

## CHAPTER VI

### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMBEDKAR AND GANDHIJI

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Mankind has witnessed from time to time emergence of great souls who have shown us the path of knowledge and taught us how to try to live an ideal life. Perhaps these two stalwarts, Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar, with their basic philosophy of the welfare of the poor and the down-trodden, are a part of the same vedic heritage.

Before their arrival on the scene, the Hindu social organization was based on the hierarchy of the four varns; the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. This four-fold division of society was laid down by Manu and is generally called Chaturvarna. According to this system, the Hindus's social and economic status was to be decided by their birth. There was no chance to choose their occupations. This dicisive feature of the Hindu society had created a number of serious problems such as the feelings of high and low, superiority and inferiority, injustice and misery. One section of the Hindus treated the other sections as second rate, third-rate citizens or slaves. The lower castes were suppressed, depressed and harassed.

In order to remove such social evils several worthy sons of India have employed their energies and talents. Twenty five hundred years ago, Buddha made the first effort. Twelfth century Basava fought against the caste orthodoxy. Saints like Kabir, Chaitanya, Eknath and Tukaram spent their life time advising and reforming the various sections of the Hindu population in different parts of the country.

The Brahma Samaj of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and the Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswati showed the path of reform to the traditional Hindu society. Jyotirao Phule and Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda fought against the outmoded caste practices. The Theosophical Society the prathan society samaj, satyashodhak samaj servants of India society the represented the vigorous movements of great reformers like Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar stand in the line of such great reformers of the Indian society. Mahatma Gandhi's efforts were mainly spiritual and religious in character whereas Dr. Ambedkar's efforts were mainly political and legal in character.

The Hindus who studied the liberal philosophy and democratic institutions of the western countries naturally began to revolt against the casteist attitudes. The work of Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar represented the early impulses of social reformation in India.

Ambedkar was born in 1891. This was the time of convulsive contradictions, confusions and conflicts that were to explore in the Indian society. As Ambedkar was progressing through his early years, momentous, revolutionary changes were sweeping across the land. These restless decades turned into nationalist movements, into a political expression of deeper values and urges of the Indian economy, society and culture. The pace of social change which was generally ponderous could not satisfy the untouchable sections of the Indian society.

Ambedkar has been hailed as the emancipator of the depressed classes in the country. He dominated the Indian political scene during the most

crucial time when India was going through a series of political crises. He secured the important rights and liberties to the under-privileged in the country and also won a compact package of political rights and liberties for the depressed population of the Shudras. Having secured the coveted degrees from the different renowned universities in the world, he was well armed with a formidable knowledge of various sciences and constitutions and laws of different nations. He was an erudite scholar, a great legal luminary, a great constitutional expert, a parliamentarian, a statesman, a powerful writer, a journalist, a jurist and, above all, a saviour of the depressed sections of the Indian population. Mr. Vincent Sheean writes about Dr. Ambedkar as follows : "His degrees were M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., and LL.B ; degrees do not mean so much, perhaps, but in the torrential flood of his talk there came up great chunks and whirling avatars of learning. He may not have been the greatest of Sanskrit scholars but he could plaster a text with dozens of reference to the early Hindu authorities "<sup>1</sup>

Despite these achievements, the stigma of untouchability attached to him. After his advanced education, when he accepted the post of secretary in the military department of the Baroda government, peons used to <sup>2</sup>fling files at him and did not allow him to drink water from the common pot. The humiliations he suffered at the hands of the caste Hindus made him challenge the outmoded institutions of the Hindu religion. He studied the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, Shrutis, and all the literary paraphernalia concerning Hinduism. Whenever he found a fault. He laid his finger on it. Till the last breath of his life he fought against the oppressive practices of Hinduism. His approach to any problem was comprehensive and aimed at examining and

repairing the institutions in question. He launched an aggressive campaign against Hinduism. He was anti slavery, and anti-priest. He believed that unless people were awakened, it was not possible to do away with the various evils afflicting Hinduism. He did not believe in God or destiny. He believed that as long as the conscience of the slave does not burn with the hatred for his slavery, there was no hope of his salvation. He said, "Tell the slave, he is a slave and he will revolt."<sup>2</sup> Self-help, self-elevation and self-respect were the prime ideas in his Preachings. He said that all men were born equal and died equal. He held that the Hindu Society should be reorganised on two main principles equality and absence of casteism.

At school and college, Ambedkar had a hard time owing to the prevailing practice of untouchability. Mahatma Gandhiji was free from such harassment while his studies were in progress. He was lucky to belong to an upper caste. This is why his School and college days meant opportunities for gaining knowledge, inspiration and joy. After having studied Hindu sacred books and Unto This Last of Raskin and so on. In later life too, Ambedkar faced numerous obstacles in his political career. When the British government proclaimed officially in 1932 that it would concede the demand for separate electorates for the untouchables, Gandhiji opposed the plan strongly on the ground that it would break up the Hindu community and announced his fast unto death if the scheme was not withdrawn. Ambedkar was equally determined to have it implemented. But Gandhiji's fast forced him to accept a compromise. Thus, on humanitarian grounds, he signed the Poona Pact of 1932, to save Gandhiji's life. Of course the struggle for his community's rights was not given up. His mission is still on. He said "Glory to those who would

keep on their struggle for the liberation of the enslaved in spite of heavy odds, carping humiliations, storms and dangers, till the downtrodden secure their human rights"<sup>3</sup>

Ambedkar stood for an opposition to the ideas of Manu. Manu codified rules, norms and regulations designed to oppress two categories of human beings- the Shudras and women. It is alarming but true that, in accepting Buddhism, Ambedkar was accepting a version of Hinduism which belonged to the Shudras and which went against the ideology and institutions of Brahminical Hinduism. We should also note that Buddha exercised an equally great influence on Mahatma Gandhi in his life.

#### **BOTH ARE PATRIOTS**

Mahatma Gandhi has been rightly hailed as the patriot monk and freedom fighter of India. When he saw the Indian society being afflicted with the various social evils, he launched a determined struggle for independence of the country and removal of the evils, He pleaded for a thorough reform of the rigid caste system and felt remorse for the decline of the country. Dr. Ambedkar was a great patriot too and therefore throughout his life he strove hard to restore unity and strength of the country and always came forward with practical solutions to the various problems be setting the country. Dr Ambedkar said, " I am of the opinion that the most vital need of the day is to create among the mass of the people the sense of a common nationality, the feeling not that they are Indians first and Hindus, Mohammedans or Sindhis and Kanarese afterwards, but that they are Indians first and Indians last. If that be the ideal, then it follows that nothing should

be done which will harden local patriotism and group consciousness."<sup>4</sup> Ambedkar thus had practical ideas to overcome the divisive forces operating in a country like India,

The means adopted by Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar to improve the lot of the masses in India were moved in different directions. It is by employing the principles of the humanistic Philosophy that Mahatma Gandhiji wanted India to solve all her problems and come up as a united strong nation. Ambedkar did not agree to this solution, Humanistic and man-making philosophy preached that God is all pervading and dwells in the poor and the wretched. But the Hindus gave discriminatory treatment to the poor and the wretched, Mahatma Gandhiji, that Hindus should not give up his religion but give society to grow. It means that casteism and untouchability must be vanished from our society. This was difficult, according to Ambedkar, because the followers of Hinduism continued to practise casteist ideas and doctrines in the social and political spheres.

## REFORMATION OF HINDUISM

Mahatma Gandhiji, wanted to remove all religions to justify themselves by the discoveries of reasons through which every science justifies itself. Ambedkar also believed that any "ism" in the sense of religion which contains something that is not amenable to reason and which is based on belief only is erroneous. He observed that if a religion is based on principles, it can amend itself in line with reason and logic. He did not believe that any existing religious opinions of Hinduism were amenable to reason or logic. This was one reason why Sanatana Hindus had irrational prejudices. Ambedkar argued

that Hinduism, to begin with, was a missionary religion, but when it developed the rigidity of the caste system and when the caste system became the core of Hinduism, the missionary spirit of Hinduism waned.

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of several reformist movement in India. Mahatma Gandhiji Mission movement was the movement for the social and religious awakening of the Indian people. Mahatma Gandhiji was the Hindu saint to proclaim that the religion of the Hindus was confined to their kitchen. He condemned the idea of untouchability and other social injustices and humiliations. Similar spirit of rebellion against injustice and brotherhood of man guided Dr.Ambedkar in his life. Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr.Ambedkar may be said to be 'two radical and bold leaders of modern India. They were the defenders of the poor and the down-trodden. Both were the champions of the underdog and the emancipators of the backward people. Both were heroic and symbols of revolt. If Mahatma Gandhiji was a reformer and an ascetic, Ambedkar was a fighter and a revolutionary. Both of them were phenomenally active and influential. Both of them have left an indelible imprint on the life and history of the Indian people.

Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr.Ambedkar grew up in their Own different social set-up. The circumstances of the two were remarkably different. Mahatma Gandhiji's personality was unique. He stood in the tradition of the ancient 'seers of the Vedas and Upanishads. Several personalities, themselves great in their own right, have tried to describe the various qualities of Mahatma Gandhiji. Stalwarts of modern India and abroad have paid similar rich tributes to his intellectual and modern outlook. Mahatma Gandhiji's thirst

for knowledge was virtually unquestionable. Very early in his life he perceived the so many things in his life. He was abreast of the new currents in the eastern and western philosophies. He was a great humanist, an idealist, and an ascetic pilgrim of the city of God. With his knowledge and message, 'he wandering from place to place and inspired and instructed the people of this land and other lands.

The Mahatma Gandhiji's main aim was the preservation by reconstruction of India's past spiritual ideas and their combination with materialist and activist ideas and influences of the west. He accepted and expounded the later's philosophy in modern terms and found its application vital in the Indian context.

Ambedkar was neither born great nor was greatness thrust upon him. He achieved greatness by sheer sincere hard work. He faced endless troubles all his life. Ambedkar enthroned himself in the hearts of millions of Indians. He has been considered as a second Buddha in India. His work as constitutionalist, professor, political leader and socio-religious reformer has endeared him to the generations of Indians. Ambedkar's personality is multi-dimensional. He was a great scholar and his writings cover diverse fields of knowledge.

Both Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar sought to reform the existing society by questioning its basic presuppositions. They fought various persistent evils of the Indian society. while both were rebels and reformers, they differed considerably in their Principles and ideologies. Mahatma Gandhiji tried to rebuild India mainly through spiritual and higher values of



the glorious ideals of India's past. Ambedkar wanted to rebuild India with a complete rejection of India's past. He held that "Wherever there are social evils, the health of the body<sup>or</sup> politic<sup>al</sup> requires that they shall be removed before they become the symbols of suffering and injustice. For it is the social and economic evils which everywhere are the parent of revolution or decay."<sup>5</sup> Ambedkar too, believed that religion is a foundation for human life and society and society cannot survive without morality. He argued that a system of moral values is necessary to promote harmonious life, upholding equality and brotherhood and rejecting superstitious mysticism, irrationality and blind beliefs. As a humanist and a scientific thinker, he was a bitter critic of the Hindu social order. He hoped that Hinduism could be reformed if not revolutionised. When he considered the idea of abandoning Hinduism for some other religion, he found his answer in the message of Buddhism. Buddhism was of Indian origin and was, according to him, superior to other religion including Hinduism. Hinduism haunted him all his life like a ghost; it is in Buddhism that he finally found. his solace.

Dr. Ambedkar had to face very bitter and it situations right from his childhood till the coming of independence (of the country) and even later. The deliberate attempts to harass him led to his mental torture and the number of humiliations inflicted on a man of his learning and status have few parallels. There was no way left for Ambedkar but to launch social movements of his own as early as January 1920, to espouse the cause of the untouchables. He felt that "If the protection of the Britishar were withdrawn, those who did not condescend to look at the untouchables would trample upon them."<sup>6</sup> The untouchables were made to suffer numerous social

disabilities and they were told that this was their fate determined by their birth. Ambedkar observed that "To the untouchables, Hinduism is a 'veritable chamber of horrors. The iron law of caste, the heartless law of the Karma and the senseless law of status by birth are veritable instruments of torture which Hinduism has forged against the untouchables.'"7 Ambedkar had to fight on two formidable fronts. To secure the social and religious rights, he had to face the opposition of the caste Hindus; he also had to struggle against the national parties and the British rule. Since no support was forthcoming from either of them, he was left with the only alternative of starting a separate organisation for the upliftment of the untouchables. Thus he had to make heroic efforts to inspire the down-trodden classes to raise the banner of revolt against the oppressive ideas and institutions of Hinduism. Here it would be appropriate to cite the comments of the late Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; Nehru, on hearing of the death of Dr. Ambedkar, reacted in the parliament thus, '... He (Dr. Ambedkar) was not a person of soft speech. But behind all that was his powerful reaction and an act of rebellion against something that represented our society for so long. Fortunately, that rebellion had the support, not perhaps the exact way he wanted it, but in a large measure, the principle underlying that rebellion had the support of parliament, and I believe of every group and party represented here. ... Anyhow, Dr. Ambedkar, as I said, became prominent in his own way and a most prominent symbol of that rebellion.'"8 The Supreme Court justice, V.R. Krishna Iyer, once observed, "Dr. Ambedkar was the multi-dimensional rebellious leader of a socially suppressed minority, a defiant protestant in religion and dissenter in politics before and after freedom."9

Dr. Ambedkar himself was sure that every good society needed its own quota of rebels. He said, "The world owes much to rebels who would dare to argue in the face of the pontiff and insist that he is not infallible."<sup>10</sup>

The rebel that he was in this sense Ambedkar protested against the socio-economic oppression of the Hindu society. He fought for the political rights and the religious beliefs. He advocated the upliftment of the down-trodden through education, organisation and agitation and separate electorate for the depressed classes.

While Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and recommended it to his followers, the followers themselves have not responded in any large numbers nor have they benefited from the conversion in any substantial measure.

By their ideas and activities, both Mahatma Gandhiji and Ambedkar have welcomed the rise and development of democratic institutions in India. Both these thinkers have sought to foster individual liberties and rights. While Mahatma Gandhiji has gone to the extent of welcoming socialism for India, he has not gone into the details of the political, administrative and judicial institutions for these goals for the common people. Dr. Ambedkar however spelt out the plans and policies and the form of government and institutions for the constructive development of the depressed classes of people. And to reduce the gap between the haves and the have nots.

Ambedkar wanted to nationalise lands, for example, so that the poor people could have some means of livelihood. Mahatma Gandhiji encouraged the establishment of religious centres to train youths on socio-religious lines. Ambedkar fought for the creation of government institutions and machineries

for the protection of the poor people and provide some means for their livelihood. He upheld the principles of equitable distribution of national wealth so that the poor people could avoid starvation in the first instance.

Dr. Ambedkar was quite against the system of Panchayat Raj. The Panchayat system was a council of the village elders, usually from the upper castes. They had traditionally promoted the wealth and well being of the upper castes and denied opportunities to the lower castes. They had condemned the lower castes to their wretched lot. The Panchayat system was thus destructive to the upliftment and progress of the depressed classes and hence he opposed the Panchayat system bill in the Bombay legislative council and in the Indian constituent assembly later.

Generally while Dr. Ambedkar favoured the Buddhist philosophy of liberation and equality, Mahatma Gandhiji was in line with monism or Advaita. From Ambedkar's point of view, monism or Advaita was not of much help. According to Ambedkar, Buddhism was practicable in a poverty-stricken society like that of India because it advocates compassion and love. Under monism, man becomes individualistic and heartless. He exploits others for his desires. The poverty-stricken become exploitable and suffer furthermore. Mahatma Gandhiji came from a high caste and therefore he had no religious or Caste trouble and he did not need to convert to any other religion,

Although both Mahatma Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar were comparatively great patriots, both of them were very active and energetic till the end and served the various causes of people. Mahatma Gandhiji inspired and guided several active and prominent Indians who created

various institutions and Ashrams, schools and hospitals and spread his message across the Indian subcontinent and across the world. Since Mahatma Gandhiji came from the upper caste background, he had no hurdles to cross or humiliations to suffer as was the lot of Dr. Ambedkar." Mahatma Gandhiji had another natural advantage. He had the backing of the educated upper caste people who had money, property, social and political experience and connections to build and run, various institutions, They could easily give and collect donations. They could build publishing houses to publish the works by and on Mahatma Gandhiji, They could easily get the support of the government or administrative agencies or offices. When the disciples of Mahatma Gandhiji held meetings or discussions, they could get audience of students and citizens. Mahatma Gandhiji was a revolutionary but he was a philosophical and social revolutionary. He was viewed as a political revolutionary or a danger to the British empire or the government of India. His resources and energies were not diverted for countering any unfavourable or hostile propoganda. He was wearing half necked clothes and this commanded instant reception and acceptance of his personality and mission. People listened to his attentively and followed his advice readily. He acquired disciples and adherents from all over India

Dr. Ambedkar had a great initial problem. His caste always came in the way. Although the Maharaja of Baroda and the Maharaja of Kolhapur gave him much support and assistance for his education and employment, this was not enough. He had to fight everywhere. He became educated, an advocate and a professor but it was not easy for him to get as many upper caste friends and supporters as one would have wished. Most of his followers

and supporters came from the lower castes, specially the Mahars and others. These did not have any privileged or influence positions in society. They were not men of property or wealth, were not men of authority or influence. They could of course follow Ambedkar sincerely. But they could not command or offer the advantages which the upper castes possessed. Much of the work of Mahatma Gandhiji was carried out then and has been carried out since his departure from the scene, by his followers most of whom are the upper castes and Hindus generally. Dr. Ambedkar has not been lucky to enjoy this advantage. Yet in another sense Dr. Ambedkar may be said to be more fortunate than Mahatma Gandhiji, Dr. Ambedkar programme was legal, socio-economic and political in nature. He was a minister of the government of India and influential member of the parliament. He was in the privileged position in the constituent assembly. He was the chairman of the drafting committee. He was in a unique position to put soon of his own ideas into the constitution and certainly influence the proceedings or debates in the constituent assembly. Of course this constitution was not up to his liking in all respects. It fell short of the ideal framework he would have liked to present to the country. But even as it was, the position he held and the powers he exercised were certainly great.

While Mahatma Gandhiji recommended a strong and efficient political and administrative system for India, he had to assume that this business was to be done by his successors and he was obviously confident that bulk of the Indians, the Hindus, were capable of realising his plans and programmes. In his time, it was too early and in a way unnecessary to delineate the picture of the exact political and administrative India. Ambedkar could not leave

anything to chance. His followers were willing and sincere. But they were obviously not as well endowed or strong as the followers of Mahatma Gandhiji. Ambedkar therefore established the depressed classes mission and trade-unions.<sup>11</sup> He wrote fiery articles and books, putting forward his ideas and plans and he therefore made several enemies in the political and other fields. He went to the round table conferences in London around 1930 and openly criticised Mahatma Gandhiji's plans and programmes including those for the upliftment of the depressed classes. His advocacy of the communal electorates was a direct challenge to Mahatma Gandhiji and the Congress politics. Ambedkar was worried about his own people and other minorities. Before the constituent assembly began its deliberations, he came out with a report <sup>12</sup> of his own on the out line of giving representation to the minorities in the new political set-up which was to emerge after independence. His followers and relatives have continued his valuable work of party-building and contesting elections. The Republican party of India has been fighting for Ambedkar's ideas and plans and generally representing the causes of the Untouchables and other backward people in the country. The Congress party has had its Own candidates like Jagjivan Ram who were said to act as the spokesmen of the untouchables and other backward people in the country. Ambedkar's programme was separate and independent and it was often in opposition to that of the Congress party.

The educational work inspired by Mahatma Gandhiji and Ambedkar has been remarkably comparable and significant in the educational history of India. While a number of schools and Colleges, hostels and Ashramas have been established following the ideology of Mahatma Gandhiji, a large number

of schools and colleges have been established by Ambedkar himself in his own lifetime, and also by his followers in the later years Ambedkar's contribution to India's college and university education is particularly great. His learning and Scholarship<sup>13</sup> have so impressed the people of India, all people, not only his immediate Scheduled castes, that (at least) three universities are named after him, the latest one being the Marathwada university at Aurangab<sup>ad</sup> in Maharashtra. There are countless schools and colleges, including the technical or medical ones, which have been named after him. In case of Mahatma Gandhiji, the schools and colleges have been established throughout the country and even outside, in Case of Ambedkar, the concentration of the institutions is in western and southern India.

Mahatma Gandhiji had a unified and universal vision. Ambedkar also had a similar vision but the intensity of his feelings for the scheduled castes was so great that it often appeared that his plans and programmes were mostly for his people. He stood for all people. But obviously he gave priority for the interests and problems of his own people.

The present-day Indian politics may be said to continue the philosophy and programme of Dr. Ambedkar. All his life Ambedkar exhorted his followers to educate themselves, organise themselves at various levels and then fight for their political and other rights. He stood for winning various rights and liberties for his people and he wanted them to fight for them continuously. Many in India have a misconception that Dr. Ambedkar fought for reservation for his people. As a matter of fact, this has largely been an upper castes strategy. Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, in the mid-40s, contemplated this policy of reservation. While these leaders were the spearhead of the policy,



the policy was really the Congress government policy which had the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. While Gandhiji aimed at the upliftment of the Harijans and their rehabilitation in the Hindu society with honour and happiness, and while he recommended self-reliance for all, he certainly favoured the idea of aiding the Harijans. He was not for charity. But he was certainly for help, assistance to the unfortunate sections of society. In his Own way he had initiated several ideas and experiments to aid and assist Harijans. The Harijan Seva Sangha was the organisation which carried out valuable work for the improvement of the conditions of the Harijans. The most important thing to be noted here is that Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress leaders and those leaders who became ministers after Independence, had the common ideology and policy of treating Harijans as part of the Hindu society and this also meant the Hindu electorate at various levels. The later Congress leaders pursued this policy in a crude and rough-handed manner to create the vote banks of the Harijans for the Congress leaders, Harijan or non-Harijan. This policy continues to be followed in several respects even today. However Dr. Ambedkar was basically opposed to this philosophy and programme. He believed that the Hindus had no philosophy or programme to uplift the down-trodden scientifically or systematically and in a businesslike way. They wanted to continue the same traditional philosophy of domination, exploitation and ill-treatment of the Harijans. Hence Ambedkar believed that any philosophy or programme which aimed at uplifting the Harijans had to be devised by the Harijans themselves. This is why he advised, his followers again and again to develop their own thinking, action plans and policies which could be pursued independently in the democratic framework and electoral politics.



He registered his basic difference with Mahatma Gandhiji the form of the Poona Pact of 1932 by which he gave a notice to the Congressmen that the Harijans would develop their own leadership and power and programme and would like to exercise their own vote in their own electorate. This thinking and programme which was in defiance of the Congress policy and programme must be taken as separate and defiant even from Mahatma Gandhiji's point of view. While Mahatma Gandhiji was not averse to independent, challenging approaches, he was for all practical purposes for a unified and coordinated approach to the country's problems of winning independence, socio-economic and industrial modernisation.<sup>14</sup> His ideas and plans seem nearer the plans and programmes of the Congress party than those of Ambedkar stood for separate development, separate electorate, separate parties and policies for his people because he did not trust the mainstream, predominantly upper castes Hindu, Congress leadership. It is possible that if universally oriented and bold and broad-minded leaders like Mahatma Gandhiji were at the helm of affairs in the Congress party or government, they would have welcomed the challenging, parallel approach of bold leaders like Ambedkar and conceded them more initiative and freedom to seek the salvation of their own people and set an example to the rest of Indians. However, as the later history showed, the Congress party or government leaders were not so broad minded and businesslike enough to trust Ambedkar to try his independent programmes. The Congress leaders and ministers generally failed to take Ambedkar into confidence and make his ideas and experiments a part of the Congress policies and programmes. Some fault in this matter may lie at the door of Ambedkar too, So, as a result, the Congress developed its own

Schedule Caste policy and programmes and had its own brand and quota of Schedule Caste leaders so that Ambedkar could be sidetracked and left to follow his own ideas and programmes without rocking the boat of the Congress government. One may say that the Congress leaders did not come up to the standard of genuineness, honesty, earnestness, boldness and universality of Mahatma Gandhi and this is why they could not come to terms with the bold and constructive initiatives launched by Ambedkar at various stages in the 1930s, 40s and 50s,

In 1956 when he left Hinduism and embraced Buddhism. In a way, this was departing from the philosophy Mahatma Gandhi had advocated. Mahatma Gandhi had advocated a religious policy of understanding, tolerance, coordination and integration. This was the essence of his dream of swadeshi and swaraj. The thrust of Mahatma Gandhiji's religious philosophy was that each religion was adequate and satisfactory to its followers; there could be exchange of opinion and views; but there was no need for any religious conflicts or wars, conversion was also needless unless one was genuinely interested or had serious or uniquely disturbing problems in one's own religion. Mahatma Gandhiji had rebuked the Christian missionaries on the ground that they were giving the poor Hindus religion which they did not need and did not give them bread which they badly needed. From many Hindus' point of view, Ambedkar's conversion was not a sound step although it was tolerable in view of the fact that Buddhism was another form of Hinduism and in that sense the departure was not fundamental. Perhaps Mahatma Gandhiji would have viewed Ambedkar's conversion in this light although perhaps he would have liked Ambedkar to be within Hinduism

and from that position to make serious efforts to reform the whole structure and process so that none ever felt the need to desert Hinduism. For about a hundred years now, Mahatma Gandhiji has acted as a great source of inspiration and guidance to the various sections of the Indian people. He has been a source of inspiration for the modernisation and enlightenment to the whole subcontinent. His message has been delivered for the Hindus no doubt but also for the others unmistakable. In a way, Mahatma Gandhiji has been quietly accepted and glorified and worshipped. He has not provoked any fierce opposition or controversy from any upper castes or lower castes and his message has been generally benign and progressive. It has been inclusive and comprehensive. It has been broad and Umbrella-like so that all groups of people with diverse opinions and preferences can be brought under his banner without anyone feeling small or uninvited. While Mahatma Gandhi has advised his country-men in rebuking words, they have been received as well-meaning like the words of a physician. Mahatma Gandhiji missions and institutions have been accepted and functioned spiritual and religious service and counsel to all those who care to go to these establishments. It may be said that most of the people who have taken advantage have been generally from the upper castes, But the important point is that no castes are specifically barred, much less as a policy or conscious strategy. Thus Mahatma Gandhi missions and disciples have been peacefully functioning in the midst of the generations of Indians in India and abroad.

To some extent, this argument holds good in case of the numerous colleges and other institutions established by Dr. Ambedkar. But, unlike Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar could not leave behind any socio-spiritual or

religious order or vast organisation. From his point of view, Ambedkar attained his salvation by going over to Buddhism. Years ago, he had taken a sort of vow to see that he does not die in Hinduism. That vow he kept. To his good fortune, lakhs of his followers embraced Buddhism at Nagpur in 1956 and periodically a few thousand collect to undergo conversion to Buddhism over there. But there has been no great or well financed and efficient organisation to stabilise, consolidate and spread the message and philosophy of Ambedkar. As we have said earlier, Ambedkar is rather unfortunate in having his followers who are largely poor and disadvantaged and who stand in need of various types of help from this viewpoint, it must be said to the credit of the Indian people and leaders at the central as well as state level that although Ambedkar followers have gone over to Buddhism from time to time Since 1956, they have not been deprived of the socio economic or other help of reservation etc. consequent to their conversion to Buddhism. By and large, Ambedkar followers, whether Hindu or Buddhist, have continued to obtain different types of help and concessions as deserving socio-economic or other help of reservation etc. consequent to their conversion to Buddhism, By and large, Ambedkar followers, whether Hindu or Buddhist, have continued to obtain different types of help and concessions as deserving socio-economically backward people, so much so that, on this analogy, backward people of other communities like the Muslims and Christians have been rightly asking for such help and concessions. Thus Ambedkar has triggered a lot of socio-economic and political changes. Born as he was and functioned as he did, Ambedkar has turned into a Symbol of the resurgence of the various suppressed people in the various parts of the country. Mahatma

Gandhiji, hailing as he did from the upper caste background has been quietly accepted, adopted and assimilated by the Indians. But Ambedkar has been embraced vigorously by the backward people, the suppressed people, and while the understanding upper castes have accepted him as a great leader of their country, they cannot pretend to feel that his ideas and plans have been to their liking in all respects. Ambedkar has gone a long way in symbolising self-respect and dignity and identity to the millions of the lower castes in the country. The upper castes followers of Mahatma Gandhi did not need much reminding that they were heirs to great civilisation; the people did not find it difficult to find, and assert their identity. For the lower castes millions the problem of identity and respectable socio-economic and political status is important and urgent and here Ambedkar is looked upon as a saviour. No one felt awkward when Ambedkar was awarded the Bharat Ratna. Posthumously

More than upper castes performing their belated political duty and setting the record straight, it was a question of fulfilling in a symbolic way the aspirations for dignity of a vast number of people in the country. Of course here again there is the ulterior motive and there is a secret desire to court the lower castes voters. But that again takes us back to the theme that Ambedkar has been found most relevant socio-politically and organizationally by the leaders in power and those in opposition. No one wants to be left behind in paying glowing tributes to Ambedkar and now that Ambedkar is not there in physical form to bombard them with his fiery speeches, the upper castes have no hesitation in praising Ambedkar and prescribing his ideas and solutions to the different problems faced by the different groups of people in the country.

Not only several universities, colleges and schools have been established in the different parts of the country, as we have referred to earlier, but more and more statues are erected to perpetuate his memory. This is not only to express our gratitude to Ambedkar but also to meet at least partially the growing demand of the lower castes to assert their identity and plant their symbol in the prominent places everywhere.

In the current climate of privatization and entry into India of the multinational companies, the chances of the backward castes getting employment or other opportunities are not very bright. This is for two reasons. One is that the better qualified and socially forward castes, with their established contacts and influence, will snap up the opportunities and positions that become available. This has been happening in different parts in the country. In this case, what needs to be done by the backward castes is to take their leader's advice very seriously. Long back Dr. Ambedkar had repeatedly advised his followers that they should take to education in a big way and improve their awareness and skills constantly. They should be on the lookout for opportunities and seize them. He advised them to be a part of the Indian mainstream and not keep away grumbling and complaining all the time. He advised them to adopt a positive approach to life and be forthcoming in politics and social affairs. This has not been happening as fast as one would have liked.

The question of such progress not taking place in case of the upper castes, the mainstream followers of Gandhi, does not arise because they have been generally keeping up with the latest trends in business, education, industry,

employment, and so on and to that extent they have been solving their problems and saving themselves from the various types of deprivation.

The followers, of Dr. Ambedkar, specially those who are leaders and ministers at the central and state levels, are doing something for improving the lot of the backward castes. This is however being done gradually and indirectly. There are backward castes leaders in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They are launching - policies which are generally favourable to the backward castes including Harijans.

Since India's socio-political, economic and industrial system is becoming more and more capitalistic and less and less socialistic, this is likely to promote the progress of the well off and well educated upper castes and slow down the progress and advancement of the lower castes. Mahatma Gandhiji had advocated the philosophy of socialism from this viewpoint, the viewpoint of the poor and the depressed. The poor and the depressed, other things being equal, can fare better under socialism than under capitalism. Under socialism, the government is usually anxious to meet the basic needs of the citizens regardless of the differences of caste and religion etc.<sup>15</sup> This advantage will not be available automatically with the progressive disappearance of the socialist ideas and practices on the economic and industrial fronts. Socialism of course has its own demerits and Ambedkar was not one of the admirers of socialism or communism. He was opposed to communism and he was generally in favour of a democratic system of parliamentary type under which minorities and lower castes would be comparatively safer by means of the use of vote, political parties and an independent judiciary etc.



Ambedkar was also put off by the lack of religion or opposition to religion implied by a communist system. Therefore generally Ambedkar was in favour of continuing a democratic system of parliamentary type under which the poor and backward castes would be able to secure a reasonable protection of their rights and freedom and means of livelihood.<sup>16</sup>

Mahatma Gandhiji on the whole had a constructive and even forgiving attitude towards the past history, traditions and intellectual heritage, including the ancient literature and epics, etc. He certainly argued that wholesale acceptance of these sources or philosophies was insulting to human intelligence. He did emphasise a rigorous examination of the various ideas and ideals recommended by the Vedas, Shastras and the Rishis or seers of the past. However, overall, he had an admiring attitude and he emphasised a consistent and systematic use of these sources and ideas for nursing the vision of modern India. He felt no difficulty in accepting and commending these intellectual treasures. His attitude was scientific and critical and he was of course against any blind beliefs and blind acceptance of any philosophers or heroes of the past. To Ambedkar, several aspects, ideas or ideals of the past were revolting. Ambedkar rightly revolted against the exploitative tradition of the Hindus and the discriminatory caste system. He went to some length to trace the origin of the Shudras and their place in the Hindu society. Several of his criticisms appeared to be bitter and unacceptable to the old-fashioned and conservative Hindus. Some of his bold statements aroused controversies and debates. His book on the 'Annihilation of Caste'<sup>17</sup> is a clear example of his bold attitude and philosophy. When the organisers of the Jat Pat Todak Mandal of the Punjab wanted him to tone down some of the observations his

address to be delivered before the gathering of the Mandal, Ambedkar refused to allow any modification and went ahead with the publication of the address which was not delivered due to the differences. This happened in the late 1930s, Recently Ambedkar's observations on the Ramayana hero Ram created another controversy. Dr. Ambedkar had expressed his criticism under his Riddles of Hinduism.<sup>18</sup> The controversy had several dimensions. One was whether Ambedkar should have expressed such an opinion on the tremendously popular and even worshipped personality, Ram. While some critics believed that this hurt the sentiments of the Hindus, others defended Ambedkar, saying that, as a scholar and intellectual, he had every right to study and draw his own conclusions regarding the epic heroes etc. The constructive critics held that those who did not agree with Ambedkar had the freedom to offer their own analysis, criticism and views to rebut those of Ambedkar. The other dimension of the controversy was whether or not the Maharashtra government was right in bringing out the concerned publication containing Ambedkar's views. Some people felt that the government should not spend public money on such public criticism on the people's heroes like Ram. Of course this view has not been accepted. Constructive critics have pointed out that there is nothing wrong if the government has published the literature or books of a great leader like Ambedkar although some part of it has contained a criticism of some popular heroes or epics. Public funds are well used and the cause of freedom of expression is well served by undertaking the publication. Suppression of criticism or views even in such basic or sensitive matters is not desirable, This was the overall reaction of the people at large in regard to the issue of Ambedkar's books and arguments. In case of

Gandhi, such a situation never arose because his views and arguments, however pungent, were not seen in such a light. Besides, in case Gandhi the books have been largely published by private publishers or institutions and the question of criticizing any government did not arise.

### **C. Removal of Untouchability Movement : A brief Comparison :**

Gandhiji always stressed truth and non-violence in his writings, while Ambedkar always urged to accept "freedom, equality and fraternity" as the ideals in the social reconstruction.

The Mahad struggle to establish the human right to drink water from the public lake and burning of Manusmriti can be compared to the movement of burning foreign cloth. Both movements proved to be weapons of mobilization. To the charge that his movement was communal Ambedkar vehemently retolaterated that his movement was defensive, and explained that the movement was to end the special privileges of the so called upper castes. He wrote in his paper if Tilak had born in an untouchable family, he would have not accepted the slogan "Swaraj is my birth right" but would have proclaimed, "to establish human dignity is my birth right and to eradicate untouchability is my primary duty". "Had Lenin born in India, he would have first fought to eradicate untouchability and then he would have taken the programme or revolution", Ambedkar added.

Ambedkar claimed that his movement was for social revolution. He fought for Dalits, which meant that his struggle was for social equality. For effective working of this programme, he suggested constitutional remedies. But Gandhiji, in his letter to the Premier of England, suggested to give more

representation to the untouchables, but not to implement the "Communal Award" which meant separate electorates to them. But after the signing of 'Yeravada Pact', Ambedkar gave more credit to Gandhiji. In an annual session of the AISC held on 6 May, 1945, he said, "(1) joint electorate or separate electorate is a matter of machinery for achieving a given purpose. It is not a matter of principle, (2) the purpose is to enable to select candidates to the legislature who will be real and not nominal representatives of the minority."<sup>19</sup>

Ambedkar was against Brahminism, and not against Brahmins. Lokhitavadi was one of the greatest social reformers of 19th century. Though he was a Brahmin, still he was against Brahminism. Ambedkar reprinted at least 20 patras from his famous Shatpatre in his Bahishkriti Bharat and Janat. Both Gandhiji and Ambedkar emphasized on religion and morality. "The religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests", said Edmund Burke, and Ambedkar fully endorsed it. According to him, a religion must have initiative and ability to give their enemies. Ambedkar attracted attention of the people to the dichotomy in philosophy equality of souls and in practice divisiveness of the caste system.

"People should not misunderstand that by convention I am taking revenge for the wrongs the caste Hindus have done to the untouchables", said Ambedkar. Inequality in Hindu religion is the basic cause behind the conversion.

In our political agitation in the initial stages religious revivalist thought was dominant. In the later period leaders like Gandhiji and Ambedkar emphasized universal brotherhood for national integration. Now we have

accepted the principle of secularism; and for that a movement of renaissance must be undertaken.

In his essay on "Castes in India", Ambedkar had clearly emphasized that "In spite of the composite make up of the Hindu population, there is a deep cultural unity".<sup>20</sup> He said further, "If I have gone to the length of considering the alternative, it is only because I felt a certain amount of responsibility for the fate of Hindus".<sup>21</sup>

In another context Ambedkar said that he is very near to the communist philosophy as regards the struggle of the exploited.

Struggle in the political field and persuasion emphasized struggle in social matters and wide discussions in political field. He said, "India's independence could wait but not the eradication of the course of untouchability".<sup>22</sup>

Basically Gandhiji was a political leader, and he was vigilant to the fact that political unity against British was not affected. This had some limits on his behavior. He was a collaborationist, and as such he relied more on the caste Hindus. But when he found time he toured the whole country with the programme of eradication of untouchability. Gandhiji tried his utmost to make this programme a success. But if the exploited (socially and economically) sections are not united there is a danger that the upper classes and castes get the political power and the just rights of the weaker sections are trampled under feet. For this, pressure of organized people was a necessity. Ambedkar did this job ably.

But Ambedkar was not hopeful of the new generation. He said, "I am not hopeful of the young generation which seems to be more predisposed to pleasure-seeking and not possessing much of idealism and is not likely to produce men of ideals, principles and actions like Ranade, Tilak and Gokhale"<sup>23</sup>

Prof. Hiren Mukerjee said, "Gandhiji, as far as I can understand, made synthesis of his own. Political, economic, social and spiritual amelioration to him was a compound something which has to be all together. He did not have a compartmental view of the whole matter. As far as I understand, Ambedkar had a more intellectual, sophisticated approach, and he knew the political and economic implications of untouchability and he campaigned for their removal." Because of his own bitter experience, he "..began to work in a in compartmentalized fashion than Gandhiji did. Gandhiji started in a much wider canvass while Ambedkar being an 'untouchable' himself who shared the agony and anxiety of all untouchables the untouchables had perhaps a compartmental vision without basic social and economic approach to the whole matter."<sup>24</sup> The untouchables have ground to say, 'Good God. Is this man Gandhi our saviour?', said Ambedkar in his book Congress and Gandhi.

In addition to the vital element of self-respect which Ambedkar engendered among untouchables, his vision of progress through education and politics, other than a Gandhian vision of change of heart among caste Hindus has come to inspire most scheduled caste leaders.

Ambedkar's view that the problem of the untouchable is economic, social and political as well as religious, widely prevails in India.

Ambedkar may have awakened self-respect and an interest in politics among untouchables, but economic dependence upon others continues to restrict the upward movement of the untouchable.<sup>25</sup>

Ambedkar's true greatness lies in - (1) tremendous strength of character, (2) absolute integrity for the fact that he was a man who could not be bought, (3) his honesty and outspokenness, for his fearlessness, and for his great determination. He had compassion for the downtrodden.

His achievements, were: mass conversion to Buddhism on 14 October 1956, at Nagpur. This was a Dhamma Revolution.



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3. Ibid, P-465
4. Ibid, P.122.
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6. Keer Dhananjay : Dr. Ambedkar : Life And Mission, (third edition reprint : Bombay : Popular Prakashan, 1990), P.42
7. Ahir D.C. : The Legacy of Ambekar, (Delhi ; B.R. Publiching Corporation, 1990), P-293
8. Ibid, P-318.
9. Ibid, P.339
10. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : Writings and Speeches, (first edition ; Vol-I, Bombay, Government of Maharashtra, 1979), P-25
11. When Ambedkar began his legal practive in Bombay, it was not easy to get on well He did not have money enough to pay for his Sanad. It was not easy to get office and good.well paying cases. However (thinks again to the upper castes friends) these initial difficulties were overcome with the good offices and support of friends and well wishers like veteran trade union leader, N.M.Joshi and others like B.G. Modak and D.A. Khare.

For details see Dr. K.Raghavendra Rao, Babasaheb Ambedkar (Makers of Indian Literature (series) New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993) p.7



12. While Ambedkar pursued a hold political struggle all his life for the upliftment of his caste brethren, he was always conscious of the imprtance of the supporting and simultaneous social reform that had to prodeed side by side. Dr. D.Raghavendra Rao boserves, He got organised a public meeting at Damodar Hall, Parel, on 9 March 1924 to focus attention on the plight of the depressed classes. A tangible outcome of this was the establishment of the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha (the Depressed Classes Welfare Association) on 20 July 1924. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Ambedkar were respectively the prisident and chairman of its managing committee. The committee also included such illustrious figures as R.P.Paranjpe, K.F. Nariman and B.G. Kher

For details see Dr. K.Raghavendra Rao, Babasaheb Ambedkar (Makers of Indian Literature (series) New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993), P-7-8.

13. Ambedkar B.R : States and Minorities : what are their Rights and How to secure them in the constitution of free India (Bombay Thacker and company, 1947)
14. To some , his fighting and campaigns, his efforts for human rights and his work in connction with the Indian constitution are of great value. This was a strong ground for an honorary degreee, M.D., conferred on him by his own university, Columbia University, New York in 1952

For details see Dr. K.Raghavendra Rao, Babasaheb Ambedkar (Makers of Indian Literature (series) New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993) P.13.

15. Note how Gandiji has no doubt that, for example under the beneficent and redeeming influence of Rama, Krishna, all artificial, man-made distincitons of caste creed and religion would drop away and satya Yuga would dawn on our motherland soon

For details see Prabhu R.K. and Rao U.R; The mind of Mahatma Gandhi, Navajeevan publishing House, Ahmadabad, 1967, P-78

16. Mahatma Gandhiji observes Its (socialism's) advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts... There will be a great distribution of ordinary education...

For details see Prabhu R.K. and Rao U.R; The mind of Mahatma Gandhi, Navajeevan publishing House, Ahmadabad, 1967, P-246

17. Ambedkar was greatly concerned about the rights and freedoms of the untouchables and, without fail, he prepared and publicised his scheme of the minority rights and safeguards in the 1940s so that the new constitution of India, being framed then, would take account of the rights and freedoms, Ambedkar was sorry that such a scheme was not accepted earlier, in the early 1930s when the Round Table Conferences were held and he had submitted his scheme entitled : A scheme of Political Safeguards for Protection of the Depressed Classes in the Future Constitution of a self-governing India,, submitted to the Indian Round Table Conference.

He observed When the Round Table Conference met the Political demands of communities other than the Untouchables were quite well known. Indeed the Constitution of 1919 had recognised them as statutory minorities and provisions relating to their safety and security were embodied in it. In their case the question was of expanding those provisions or altering their shape. With regard to the Depressed Classes, the position was different. The Montagu- Chelmsford Report which preceded the Constitution of 1919 had said in quite unmistakable terms that provision must be made in the Constitution for their protection. But unfortunately when the details of the Constitution were framed, the Government of India found it difficult to devise any provisions for their protection except to give them token representation in the legislatures by nomination. The first thing that was required to be done was to formulate the safeguards

deemed necessary by the Untouchables for their protection against the tyranny and oppression of the Hindus, This I did by submitting a Memorandum to the Minorities Committee of the Round Table Conference.

For details see Vasant Moon (edition) Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : writings and Speeches (Vol-9: Bombay : Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1991), P.41

18. This work in (also) available in reprint, as part of Volume-I Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : writings and Speeches (compiled by Vasant Moon Bombay : Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1989)
19. For some constructive comments on this issue see Dr. K.Raghavendra Rao, Babasaheb Ambedkar (Markers of Indian Literature (series) New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993) P.75

Further they pointed out, Hinduism has been subjected to similar harsh treatment from time to time by several other scholars or intellectuals and many, if not all, of the have been upper castes Hindus.

20. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar : Writings and Speeches (first edition ; Vol-I, Bombay Government of Maharashtra, 1979) Vol. I, P. 374.
21. Ibid, p.374
22. Source Material I, p. 152
23. Pyarelal: The early Phase, P. 478
24. Source Material, I. P. 139
25. Eleanor Zelliot : Gandhi and Ambedkar - A Study in Leadership, P. 42

**CHAPTER -VI**

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AMBEDKAR AND GANDHIJI ON**

**UNTOUCHABILITY**