# Varnashrama morals: Understanding Dalit narratives in Gandhian Discourses

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## 1. Introduction

The present paper is purported to examine the fundamental views of Gandhi on caste and its different structures and practices that work against a philosophy of emancipation. Historians and scholars have sufficiently argued that the formation of the caste system was engineered and patterned by considerations such as racial factors, the philosophy of action, political domination, and occupational bias. The class divisions eventually became hereditary due to the selfishness of the priestly class, who provided a theological and supernatural explanation of their origin. Accordingly, they interpreted the Sastric injunctions to perpetuate the hereditary superiority of their class as the superior caste.

This paper argues that casteism as a philosophy of social exclusion has provided the necessary theological setting between a body of knowledge and perception. The systematic intertwining between the body of knowledge (theological precincts) and a perception worked against a philosophy of emancipation in India. Thus, in the chronological past of India, caste is a living concept with a reputable history and a highly regarded prospect. It continues to pervade the Indian sentiments and psyche with distressed consciousness both politically and intellectually. Critiquing the Hindu caste system, its concealed exclusion ideology, and the implicit dehumanization of Indian societies as an outcome of deformed intellectual complacency and arrogance is also potentially a controversial issue.

It is controversial because critiquing a tradition such as the Hindu tradition and blatantly disagreeing that this tradition is filled with certain forms of perverted and arrogant intellectuality that upholds several forms of mental slavery-like casteism, is inviting trouble in these days of 'tolerance'. It is not reassuring because of its enduring and increasing practical significance due to the social division it created during and after the independence of India. It is intellectually disquieting as it allows one to differentiate the human subject in terms of one's birth in a particular caste. Hence, from the point of view of the intellectual level, caste is both an illusion as well as a fantasy. It is an illusion as it is a mental creation of the society that we live in; it is a fantasy as it has paved the way for diverse types of intellectual stimulation that have created various forms of mental illusions in India. Though caste cannot be accorded any academic legitimacy or scientific validity, caste as a social stratification of individuals also adds its political and social recognition in these modern times. The question is: Can we legitimately claim that caste is an illegitimate child of a legitimacy propounded by certain groups that intended to uphold the political, social, and cultural supremacy of India's intellectual and artistic tradition? It may be understood so because historically and theologically, caste has been recognized as a social reality all through these years by the perverted rationality that is assigned to this notion. It is socially accepted as a reality because the entire society, as envisaged by Indian classical thinkers in general and Manu in particular, is categorized under four groups, each with distinct spheres of duties and obligations. Many read a kind of caste structure in the Purusha-Sukta of Rig-Veda describing the origin of four Varnas, which were later metamorphosed into castes. Although doubts exist about the status of Purusha-Sukta being an internal part of Rig-Veda, a functional division of society was undoubtedly known at the time of the Rig-Veda.

A rigid form of social stratification historically marks Hindu society based on the Varna-Jati model of social organization in which the Brahminical religious principles, namely purity and pollution, played a central role in defining social hierarchy and separation. Varna (class) and Jati (caste) are two distinct concepts. Varna ("class") (from Sanskrit, literally "arrangement") is a supposed unification of all the Hindu sub-castes or jatis into either four groups: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or into one of several Varna- Sankaras. Jati (caste) is an endogamous group. Generally, a sub-caste is divided into groups based on the same Gotras. Caste systems are traditional, hereditary systems of social stratification, such as clans, genres, or the Indian caste system. Many Hindus could be classified into a specific Varna, but not everyone. During the British rule, several cases went to the courts to settle the "Varna" of a sub-caste.

Casteism in Indian societies is a concrete example that acted towards the dehumanizing factors that notably nullified and maligned the Indian notion of Sat a being. An analysis of caste discrimination in India points to the question of the mindset of the upper caste persons' attitude toward a Chamar or a Pulaya (there are many lower caste people like Chamar, Pulaya, Chuhra, Mahar, Mehtar, Madiga, Paraiyar, etc,) as a despicable creature rather than a human self. The issue is epistemological: How does the upper caste person distinguish whom and what he perceives? The question pertains to where the casteist ideas come from and how strongly we are in tune with those ideas.

Caste identifications have been causally associated with one's history, ancestral background, perception of oneself by oneself, and the perception of others toward oneself, etc. It is also true that caste identifications have external and internal proportions, which work as identifying factors to denote someone belonging to a particular caste. In Indian social life, this identity problem is expressed in two ways: (a) how do we define the identity of a lower caste person vis-à-vis the upper caste person, and (b) how do we express our social identities in the context of other societies? The former is called individual identity, known as multiple identities. In Indian social and cultural life, it was difficult to define the identity of a lower caste person as an individual during the days of Gandhi. Traditionally and generically, persons are seen from two standpoints: that of the body, which provides the basis for one's determination and material interests and that of the spirit, which is regarded as the basis for one's infinity and rationality. In terms of the body, the lower caste person is described as a physical object, which may be tall, black, or heavy, with a heart or head, and they provide a specific shape from other objects and beings. Concerning the spiritual aspect, they have never been accorded as a reality. They are a mithya. In other words, they have not accorded the status of possessing a self. It amounts to saying that they have only a partial identity that includes a body devoid of a self. Selfhood cannot be applied to a lower caste person as they are not inclined by external conditions such as history, culture, environment, and relationships.

Modernist liberal thought advocated by many of the critiques of casteism has generated rhetorical weapons against the remnants of caste identities as virtuous. Unfortunately, socio-religious reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Narayana Guru, Baba Sawan Singh (founder of Radha Swami Satsang at Beas), Sri Paramahamsa Yogananda, Swami Chinmayanada (founder of Chinmaya mission), and social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Justice Govind Ranade and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and many others could not break the hardcore structure of Indian caste system and its inbuilt philosophy. The fact is that modernist liberal thought conceived by all social reformers and religious people, though attempted to provide the conceptual and practical foundations of a modern form of political and religious culture, could not transform the Indian caste consciousness out of its bonded composition. To make their attempts a practical possibility, the citizens of our democracy must be shaped by tolerance of difference and a disposition to accept the 'other' as equal, which disregards caste rankings, priorities, and caste considerations.

Our attempts at understanding the caste factors that are prevalent in India imply that in the socio-political and cultural life of India, caste is an existential reality. Indians have been nourishing and

practising casteist considerations in their daily lives. Given the caste considerations as a reality in the socio-cultural life of India, it may be acknowledged that caste is a severe determinant of the social life of Indian people. Recognizing the idea that caste is a shared factor in our daily life experiences is to admit that caste is an identity factor of Indian life that has produced certain shades of human morphology. Though it may not be philosophically viable to argue for the scientific credibility of casteism in the 21st century, that does not mean that caste has lost its credibility in the social life of India. Caste is one of the prime considerations with which we look at the other and the other looks at us. It purports that my 'being' is constituted and re-constituted by the other, and the other, in turn, includes the 'me'. What is central to the suggestion is that caste has not lost its ontological status even today. Consider a typical poor Dalit from the remotest area of a village side in the cow belt area of North India. The wide nostrils, the thick lips, the black figure, the untidy attire, and the overall undernourished body and mind are typically considered as a remark of the upper castes toward the Dalits and Adivasis. It means that our conception of a lower caste person is particularized with a perceptual blink that they are shabbily dressed or have a shabby look. This may be said to be the unique existential reality of Indian upper castes whose approximations on the 'idea' of lower castes are crammed with a normative value; it also points to the idea that caste is the basis of solidarities and collective identities and pointed towards the search for an unusual exploration into the meaning of being which is central to the experiential metaphysics of Indian worldview and philosophy. What is central to the ontological issue of the meaning of being in this culture is founded on the understanding that all beings are conditioned and patterned by the structural determinants of Being itself. Thus, Indian ontology is centred on the fundamental question of understanding what being is. Defined from the aspect of being, caste may be regarded as the historically and culturally located categorization of human persons involving specific visual determinants such as colour, ascribed social stigma, stark poverty, ancestry, outside perception, habits, practices, etc. Caste considerations got their metaphysical validity and efficacy through the medium of human cognition, considered Anvikshiki or philosophy in India.

## 2. Gandhi and the Idea of Caste

As a theorist and sage, Gandhi tried to understand the metaphysical and ontological meaning of caste and its consequences in creating a more compassionate and charitable world. However, how far Gandhi's ideas on caste have contributed to making a humanitarian world has been a subject matter of philosophical and analytical investigations in theories. The striking observation about caste-based communities has provided an upper status to Brahmins, who enjoy the highest status. In contrast, the untouchables have the lowest status, and all other castes have engaged space in between.

Gandhi narrated in his autobiography how he came face to face with casteism and its invention of untouchability in his home. His mother shared the caste prejudice, which was common among Vaishnava Hindus. The children had orders not to defile themselves by touching the family sweeper Uka or playing with 'untouchable' classmates. Gandhi was an obedient child, but he was annoyed with these restraints; even at an early age, he sensed the inconsistency between the practice of untouchability and the beautiful anecdote of the epic Ramayana, in which he had heard of the hero Rama being ferried across the Ganges by a low-caste. In South Africa, Gandhi's associates belonged to all classes and communities. To the first ashram at Ahmadabad, which he founded after his return to India in 1915, he welcomed an untouchable family; this action outraged the wealthy merchants of Ahmadabad, who were contributing to the upkeep of the ashram. Consequently, several associates deserted him in protest. (Gandhi, 1931).

Gandhi considered untouchability as the crime committed by upper-caste Hindus. Swaraj, he maintained, is a meaningless term if millions of people were kept under perpetual subjection and deliberately denied the fruits of national culture. Gandhi wanted every Indian to take a vow to work for the removal of untouchability. He declared that if he found Hinduism consents to untouchability,

he should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. According to Gandhi, there is no religious justification in Hinduism for considering any individual to be untouchable.

According to Gandhi, no social superiority should be entertained by any individual or a section of society on the grounds of birth knowledge, religion, or any other consideration. Gandhi fought against social superiority in any form and carried on his crusade against the doctrine of racial supremacy in South Africa and the evil practices of untouchability in India.

Gandhi had the opinion that no one is born untouchable and unequal. The practice of untouchability is a sin against God because the Harijans and non-Harijans are the children of the same God. He found untouchability to be the worst effect of Hinduism and worked for their temple entry for religious equality. In 1932, Gandhi introduced Harijan Sevak Samaj, a non-political association for the self-improvement of the untouchables. He suggested their economic self-reliance through the adoption of spinning and weaving.

Gandhi knew he had to tread cautiously regarding social and religious reform, or his efforts would prove counterproductive. The movement against untouchability, he said, did not urge the untouchable to give up their vocations. The desire was to demonstrate that the function of removing garbage and filth was necessary and sacred, and its performance could import grace even to Vaishnava. According to Gandhi, 'Those who pursue this vocation are not, therefore, degraded but entitled to an equal measure of social privileges with those pursuing other callings; their works protect the country from several diseases. They, therefore, deserve the same respect as doctors (CWMG, vol. 14, 76-7). Gandhi's commitment to the cause of the eradication of this social evil was complete. Thus, he made the following declaration: 'It is my firm conviction that if in the attempt to free Hinduism of this blog, I have to lay down my life, it will be no great matter' (CWMG, vol. 20, 320).

Gandhi's most significant challenge on the issue of untouchability arose when the British Government announced the Communal Award, which sanctioned a separate electorate for the Harijans. Earlier, Gandhi had made it emphatically clear that he would resist any such attempt to approve a separate electorate for the untouchables with his life. Therefore, Gandhi decided to fast unto death as soon as the award came into effect. Gandhi started his fast on September 20, 1932, leading to momentous consequences. It is reported thus: 'Gandhi's fast is generally known as the Epic fast, and it evoked hectic negotiations and consultation between leaders and different sections of the Hindu community to arrive at an amicable settlement as soon as possible to save Gandhi's life. The Yervada pact was reached on September 24 between the leaders of the depressed classes on the one hand and the rest of the Hindu community on the other.' (CMWG, Vol, 61, Appendix II, 463-65).

This event provided sizeable representation to the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures of the country; in the central parliament, they were given 18 per cent of the seats prearranged to the general electorate for British India. The fallout of Gandhi's fast was the extensive and vocal assertions of most Hindu leaders and organizations in the country that all efforts would be made to fully integrate the Harijans with the rest of the Hindu community.

Gandhi maintains that the spirit of untouchability must have come to us from our lowest ebb. It is a curse for society. So long as this curse prevails in society, people will commit crimes. Further, according to Gandhi, untouchability has no religious sanction. Religion does not provide any room for untouchability. According to him, "Untouchability is not a sanction of religion; it is a device of Satan" (Young India, 1921. 3). He goes on to argue: "It is against the Sastras. It is against the basic principles of humanity; it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, be forever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and untenable. The tragedy is that millions of Hindus believe in this institution as if the Hindu religion enjoined it." (Harijan, 1933, Vol, 1. 4) Gandhi regarded untouchability as a great hindrance in the way of attaining Swaraj and also for the

reorganization of the society. He emphatically proclaimed that so long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus considers it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment." (Young India, April 1921, 648).

Though Gandhi was busy abolishing this evil practice of untouchability in the Hindu society, yet did not oppose the caste system. Caste was, to Gandhi, an extension of the principle of the family, as both were governed by blood and heredity. He stated that caste was essential for the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress, but it must not connote superiority or inferiority. It must only recognize different outlooks and corresponding modes of life. At the same time, Gandhi was equally aware that caste as an institution has degenerated to a great extent and has stratified the social life of the Indians. Therefore, for Gandhi, the practice of caste did not align with its theory. He emphasized the purification of caste. According to him, the purification of caste is conceivable when untouchability is abolished. As soon as untouchability goes, the caste system is purified, and the true conception of Varnashrama dharma, the four divisions of the society, will come to light. He maintains that the four caste divisions are complementary and none inferior or superior to any other.

Untouchability was a recurrent theme in his speeches during countrywide tours in the twenties. Gandhi issued press statements and letters to his numerous correspondents to educate the people on the evil of untouchability. He arranged for the publication of a weekly paper, Harijan, to promote his campaign. Gandhi wrote a good chunk in Harijan. He took the lead in pulling out the skeleton of untouchability from the Hindu cupboard and publishing graphic pen pictures of the miserable conditions in which the 'outcastes' lived. Thus, Gandhi affirms that removing this sign does not mean only its removal from Hindu society but from all walks of life. It should be removed from all levels of society, be it a Christian, Mohammedan, or Parsi society. According to him, "There should be not only no untouchability as between Hindus and Hindus, but there should be no untouchability whatsoever between Hindus, Christians, Mussalmans, Parsis and the rest" (Harijan, January 26, 1934, 4).

### 3. Jati Vyavastha: The Ontological Moorings
Gandhi, as a political activist, engages with certain beliefs and convictions about the notion of jati-vyastha and in his reflections, he has tried to establish two meaningful ontological and epistemological connections between caste and its manifestation on an individual's well-being and its consequences on humanity and Indian society at large. Intriguing enough, Gandhi's ideas on inter-caste marriages are evaluative indicators through which he has always been keen to figure out the disruptions and rigidity of Indian society. In his plethora of writings, he observes how inter-caste marriages have played important and influential roles in eradicating untouchability. However, Gandhi's ideas on inter-caste marriages and eliminating untouchability have been a subject matter of critical engagement of philosophers and political theorists of contemporary Indian political philosophy in India and the West.

According to Gandhi, the problems of inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning are social problems that the people engaged in reorganizing the masses deserve consideration. Can inter-caste marriage and inter-dinning be regarded as the effective means of removing untouchability? Gandhi's answer to this question is both affirmative and negative. He says:

"My answer is no and yes. 'No' because it is not part of the programme of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Generally, marrying and dining are matters of individual concern. No one has a right to ask another to choose a girl as his wife or to dine with anybody against his will. But my answer simultaneously is 'yes' because if a person refuses to take food touched by another person on the grounds of untouchability or inferiority, he is observing untouchability. In other words, untouchability cannot constitute any ground for restraint on inter-dining or marriage" (Gandhi, M. K, 1954, 81).

It is genuinely inadmissible to agree with the Gandhian perception that a 'Shudra' has every right to acquire knowledge. However, Gandhi did not want a 'Shudra' to search for a job other than the one ordained for him by God. Gandhi advocates that "the only profession after his heart should be the profession of his fathers. Gandhi strictly favours the parental profession (Bharatan Kumarappa, 1958, 40). Thus, he distinguished between the ideal caste system, the Varna Dharma, and the caste system practised in India and its distorted practices. Perhaps Gandhi perceives that a social order based on the Varna vyavastha is oriented towards enabling the individual to work for self-realization. Thus, Gandhi argues: "Varna means pre-determination of the choice of man's occupation. The law of Varna is that a man shall follow the profession of his family to earn his livelihood. Varna, therefore, is, in a way, the law of hereditary. Varna is not a thing that is superimposed on Hindus, but men who were trustees for their welfare discovered the law for them. It is not a human discovery, but an irreversible law of nature" (Bharatan Kumarappa, 1958, 139).

Though Gandhi claims that Varnavyastha and jati vyastha are separate categories, he fails to explain where and how the pollution theory emerges. In its metaphysical construct, Gandhian philosophy does not allow questioning the basic presuppositions of vanaprastha and jati vyastha. Hence, it remains a contested terrain, which Bhikhu Parekh and Ronald J. Terchek have pointed out in diverse ways. For Ronald Terchek, caste is not a metaphysical construct but a reality that merges out of daily experiences. He points out that Gandhi's position/stand on caste is very much based on the presumptions of the Hindu worldview. Bhikhu Parekh, on the other hand, critiques Gandhi's position and provides reasons to justify Gandhi's views on the metaphysical foundation of varnavyastha. However, Bhikhu does not accept Gandhi's distinction between ontology and epistemology of Varna vyastha. Hence, it is still pertinent to make out the philosophical hermeneutics of the caste system and its evaluations that emerge from the Gandhian Scholarship on the notion of varnavyastha and jati vyastha. One is constrained to think that the dichotomous relationship between the two is wholly mistaken if one analyzes Gandhi on Varna vyastha and caste. Thus, Gandhi writes:

"There is one thing more to be remembered about the caste system. For me, it is not the same as Varnashrama. While the caste system answers social needs, Varnashrama is based on the Hindu scriptures. Not so the caste system. While there are innumerable castes (some are dying out, and new ones are coming into being), the Varnas are and have always been four. I am a firm believer in Varnashrama. I have not hesitated before to consider it a gift of Hinduism to humanity. Acceptance of that Dharma is, so far as I have seen, a condition of spiritual growth. The four divisions are not a vertical section, but a horizontal plane on which all stand on a footing of equal opportunity, doing the services respectively assigned to them." (M.K. Gandhi Harijan, February 11, 1933. 14).

Gandhi's attitude towards untouchability, class, and caste had steadily changed through the different phases of his life. We cannot mark a particular stand from a specific time to evaluate his entire approach towards untouchables. He had been inconsistent for many years. That is why Dr. Ambedkar constantly criticized Gandhi on this issue. But, later on, he took a clear stand. Later, in South Africa, Gandhi was associated with the untouchables and had friends and clients among them. On his return to India in 1915, he started Satyagraha Ashram and admitted untouchable inmates there. Gandhi even adopted the daughter of an untouchable family, Lakshmi, as his own. He also began cleaning toilets, which were considered to be the work of untouchables.

Gandhi's ideas of Varna vyastha and the caste system have been critiqued and criticized by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. The critique of Ambedkar offers us new insights and dialogical rationality to re-evaluate Gandhi's ideas and efficacy of the Gandhian approach to the caste system. However, it would be a separate question to address how far Ambedkar's critique of Gandhian understanding is justified. However, it supplements Gandhi and opens up new possibilities for the emancipation and liberation of untouchables. At the same time, Ambedkar's critique also highlights the limitations and contradictions of Gandhi's ideas on the caste system.

It is clear that throughout 1921-46, Gandhi's public stance on caste and class was utterly reversed. D. R. Nagaraj, in his book 'The Flaming Feet and Other Essays: The Dalit Movement in India', claims that the difference between Ambedkar and Gandhi on the issue of Dalits' was because of their perception. Ambedkar defined the problem in terms of building an independent political identity for Dalits in the social, economic, and political power structure. In contrast, for Gandhi, it was purely a religious question, and that was an internal one for Hinduism. But this is not fully correct when we study the steady change in Gandhi's vision. Anyway, Nagaraj admits that it was because of Gandhi that the plight of Dalits came into the central sphere of politics of freedom struggle'. (Nagaraj, 2010, 45).

Gandhi places great importance on the values and duties attached to one's Varna. Gandhi maintained his faith in the Varna system but condemned the discriminatory practices associated with the caste system. We find a fascinating debate between Dr B R. Ambedkar and Gandhi in criticizing the caste system. Ambedkar stated in a message to Gandhi:

"The outcaste is a derivative of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes. Nothing can liberate the outcastes except the destruction of the caste system. Nothing can help to save Hindus and make sure their continued existence in the impending struggle except the purging of the Hindu faith of this odious and vicious dogma." (Bharatan Kumarappa (1958, 318).

Gandhi wanted to eradicate untouchability in order to preserve Hinduism, while Ambedkar saw a way to provide for his people outside of the mainstream Indian religion. Ambedkar, a supporter of modern technology and city life, disregarded the Indian village as a den of immorality, while Gandhi, a romantic who loved the countryside, wanted the self-governing village to be the cornerstone of free India. While remaining wary of the state, Gandhi was a crypto-anarchist who supported peaceful protest; Ambedkar was a staunch constitutionalist who worked within the state and sought solutions to societal problems with the aid of the state.

Perhaps the most telling difference was in the choice of political instrument. For Gandhi, the Congress also represented all of India and the Dalits. Gandhi had made their cause his own from the time of his first ashram in South Africa. Ambedkar, however, made a clear distinction between freedom and power. The Congress wanted the British to transfer power to them. However, to obtain freedom, the Dalits had to organize themselves as a separate bloc, form an independent party, and articulate their interests in electoral politics and Indian democracy more effectively.

Gandhi's deep sense of sympathy and sensitivity towards the downtrodden and untouchables underlies how he thought about the possibility of an emancipatory political agenda through which the caste system can be wiped out; indeed, Gandhi does not question the theory of re-birth and its metaphysical foundations to eradicate the untouchability. Therefore, though we find Gandhi to be an incredible humanist, he does not offer a concrete solution accessible from any metaphysical beliefs which have been practised by Indians who are the victims of the age-old inequalities which denied them human dignity and social justice.

When we critically see Gandhi from Ambedkar's point of view, we find a vast difference in points of view between them; at the same time, Ambedkar stressed the Dalits' need for political power. On the other hand, Gandhi argued for reform and protection from above. Gandhi feared that Ambedkar's claim for the whole of the untouchable of India would create a division in Hinduism, which Gandhi rejected. Gandhi says: "Those who speak of the political rights of untouchables do not know their India, do not know how Indian society today constructed, and therefore I want to say with all the importance that I can command that if I were the only person to resist this thing, I would resist with my life." (Writings and Speeches, vol. II, pp. 661-63). One of the few Gandhians who understood the cogency of the Dalit critique of the Congress was C. Rajagopalachari. In the second half of 1932, Rajaji got involved in the campaign to allow the so-called untouchables to enter the Guruvayoor

temple in Kerala. The spirited fighter for the rights of the dispossessed, K. Kelappan Nair, led the campaign. Following the Gandhian ideal, in a speech delivered at Guruvayoor on December 20, 1932, Rajaji told the high castes that it would help us fight for Swaraj if we opened the temple doors (to Harijans). One of the many causes that keep Swaraj away from us is that we are divided among ourselves.

Regrettably, even after 75 years of independence, the liberal ideas of Indian enlightenment could not pave the way for a broader cultural movement that goes beyond caste identities. We point out that the Indian cultural renaissance could not provide adequate warfare that engulfed particular caste identities. Unlike the European Enlightenment, which was powerful enough to overthrow a cognitive method centred on religious considerations, Indian cultural and civic movements could not depose doctrinal claims based on caste and caste identities. Most of the leaders of the Indian independence movement had their religious and caste identities and had claims to the possession of a privileged cognitive standpoint based on caste systems. The question is: Can a new form of civic culture arise out of the ruins of Varnashrama morals, and their preceptors will be a possible reality in this tradition? Can the normative doctrines defining Varnashrama duties provide the ideals of freedom and equality in our liberal democracy? We do not say that the perfect of Varnashrama and the consequent responsibilities of such morality is still prevalent in India as had been; our concern is that different forms of Varnashrama are being practised in Indian societies, which indicate the idea that Indian institutions are yet to overthrow the age-old conception of Varnashrama morality. In other words, our perception of women, lower caste people, and the like explicitly expresses Varnashrama's morals. There is not even a day in India where there is no atrocity towards the Dalits or women taking place in one of the regions of our country. One of the most significant and lingering obstacles that we come across is the continued caste conceptions that had provided high status to some sections of people; indeed, ours is a strange form of civic culture that does not give equality and freedom to all sections of people though we claim it as a liberal democracy. Whatever the case, Gandhi and his vision are still relevant because Gandhi's vision of social change is solely based on eliminating the intrusion of violence. He envisaged a world of non-violence and truth, a world without greed, exploitation, war, and violence, and he dreamt of a world where everyone has the talent and space, where everyone is using wisdom to make harmony and relation, and where everybody uses time for prospering each other. At the same time, his social philosophy is diagnostic and curative. He was constantly aware of the social reality around him and could prescribe the means to change the conditions that made it miserable and retrogressive. Therefore, every age must discover its own Gandhi, and India cannot be different at present.

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