was in charge of the camp at Vykom to concentrate his effort on working among the unhappiest and the most suppressed among ‘the untouchables’ i.e. Puliyas whose very shadow defiles . . . Reform has to be undertaken at both ends to make *savarnas* do their duty by the ‘untouchables’ whom they have so cruelly suppressed and to help the latter to become more presentable and to shed habits for which they
can in no way be held accountable but which nevertheless have to be
given up if they are to occupy their proper place in the social scale.”

“Gandhi elaborated his point of view in respect of a temple entry programme at Deoli, ‘I take the masses only so far as they are prepared to go. I do not want to injure their susceptibilities. I open temples with the utmost caution. I refused to open a temple at Deoli because the trustees were said to be sharply divided over the issue, though the vast majority of temple-goers were in favor of opening the temple to the Harijans immediately.’”

Some of the leaders of the untouchables, especially B.R. Ambedkar, opined that Gandhi and his associates were paying too much attention to the problem of temple entry and less attention to the improvement of their economic status and upliftment of their educational standards. To this Gandhi replied that temple entry was the decisive test to the fact whether the mind of the orthodox Hindus had changed or not, and its achievement would strike the imagination of all most effectively. His line of thinking was thus concerned as much with the savarna Hindus as with the untouchables. Indeed what he ardently desired was a change of heart. He argued that political
and economic betterment would be far more quickly brought about if religious equality were attained.

“In May 1924, Gandhi admitted the Navajivan about the pitiable plight of untouchables.”

“... not a single school for untouchables could be started, for our work among them is yet to be considered as ‘popular’. Moreover, in many villages all the Hindus are opposed to such an activity or, if not actually opposed to it, are indifferent in the matter... So far as the untouchables are concerned, we have really clipped their wings. We have crushed better sentiments out of them, so that much of our work among them has to be done by way of atonement. All this is adept we owe them. Moreover, this obligation may not become ‘popular’. Those to whom it appeals may spend their money on it and work without hoping for reward...”

Anecdote

Gandhi did not believe that inter-dining or even inter-marriage necessarily deprived a man of his status that his birth had given him. The four divisions, defined a man’s calling, they did not restrict or regulate social intercourse. He argued that the divisions define duties
and did not confer any privilege. It was, he held, against the ‘genius’ of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign to another a lower. “All are born to serve God’s Creation . . . There is nothing, again, to prevent the Shudra from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes . . . Varnashrama is self-restraint and conservation and economy of energy . . . I do not want Moksha. I do not want to be reborn. But I have to be reborn, I should be born as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts leveled at them in order that I may endeavor to free myself and them from that miserable condition . . . If I should die with any of my desires unfulfilled, with my service of the untouchables unfinished, with my Hinduism unfulfilled, I may be born again amongst the untouchables to bring my Hinduism to fulfillment.”

‘As a lay human student of Hinduism and claiming to be one desirous of practicing Hinduism in the spirit and to the letter, let me tell you that I have found no warrant or support for this terrible doctrine. Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed in Shastra and has any binding effect upon us . . . Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk. Knowing the quality of milk and the use of
milk and knowing the quality of arsenic, we should be impatient with
the man sitting near a pitcher of milk and trying to remove arsenic
grain by grain, and we should throw the whole pitcher overboard.
Even so do I, as a Hindu, feel that the curse of untouchability is
rendering the milk of Hinduism altogether poisoned and impure . . .
Patience with evil is really trifling with evil and with our selves . . .
You must remember that all the great religious of the world are at the
present time in the melting pot. Let us not ostrich-like hide our faces
and ignore the danger that lies at the back of us. I have not a shadow
of doubt that in the great turmoil now taking place either
untouchability has to die or Hinduism has to disappear. But I do
know that Hinduism is not dying, is not going to die, because I see
untouchability is a corpse struggling with its last breath to hold on for
a little while.

"Untouchability is a snake with a thousand mouths, though
each of which it shows its poisonous fangs . . . It need no sanction
from Manu or the other ancient law-givers . . . Reformers are trying to
cope with the evil. I feel, however, that much more drastic methods
are needed than are employed to rid Hinduism of the blot. We are
needlessly afraid to mould the susceptibilities of orthodoxy . . . This
untouchability naturally recoils on the heads of those who are
responsible for it.”

Indeed the Mahatma very much wanted to uplift Hinduism,
and, therefore, he regarded the untouchables as an integral part of the
Hindu community. He was pained when he happened to see a single
Bhangi driven out of the fold of Hinduism. But he did not believe
that all class distinctions could be obliterated. He had deep faith in
the Doctrine of Equality as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita. The
Gita teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated
on an equal basis. It insists that the Bhangi should be entitled to the
same measure of consideration, and esteem as the former with all his
superior learning. “It is, therefore, our duty to see that the
untouchables do not feel that they are despised or looked down upon.
Let them not be offered leavings from our plates for their
subsistence.”

Gandhi narrates how he was touched by the deplorable plight
of a scavenger when he was hardly twelve years old. In his later
career, he challenged, the artificial religious norms imposed by the
Hindu society on millions of untouchables. He stated, “A scavenger
named Uka, an ‘untouchable’ used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform ablutions and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion . . . I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful. While at school, I would often happen to touch the ‘untouchables’.”

He drew a sharp distinction between untouchability and *Varna* or caste. The caste system, in his opinion, had a scientific basis. Reason does not revolt against it. “Caste creates a social and moral restraint. The doctrine of caste cannot be extended. I would restrict it to four divisions. Any multiplication would be an evil. I would reform the castes and rid them of undoubted abuses, but I can find no reason for their abolition. For me there is no question of superiority or inferiority. A Brahmin who regards himself as superior being born to look down upon the other castes is not a Brahmin. If he is first he is so by right of service.”
Gandhi’s Opinion

“Gandhi wrote in 1931, ‘Untouchability cannot long endure. Some years ago we obstinately clung to it, today we are indifferent. It will be a thing of the past only when the indifference is translated into a conscious, deliberate awakening to a sense of the duty of self purification. Even the indifference or sufferance would have been impossible fifteen years ago,” was of the firm conviction that if untouchability was an integral part of Hinduism, the latter was a spent bullet’. But untouchability, he stated, was a hideous untruth. What he was aiming at was not every Hindu touching an ‘untouchable’, but every touchable Hindu driving out untouchability from his heart, going through a complete change of heart. In fact inter dining or intermarrying was not the main point. “I may not dine with you, but I ought not to harbor the feeling that if I dined with you I should be polluted. If I was a woman to be married, I should not say: “I cannot marry a man because he is an untouchable’ . . . Instead of being the dead faith that it threatens to be, I want it to be a living faith, so that it may exist side by side with other religions of the world.”

Thus, to remove untouchability was a penance that caste Hindus owed to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification
required was not of untouchables, but of the so called superior castes. Indeed, there was no vice that was special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. “It is our arrogance which blinds us, ‘superior’ Hindus, to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our down-trodden brethren, whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression . . . God’s grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence. God is Light, no darkness. God is love, not hate. God is Truth, not untruth. God alone is Great. We, His creatures are but dust. Let us be humble and recognise the place of the lowest of His creatures. Krishna honored Sudama in his rags, as he honored no one else . . . The Hindus have to purify themselves before they can hope to revive the Vedic philosophy and make it a living reality.”  

During the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi had been kept in jail under the usual rules. But during his fast, these had been relaxed and he had Kasturba to attend upon him and many visitors. After his contact with the authorities through correspondence, he was permitted from 7th November to conduct the
Harijan movement from within the jail, to receive visitors freely and to write. In May 1933 sixteen months after his arrest, he decided again to fast for twenty-one days. This was his only fast of any length since his experimental fasts in South Africa. His explanation is as follows:

‘A tempest has been raging within me for some days. I have been struggling against it. On the eve of the ‘Harijan Day’ (April 30) the voice became insistent, and said, ‘why don’t you do it?’ I resisted it. But the resistance was vain . . . . The fast is against nobody in particular . . . But it is particularly against me. It is a heart-prayer for the purification of self and associates, for greater vigilance and watchfulness. But nobody who appreciates the step about to be taken is to join me . . . Let the fast however be a preparation for many such fasts to be taken by purer and more deserving persons than myself . . .

‘. . . . I have no desire to die. I want to live for the cause. But I need for me and my fellow-workers greater purity, greater application and dedication. I want more workers of unassailable purity. Shocking cases of impurity have come under my notice. I
would like my fast to be an urgent appeal to such people to leave the cause alone.

“I know that many of my *sanatanist* friends and others think that the movement is a deep political game. How I wish this fast would convince them that it is purely religious and not political.”

In a public meeting in Nagpur on 8 November, 1933, the Mahatma explained thus: “I am deeply grateful to you for the manifestation of this great affection. Thanks to God that you have assembled in such numbers to listen to my message. The Chairman is right when he says that this Harijan work is essentially religious from my standpoint. That it has many other results is essentially true. There never has been a single truly religious movement. I would like to say in all humility, but with perfect confidence, that I have taken up this movement in no spirit of antagonism to any other religion or community. It would be impossible for any person to point to a single act of mine during the past 50 years which could be proved to have been antagonistic to any person or community. I have never believed anyone to be my enemy. My faith demands that I should consider no one as such. I may not wish ill to anything that lives. It is
my certain conviction that, if the Hindu heart is completely purged of the taint of untouchability, the event will have its inevitable influence not only upon all the communities in India but on the whole world. This belief is daily becoming stronger. I cannot remove from my heart untouchability regarding several millions of human beings and harbour it towards some other millions. The very act of the Hindu heart getting rid of distinctions of high and low must cure us of mutual jealousies and distrust of and among other communities. It is for that reason that I have staked my life on his issue. In fighting this battle against untouchability, I am fighting for unity not only between Hindu touchable and Hindu untouchables but among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all other different religious communities. Do not believe that I am interested in the numerical strength of Hindus. I have never throughout my life laid stress upon quality. If I collect a million false coins they would be a worthless burden to me. One true coin would be worth its value. A religion cannot be sustained by the number of its lip-followers denying in their lives its tenets. This great Hindu religion itself will perish, in spite of its so-called million of followers, if its votaries persist counted by the millions. It would perish even if they were a handful. Milk is poisoned and has to be thrown away whether you put a little or much arsenic in it. If we
believe that we are all children of one and same God and that God is Truth and Justice, how can there be untouchability amongst us, His children? God of Truth and Justice can never create distinctions of high and low among His own children. I, therefore, invite all without distinction of race and religion to assist this movement by praying for its complete success, so that we may all live in peace and friendship.

‘And if I want concord amongst all the communities professing different faiths, I cannot desire discord between the so-called sanatanists and reformers.’ I can harbour no ill-will against sanatanists. I ask them to extend the same toleration to reformers that they would have the latter extend towards themselves. If they tolerate the faith and practice of others, why will they not tolerate the faith and practice of the reformers? They may not help so long as they regard untouchability as an integral part of Hinduism. I and fellow reformers firmly believe that untouchability is an evil; and if it is so and if the reformers will continue to exercise patience and gentleness, the heart of the sanatanists must melt. There can be no room for compulsion or violence in this great movement. I endeavor to place before the vast mass of Hindus the results of a belief derived from such prayerful study of the Hindu scriptures as has been possible for
me, and from association with those who are learned in them and, what is more, from my practice based upon that belief. Surely, that cannot promote internal dissensions. I observe that many who oppose this movement have not taken the trouble to understand its implications. The object of this tour is to place the position of the reformers clearly before the public. And I am hoping that, as the scope of the activities of the Servants of Untouchables Society. (Maharshi Vittal Ramji Shinde) Kolhapur, a social reformer from Maharashtra becomes known, the position to it will melt away. We want to change the hearts of those who today oppose the movement. We want to remove their distrust. We do not desire to compel them to act against their belief. We want to win them over to the reform by gentlest persuasion, by appealing to their reason and to their hearts. Love can never express itself by imposing sufferings on others. It can only express itself by self-suffering, by self-purification. I am convinced that, if the reformers will show in their own lives an increasing purity, self-denial, and capacity for suffering, they will be sure to melt the hearts of those who are today saturated with untouchability, believing it to be a desirable part of Hinduism.
It is said that untouchables are so because of the evil traditions. But are the touchable better? Are they sinless? Indeed, defenders of untouchability claim that some people are always untouchables and that no amount of pure conduct can cure them of the taint with which they are born. They must remain social lepers for ever. The fact is that whatever weaknesses we may notice about untouchables, are the reflections of our own weaknesses and sins. They are a direct result of the ill-treatment that we have heaped upon their devoted heads. Their real rise, therefore, depends upon the removing of untouchability from the root and branch and upon showing a growing purity in our own lives. Thus the movement is dependent, not so much upon pecuniary help, as upon correct conduct. Pecuniary help is to be an earnest effort of our determination to rid ourselves of the evil and to achieve self-purification.

The question is repeatedly asked whether the reform includes inter-dining. Though I have answered this question repeatedly, I must continue to repeat the answer as long as the question continues to be asked. Everybody knows what my personal views are. Since my youth upward I have consistently dined with all so long as the rules of cleanliness have been observed. But that has nothing to do with the
present movement. Inter dining and the rest is a question for each individual to determine for himself. The movement organized by the ‘Servants of Untouchables Society’ stands for simple removal of untouchability in every shape and form, in so far as it is special to the so-called untouchables. They would have the same public rights and facilities as are enjoyed by every other Hindu, that is to say, they should have access to all public institutions, such as wells, schools, roads, temples, etc.

‘One word as to the objections raised against Anti-untouchability Bills’. Sanatanists have contended that they constitute State interference in matters of religion. I suppose by interference is meant that which is undue. For it is possible to quote instances where State interference has been sought, that has been inevitable in matters of religion. What is sought is freedom from external compulsion. I am no more in favour of such compulsion in matters affecting religion, than sanatanists. These Bills involve no such compulsion, no undue interference. The interference sought is beneficial and unavoidable. If the State compelled the opening of temples to Harijans, it would without doubt be undue interference, but it cannot be undue when the State is called upon to legalize the voluntary opening by a stated
majority of temple-goers or the trustees. Not to do so would be compulsion. The other Bill has been long overdue. It does not abolish untouchability altogether. It seeks to rob it of secular consequence. To clothe it with such consequences is to constitute an intolerable interference with the free exercise of religion. Nobody will deny that to make a religious obligation an obligation in law would be a gross and undue interference by the State. The observance of untouchability requires the voluntary recognition of it by both touchables and untouchables. For the State to compel observance by untouchables would be a gross interference in matters of religion. The Bill, therefore, seeks to remove the secular recognition of untouchability, without in any way interfering with the religious observance of it or the religious consequences of the breach of it. If the objectors mean, therefore, what they say and on a careful study should find that the Bills involve no compulsion, they should waive their objection.

"The poor man perhaps had nothing else to pay and he seems to have paid his all. It is an unsoiled cowrie, as Malaviyaji would call it. We attribute our earnings to fate, but what we give in the name of God, and for the service of his creatures bring us merit. Looking at it as a symbol of sacrifice, it is more precious than gold."34
The same sentiments were expressed by him in public meetings at Amraoti and Calicut. 'I have visited many places throughout the length and breadth of this country and such big meetings are to me the manifestations of the grace of God. I believe that with God's favour only can we conduct such huge assemblies. With His grace also I have taken up the Harijan work. It is a religious work and should therefore be done with truth, patience and sacrifice. It could not be otherwise: - If we want to expiate for the injustice done to the Harijans and if we want to atone for the wrongs we, the *savarna* Hindus, are still doing them, we must treat them as we treat other *savarna* Hindus. I would like to tell you all that, unless we behave with them on equal terms, there is no chance of our movement also. I visited the Harijan quarters with the help of Dr. Patwardhan, and have also seen other work here, and have now heard the address read out to me by the local Municipal Committee. If the Municipality of this place could do anything in this matter, it is to be blamed. I have seen many other municipal committees and the conditions are just the same. But I must say that now even the Western scientists after their research have come to the conclusion that if we leave out any particular section of our society out of our fold we are sure to go down economically. After these 25 years of observations, my belief
is being strengthened that wealth should always go hand in hand with religion. There should be harmony between religion and wealth. I have come to realize from my ‘Harijan’ work that one who tries for wealth in accordance with religion gets both. I believe it to be the duty of every savarna Hindu that he should try to take up the Harijan into his fold. If we do our duty towards the Harijans, all of us, Hindus, Moslems, Parsis, Christians, will live peacefully. To my mind there is no better way to unity of these people than Harijan work. Now I must tell you what every one of you can do in this respect. The Harijan movement is a great yojna and each of you can put his little bit in it. Those who have money can give it for this cause. Those who have the leisure and intelligence to spare can teach the Harijan boys and give them lessons in personal hygiene and cleanliness. The Congressmen are doing this work at present. But I want that non-Congressmen also should undertake this work. It is the religious duty of every one of you to do this work.

‘I do not value politics as much as I value this work. Politics is nothing to me. It is my belief that if we do this work; with religious favours everything will be obtained. I am not traveling with any other intention in this work. And when I see people assemble in such large
numbers to hear me, I hope they will stand with me in his work. In July the Harijan Sevak Sangh started and some of you must have taken the vow to wipe out this curse of untouchability. It is the birthright of the Harijans to make use of public institutions and to enter into the temples. But as long as there is a single soul boycotted as being a Harijan, I shall not regard untouchability as being wiped out totally. It is up to you, therefore, to change your hearts and consider the Harijans as your brethren.

The Harijan Sevak Sangh is composed of people of different schools of thought but they can do this work together. The workers in this field should not aspire of any kind of honour or title. They should not have the slightest tinge of personal interest or selfish motive. This work should also be free from any sort of political colour. There is no doubt that it will have some political meaning but I do not value political things as much as this. The Harijan work is for the purification of the Hindu religion. I have great hopes in this matter. I have always been an optimist and my optimism in this case is increasing every day. But even if I fail it remains my duty to continue this work. Very few sincere workers have so far come forward. I therefore, pray God that He should give you all the necessary strength
and guidance to do your duty in this respect. I must remind you of the pledge given last year in your name. You will remember that a meeting of representatives of Hindus was held in Bombay in September last year, Pandit Malaviyaji being in the chair, ‘among other things they resolved that untouchability, being a blot on the Hindu religion had to be removed and that Harijans were entitled to the same public utilities, and in the same manner, as caste Hindus’. There was in that resolution a special reference to Hindu temples, and legislation was contemplated if it was found to be necessary for attaining the end. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of every caste Hindu to fulfill the pledge by throwing open to the Harijans temples, wells and other institutions precisely on the same terms as they are open to caste Hindus.

We are the cause of the degradation to which the Harijans are reduced. We must spend money if the wrong is to be redressed. He who will give to the cause will gain. We may not be satisfied therefore with given out of superfluous cash we have to give even if we have to stint ourselves, Some of us will have to give our all for Harijan service.
It gladdens me to find both Congressmen and non-Congressmen working together in this movement. Since questions are being asked as to how far Congressmen can join this movement, I would like to reiterate what I have said before. The Congress adopted removal of untouchability as an integral part of its programme in 1920. (It was since when he entered to Congress National Movement. His entrance in the national movement of course was good, but many of the reformers, were asked to join the Congress, as Gandhiji promised the reformers to include the reform programme in the Congress ideology. It has also to be noted that many of the non-Brahmins because of this approach of Gandhi felt that reforms would be given priority, which was not the case. Since 1920 many of the non-Brahmins joined the Congress movement, which weakened the reform movement in Maharashtra, which influenced the non-Brahmin movement in other parts of the south India, like (Justice Part. South Indian Liberal Association, Karnatak non-Brahmin Movement etc). It is, therefore, the duty of every Hindu Congressman to fight untouchability and help Harijans in every way open to him. But, if the movement gets were confined to Congressmen alone, it could not make the headway as we all desire. Every savarna Hindu has to do his bit in the movement. But whilst every Congress member is expected
to fight the evil, he or she is not expected officially to join the Harijan Sevak Sangh. If they are active civil resisters, they ought not to hold office in these organizations. And no Congressman who believes in and wants to offer civil resistance need in any way feel constrained to suspend or give it up altogether. The case is wholly different with those who feel the call to give up civil resistance for the sake of Harijan service or who lost faith in the former.

In this movement of self purification as in satyagraha there is no room for camouflage. Harijans have complained that so many self-seekers have crept into the movement. In a purely religious movement there is no room for such people. Only those who can or hold office, who have the spirit of service in them.

“Some of the ladies of this place have offered me ornaments and the little children have given me a little silver casket which I wish to put for auction. I shall accept money from you all, be it even a cowries but it should be given with a pure heart. I assure you that it will make you happy and will be helpful to the Harijans.”

I have just got several purses on behalf of the citizens of
Calicut which amount to Rs.4, 388-5-9. On the principle that you may not look a gift horse in the mouth I must in all courtesy thank you for the gifts that you have given on behalf of the Harijan cause. But as a self-chosen or self-appointed Harijan servant, I must lodge my respectful protest against the leanness of the purses from the capital of Malabar. You will be surprised to learn that Bangalore, not the capital of Mysore, but the second city in Mysore not as big as Malabar, produced much more than you have given this evening. And I am fully aware of the capacity of Calicut to give for the Harijan cause. But nothing is lost yet. You have got here many tempting things, and at the end of a few remarks that I want to make it is open to you and perfectly possible for you to make up for the deficiency and what is today undoubtedly a lean purse can be turned by you into a fat purse.

As I have said from many a platform after entering Malabar, if there was a map of untouchability made for the whole of India, Malabar would be marked as the blackest spot in all the land; and as matters stand today, I suppose you will admit that you will have to plead guilty to the charge. Then if you are convinced of the sin of Malabar, as confessedly you are convinced by the very fact of your
giving me this purse, you will admit that Malabar has to make the
greatest reparation in order to rid itself of the greatest sin. It does not
matter, and if ought not to matter, the least little bit that some of you
who are moneyed men do not originally come from Malabar. Those
who make their livelihood or their fortunes in Malabar should realize
that every pie they get is trained with this sin. Therefore, in the matter
of reparation and repentance, they stand exactly on the same footing
as the original Malayalis.

This morning they took me to a most beautiful bit of Malabar;
ye took me up the hills with the most romantic scenery. There I was
taken to a village called Kalpetta, and I recalled a hymn - I think it
was composed by Bishop Heber. But whether it was composed by
him or some other bishop, this is the line that single out from that
hymn for your edification. It is said that, as he was approaching this
Western coast of India, involuntarily this line came to his lips, or to
his pen: 'Every prospect pleases, man alone is villa.' I have no doubt
that he had not this black spot of untouchability in his mind when he
wrote this line. The orthodox interpretation of this line is wholly
different from the one that I put upon it. But poets can never be
confined even in cases of their own construction. Poets write for
eternity. Their words are charged with a meaning of which they have-no conception-when they utter or write them. Scented breezes come from plantations that Nature has designed for man in Malabar. But through untouchability he has violated Nature and thus become vile. We have endeavored to disfigure God's mightiest creation, namely, man. The soul of man presents a beauty never to be surpassed by any ravishing beauty of vegetation. But the so called savarna Hindus or the so called high class Hindus arrogated to themselves the right of suppressing a portion of Hindu humanity. They endeavored, however, vainly, as we all presently see in a few years, perhaps. But man has left no stone unturned to suppress, in the name of Divinity itself, the soul of man by putting thousands outside the pale of society.

I will tell you what I saw today in Kalpetta in the midst of the ravishing beauty of vegetation. I saw wild specimens of humanity, with a stinking adour. Please do not say hastily that is why they are untouchables. I want you to think with me a little more deeply than possibly you are prepared to do and realize with me that for this indescribably painful scene you and I are responsible. These very men, in an hour's time, if you desire, can be transformed into beings cleanly and outwardly as respectable as you and I may be. A little hot
water, or soap, a little white khaddar, and you will immediately find
that they are just as presentable as you and I are. Internally, God
alone can be the judge between them and us. It is quite possible, in
fact, in my opinion it is quite certain, that we are much more sinful or
much viler than they can be. Our slates are sullied with writings not
particularly creditable to us. Their slates have still to be written upon.
Are you now surprised that, when I saw these countrymen of ours,
I involuntarily said in my mind to the poet, 'you were right in saying,
'every prospect pleases, and man alone is vile'. ' Now, put your hands
upon your hearts and tell me whether, if you gave up all your wealth
and all sisters discarded every article of jewellery of which they are
possessed, would it be sufficient reparation for the injuries that you
have been partners in inflicting on these countrymen of ours? I wish
to suggest you that you will be fit servants of Harijans when you have
begun the act of reparation by discarding all your possessions for
their sake. But I know that is an ideal state of things, and I know also
that, if I could possibly carry you along those ideals, then India would
again be really a land of thirty corers of gods.

But I am laboring under no such delusion. I consider myself a
practical idealist. I take from human nature what it yields and go my
way. My business is to present to you the realities of the situation, to stimulate your intelligence and your imagination; to touch your hearts and then leave you to do the very best that you can possibly do for a cause so noble and as sacred as that of the Harijans.

“I would like you; lastly, to realize that if we, the so-called *savarna* Hindus, failed in this elementary duty by the Harijans during this brief period of probation, Hinduism will be a thing of the past. History teaches us that many a civilization, many a culture perished beyond redemption because of the inherent weakness of the representatives of those bygone civilizations; Do not, therefore, run away with the belief that Hinduism win be an exception and escape the impending doom, if we, Hindus, prove unworthy representatives of the priceless treasures that the *rishis* have left for us”.

**Educational reforms**

When Seth Ghanshyamdas Birla, President of the Harijan Sevak Sangh wrote to Gandhi for starting a few residential schools for Harijan boys, he whole-heartily supported his idea and wished him all success in his efforts. In fact Gandhi knew well that these schools would greatly enhance their academic standard and would
enable them to become better citizens of India. G.D. Birla wrote thus:

We are thinking of establishing a few residential schools and mainly for educating Harijan boys, though not exclusively. So far, whenever we have talked of Harijan hostels or schools, we have thereby meant cheap schools or cheap hostels conducted by ill-educated and ill-paid teachers and wardens with boys half-starved. So long as we educate Harijans or children of poor parents in these cheap institutions, the boys will never succeed in shedding the inferiority complex from which they often suffer. And what will they learn from these unqualified and ill-paid teachers? These boys never get the opportunity to mix with the other boys. The harm due to this lack of contact between the poor and the well-to-do or between Harijans and Savarnas is mutual. I therefore propose that we should have a few residential schools established in pleasing environment. They should be of a standard that would compare favourably in every respect with a well-conducted public school. We should start a few such schools first of all as a trial.

They should be of the matriculation standard and affiliated to a university. They should, of course, be mostly residential. Personal attention to students should be a specialty. Education should be
imparted through the medium of the mother-tongue. English should be taught as a second language. During the period of this education, the boys should be taught useful handicrafts chosen for their educative value.

In order to make this education thorough and self-sufficient, we should take two years more than the time needed for the matriculation

Foot note:
In India education become the main theme of all reform movement as education was the only way to reform the Hindu society. The upper castes played a major role to see that the other castes and i.e. the untouchables remain aloof from education. They where never allowed to enter the school premises by the upper castes. This is how Mahatma Jotiba Phule`s contribution stands great as he the first to take up the causes of the education of the down trodden section of the society. Besides he also advocated for woman education. He was the first reformer who rose against the upper caste, and the one who belonged to the masses. Prior to these most of the reformers belonged to white-collar classes and upper castes.
examination. These two years should be utilized in giving extra training to the boys besides what they learn for the matriculation course.

We propose to have three crafts, one of which will be taken up by every boy at his option. These will be:

Either (1) Carding, Spinning, Weaving, Dyeing and Bleaching; or (2) Carpentry and Smithy; or (3) Paper-making, Bookbinding and Ordinary Composing.

It is intended to employ a superior staff, adequately paid, to ensure good qualifications. The underlying idea is that the boys may not feel the want of a college education. There will be no bar to such. The boys, it is hoped, will not find it difficult to earn an honest livelihood after finishing the course. It will be the duty of the Board to accommodate such boys as may like to be.

Besides the university course and craft, special attention will be given to increasing the general knowledge and hygiene. Music, games, exercises, riding; swimming, etc. should be taught. Religious or moral training should not be neglected. Equal respect for all
religions should be inculcated, along with a good grounding in the principles of Hinduism and the peculiar beauties of our own culture.

Half the number of the students should be Harijans who would have free education and free boarding and lodging. The other half of the students i.e. *savarnas*, should be charged fees.

This is a very rough and brief outline of my idea of a good high school.

But there is difference amongst us about this outline. Some say why should we have the matriculation course? Others say: We should not undertake costly education as this will be a bad example to set. It is urged that we may employ most qualified men, but only if they come on a bare maintenance and out of a spirit of sacrifice. In other words, in their opinion, in this school there would be no room for teachers other than those prepared to lead a simple life of sacrifice. Some go to the extent of saying that we should rather have no school than start one which is not manned by a highly self-sacrificing staff.
I consider all this unpractical. I need not give my arguments. They are obvious. Will you express your views on this question?

I whole-heartedly support Seth Ghanshyamdas's scheme, the arguments advanced in opposition seem to be based more on caution than on principle, and I too, should side with the opposition, if the scheme was to be financed out of the meager funds of the Harijan Board. But I assume that the model schools; would be financed by special donations enough to guarantee their full working. Having lived in South Africa for twenty years where every Indian is treated almost as a Pariah, I know how sensitive the mind becomes under unnatural treatment. I took some time to regain my balance though I never lost the sensitiveness. I felt that I was a strange creature in the company of the general body of Europeans. The plight of Harijans in India is much worse because of their much greater ignorance and still greater poverty. Therefore, if we are to break down the double complex, we have to bring up a fair number of Harijan lads in surroundings in no way inferior to those that are available to the well-to-do class boys. The scheme under examination does not contemplate the production of clerks who would be too big for their boot and who would be naturally discontented because no one would
have them as clerks. Boys trained under the scheme would be in no way inferior in knowledge to the other matriculates. But these will be better placed because their bodies will be specially looked after and their hands will have their cunning fully developed. Such boys will have their future assured. They will have self-confidence. They will not be torn from their kith and kin on the contrary, they will be expected to serve fellow Harijans and give them the benefit of the teaching they have received.

It may be objected that I am inconsistent in that I have written and spoken against to the present system of education. The objection would be superficial. In the first place, the worst features of the system will be eliminated in that the training will be in the mother-tongue and the boys will be taught handicrafts which should enable them to earn an independent and decent living. Secondly, an objection that may be applicable to boys who can be better educated cannot be held well in the case of boys who have no choice and who smart under the knowledge that they cannot have the education that thousands of other boys have simply because they are not Harijans. I would not insult Harijan lads by arguing with them that what the thousands of non- Harijan lads are doing is wrong, and that therefore
they had better be satisfied with the shanties which Seth Ghanshyamdas has referred to in his letter.

I plump for his scheme. I wish him all success. The sooner it is launched, the better for Harijans and better for India. These schools will be potent instruments for exercising the demand of untouchability.

Thus he recommended higher education for Harijans.

"I hope all those who are interested in the removal of untouchability are familiar with Mr. David's scheme for the higher education of selected Harijans by caste Hindus. In Mr. David's words, 'it aims at enabling a large number of untouchables to enjoy the benefits of the best higher education (including technical instruction) possible in this country.' Under it, 'well-to-do castes Hindus are expected throughout India each to bear the expenses for such education of at least one Harijan student for a period of five years. Scholarships should be given to selected candidates and the expenses imply the provision of educational fees, books and living expenses on a modest scale.' Mr. David thinks that Rs. 500 per year per Harijan would be required for college education and half as much for high
school education. He advised donors to subscribe, wherever it is possible, the whole amount covering five years in one lump sum.

'In order to build up the self-respect of Harijan scholars,' says Mr. David, 'it should be laid down that each scholar would be expected to reimburse the amount originally advanced for his education as soon as he is in a position to do so. Thus a student is provided by means of a loan and not a gift.' And if a large number of students discharge these debts of honour Mr. David anticipates that a permanent fund will be created.

Mr. David advises the formation of Committee or Committees in provinces which will frame rules for the selection of candidates, and the disbursements of subscriptions will be subject to the recommendation of such Committee or Committees. He is emphatic that the scheme if carried out, should 'produce important and sustained results', and make possible within a comparatively short period the creation of a large number of lawyers, teachers, doctors and engineers from among Harijans. The existence of a considerable number of such persons would be of material help in raising the social status of the depressed classes, and, he adds, 'it is framed on strictly non-controversial lines, thus widening to the maximum its
potential field of response. It should win the support of even the staunchest Sanatanists. It is an opportunity at hand for caste Hindus to give concrete expressions of their feeling towards 'untouchables'.

Let me hope, with Mr. David, that the scheme will commend itself to the 'staunchest Sanatanists' and that in any case it would receive liberal support."

'A Harijan asked if it was right to encourage Harijan boys to become B.A.s or M.A.s, when unemployment was rife among graduates, and whether it would not be better if they took to technical education. Gandhiji replied that they could hardly expect Harijans to go in for industrial education before it had successfully appealed to the Savarnas. And it was possible that, even if mere academic training was now no good for Savarna, it had its own value for Harijans. For instance, he had long thought Dr. Ambedkar to be a Brahmana. He was equal in intelligence and ability to the tallest among us. Such distinction had its undoubted use for Harijans. Gandhiji himself fully believed in industrial education and wished the numerous Harijan students would turn their attention to it. Harijan Sevak Sangh could not force Harijans to such education. They had to encourage the
academicians side by side with the industrial. It was for the Harijans to preach the gospel of industrial training.'

According to Gandhi, Vykom Satyagraha was intended to be of an educative force. A satyagrahi strived to reach the reason through the heart.

“I make bold to state that from the very outset Satyagraha at Vykom was intended to be an educative force and never an instrument of coercion of the orthodox. It was for that reason that the fast against the orthodox was abandoned. It was to avoid coercion of the Government by embarrassment that the barricades have been scrupulously respected. It was for that reason that no attempt was made to dodge the police. It has been recognized that what appears to the reformers as a gross and sinful superstition is to the orthodox a part of their faith. The Satyagrahi's appeal has therefore been to the reason of the orthodox. But experience has shown that mere appeal to the reason produces no effect upon those who have settled convictions. The eyes of their understanding are opened not by argument but by the suffering of the Satyagrahi. The Satyagrahi strives to reach the reason through the heart. The method of reaching the heart is to awaken public opinion. Public opinion for which one cares is a
mightier force than that of gunpowder. The Vykom Satyagraha has vindicated itself in that it has drawn the attention of the whole of India to the cause, and it has been instrumental in the Travancore Assembly considering in a remarkable debate a resolution favoring the reform sought for and lastly in eliciting a considered reply from the Dewan of Travancore. I am sure victory is a certainty if only the Satyagrahists will retain their patience and their spirit of suffering”.

'Vykom of which till lately no one outside Travancore at most the Madras Presidency knew anything has suddenly leapt to fame because it has become the seat of Satyagraha. The Press contains daily bulletins of the progress of the movement. It has been undertaken on behalf of the 'untouchables' of Travancore. The movement has given us another word to describe the condition of the suppressed classes. It is unapproachability. These poor countrymen of ours may not touch any other caste Hindus but they may not even approach them within a stated distance. The leaders of the movement with a view to remedying the evil have taken up only a fragment of the evil, hoping no doubt that if they deal with it successfully; they will have dealt it a death-blow at least in that part of India in which direct action is now going on. In the prosecution of the campaign
some of the staunchest workers of Malabar have been imprisoned. There can now be no receding. The struggle may last long if orthodox Hindu opinion is actively hostile to the movement. The Satyagrahis are certain to break down the wall of prejudice, no matter how strong and solid it may be if they continue firm, but humble, truthful and non-violent. They have faith enough in these qualities to know that they will melt the stoniest hearts.

**Younger Generation and Satyagraha**

'The Vykom Satyagraha has perhaps a meaning deeper than is generally realized. The young men who have organized it are stern in discipline and gentle in their dealings with the orthodox section. But this is the least part of their trials. Some of them suffering too the persecution of social boycott. We of the Western Presidency have no idea of what this persecution can mean. These young men who are taking part in the movement are not only being denied social amenities but are threatened even with the deprivation of their share in the family property. If they would go to law, probably they would get their due. But a Satyagrahi cannot go to law for a personal wrong. He sets out with the idea of suffering persecution. In a reform that the Vykom struggle seeks to achieve, the Satyagrahi seeks to convert his
opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore resign himself to being excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully but he must actively love his persecutors. The latter honestly believe that the reformer is doing something sinful and therefore resort to the only means they know to be effective to wean him from his supposed error. The Satyagrahi, on the other hand, does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments but by penance, self-purification and suffering. Any resentment of the persecution, therefore, would be an interruption of the course of discipline he has imposed upon himself. It may be a prolonged course; it may even seem to be never ending . . .’

Vykom Satyagraha has attracted such wide public attention, and though restricted to a small area presents so many problems for solution that I offer no apology to the reader for constantly engaging his attention for it.

“I have received several important and well-thought-out letters protesting against my countenancing it in any way whatsoever. One
such letter even urges me to use whatever influence I may have, for stopping it altogether. I am sorry that I am unable to publish all these letters. But I hope to cover all the points’ raised in these letters or otherwise brought to my notice”.

The first may be cleared at once. Exception has been taken to Shri George Joseph—-a Christian- having been allowed to replace Shri Menon as leader and organizer. In my humble opinion the exception is perfectly valid. As soon as I heard that Shri Joseph was 'invited to take the lead' and he contemplated taking it, I wrote to him as follows on 6th April:

As to Vykom, I think that you should let the Hindus do the work. It is they who have to purify themselves. You can help by your sympathy and by your pen, but not by organizing the movement and certainly not by offering Satyagraha. If you refer to the Congress resolution of Nagpur, it calls upon the Hindu members to remove the curse of untouchability. I was surprised to learn from Mr. Andrews that the disease had infected even the Syrian Christians.

“Unfortunately before the letter could reach him, Shri Menon was arrested and Shri George Joseph had taken his place. But he had
nothing to expiate, as every Hindu has in the matter of untouchability as countenanced by the Hindus. His sacrifice cannot be appropriated by the Hindus in general as expiation made, say by Malaviyaji. Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, and they must pay the debt they owe to their suppressed brothers and sisters. Theirs is the shame and theirs must be the glory when they have purged themselves of the black sin. The silent, loving suffering of one single pure Hindu as such will be enough to melt the heart of millions of Hindus; but the sufferings of thousands of non-Hindus on behalf of the 'untouchables' will leave the Hindus unmoved. Their blind eyes will not be opened by outside interference, however well-intentioned and generous it may be; for it will not bring home to them the sense of guilt. On the contrary they would probably hug the sin all the more for such interference. All reforms to be sincere and lasting must come from within”.

But why may the Vykom Satyagrahis not receive monetary aid from outside, especially if it be from Hindus? So far as non-Hindu assistance is concerned, I am as clear about such pecuniary help as I am about such personal help. I may not build my Hindu temple with non-Hindu money. If I desire a place of worship I must pay for it.
This removal of untouchability is much more than building a temple of brick and mortar. Hindus must bleed for it, must pay for it. They must be prepared to forsake wife, children and all for the sake of removing the curse. As for accepting assistance from Hindus from outside, such acceptance would betray reluctance on the part of the local Hindus for the reform. If the Satyagrahis have the sympathy of the local Hindus, they must get locally all the money they may need. If they have not, the very few who may offer Satyagraha must be content to starve. If they are not, it is clear that they will evoke no sympathy among the local Hindus whom they want to convert. Satyagraha is a process of conversion. The reformers, I am sure, do not seek to force their views upon the community; they strive to touch its heart. Outside pecuniary help must interfere with the love process if I may so describe the method of satyagraha. Thus viewed, the proposed Sick free kitchen; I can only regard, as a menace to the frightened Hindus of Vykom.

There is no doubt in my mind about it that the orthodox Hindus, who still think that worship of God is inconsistent with touching a portion of their own coreligionists and that a religious life is summed up in ablutions and avoidance of physical pollutions
merely, are alarmed at the development of the movement at Vykom. They believe that their religion is in danger. It behaves the organizers, therefore, to set even the most orthodox and the most bigoted at ease and to assure them that they do not seek to bring about the reform by compulsion. The Vykom Satyagrahis must stop to conquer. They must submit to insult and worse at the hands of the bigoted and yet love them, if they will change their hearts.

But a telegram says in effect, 'the authorities are barricading the roads; may we not break or scale the fences? May we not fast? for we find that fasting is effective.'

“My answer is, if we are satyagrahis, we dare not scale or break fences. Breaking or scaling fences will certainly bring about imprisonment but the breaking will not be civil disobedience. It will be essentially in civil and criminal. Nor may we fast. I observe that my letter to Shri Joseph with reference to fasting has been misunderstood. For the sake of ready reference I reproduce below the relevant part:”
'Omit fasting but stand or squat in relays with quiet submission till arrested.'

"The above is the wire sent to you in reply to yours. Fasting in Satyagraha has well-defined limits. You cannot fast against a tyrant, for it will be a species of violence done to him. You invite penalty from him for disobedience of his orders but you cannot inflict on yourselves penalties when he refuses to punish, and renders it impossible for you to disobey his orders so as to compel infliction of penalty. Fasting can only be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him, as when a son fasts for a father who drinks. My fast at Bombay and then at Bardoli was of that character. I fasted to reform those who loved me. But I will not fast against. General Dyer who not only does not love me but who regards himself as my enemy, Am I quite clear?"41

It need not be pointed out that the above remarks are of a general character. The words 'tyrant' and 'lover' have also a general application. The one who does an injustice is styled 'tyrant'. The one who is in sympathy with you is the 'lover'. In my opinion, in the Vykom movement opponents of the reform are the 'tyrant'. The State
mayor may not be that. In this connection I have considered the State as merely the police striving to keep the peace. In no case is the State or the opponents in the position of 'lover'. The supporters of Vykom Satyagrahis enjoy that status. There are two conditions attached to a Satyagrahi fast. It should be against the lover and for his reform, not for extorting rights from him. The only possible case in the Vykom movement when a fast will be justified would be when the local supporters go back upon their promise to suffer. I can fast against my father to cure him of a vice, but I may not in order to get from him an inheritance. The beggars of India who sometimes fast against those who do not satisfy them are no more Satyagrahis than children who fast against a parent for a fine dress. The former are impudent, the latter are childish. My Bardoli fast was against fellow: Workers who ignited the Chauri Chaura spark and for the sake of reforming them. If the Vykom Satyagrahis fast because the authorities will not arrest them, it will be, I must say in all humility, the beggar's fast described above. If it proves effective it shows the goodness of the authorities, not that of the cause or of the actors. A Satyagrahi’s, first concern is not the effect of his action. It must always be its propriety. He must have faith enough in his case and his means, and know that success will be achieved in the end.
I am assured that the use of the road is the final goal of the Satyagraha. It is however not to be denied that the present movement throughout India is to throw open to the suppressed classes all the public and public schools, public wells and public temples which are accessible to non-Brahmans.

It is in fact a movement to purify caste by ridding it of its most pernicious result.

I have letters which protest that the road in question is a public road. In fact my information’s tell me it was some years ago even accessible to the unapproachable as to other non-Brahmans.

In my opinion, therefore, there is a just cause for the Vykom Satyagraha, and so far as it is kept within limits and conducted with the strictest regard to non-violence and truth, it deserves full public sympathy.
Conclusion

Thus the steps for the upliftment of Harijans taken by Gandhi were unique in our history. Along with numerous other issues-political, social, economic, cultural and other he ardently identified himself with numerous causes which had deep linkage with the daily life of a down-trodden member of our society. He always wished to give the Harijan a place of honour and respect in our society which was denied to them since centuries. In this task what he preached, he professed. He spoke much in their favour by undertaking strenuous tours of all the regions of India. He castigated caste-Hindus and criticized their behavior towards the untouchables. By doing so, he demanded their financial and social cooperation for the upliftment of this neglected community. At Mahatma’s persuasion, numerous affluent persons came forward and funded his schemes of reform. The money thus raised was spent on their educational, moral, social, economic and religious development. Undoubtedly much progress was visible in this regard with the passage of time. The Hindu orthodoxy in many areas had to bow down before Mahatma's humanitarian gestures.
Gandhi used to spend time with the Harijans by living himself with them. This kind of personal identification of the Mahatma made the Harijans realize their sense of importance in our society. He taught them the sense of cleanliness and advised them to raise their economic and social standards by hard work and honest means. He raised their colonies and advised the workers to devise schemes of their upliftment.

After incessant work for more than three decades, it was realized that much headway was made in this regard. They were given numerous concessions in the educational institutions, reservations in government departments, ministerial positions, reserved seats in the provincial legislatures and Lok Sabha. By doing so, the social status of a sizeable population in this community has been raised. Thus the present chapter gives a clear picture about Gandhian reforms and ideas related to the upliftment of the weaker sections. The charisma of Gandhi made an invaluable impression among all the Indians invariable of caste and community. By sticking on with “Harijans” and their welfare Gandhi turned the people of Indian towards the movement of social justice. In consequent of the aforementioned activities, a very good amount of the weaker category
got empowered and it is because our father of Nation. In the succeeding chapter this book discusses about E.V. Ramasamy whose opposition to the self-centered approach and dominative attitude of Brahmins are elaborated.

The history of the non-Brahmin Movement would have been different had if Gandiji would have not sympathyised with the reformist. By 1920s the reformist in south-India had developed close association, united in their approach towards the British policy in both the Bombay and Madras Presidency. But because of Reform Acts 1919, introducing communal representation left the movement disunited and a sense of regionalism in this united movement But Gandhiji had his own approach towards the reformers, in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and also Kerala. The study tries to bring forth the various leaders after 1925, functioned to reform the society. In this context the further study would devote more to bring forth the contributions, besides try to bring forth the contribution made by various regions and regional leaders.

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