



30-01-2025 NEWS

Gandhi and Ambedkar: Contradiction and Unity

Leader against untouchability

- Gandhiji was a man who had been speaking out against untouchability since his time in Africa. He had worked against untouchability in his own life to the point of asking his wife Kasturba to carry the excrement of an oppressed person.
- After arriving in India in 1915, he housed a family from an oppressed caste in the ashram he started in Ahmedabad. For this, Gandhi was ostracized by the Vaishnavite sect. Those who had given money to his ashram stopped their donations. However, Gandhi continued to run his ashram.
- He had spoken strongly in the 1920s, standing at Congress conferences, that untouchability was a sinful act, and that all of you who follow it were the General Dyer of Hinduism, that we were fighting for freedom from the British, and that self-rule was not possible for us as long as the majority of the people were not treated as equals and were kept apart by the cruelty of untouchability.

The opposition

- Conversations with Ambedkar around and after the 1932 Poona Pact led to a change of heart in Gandhi. Until then, his views against untouchability were considered his personal views.
- After the conversation with Ambedkar, it became the work plan of the national movement called Harijan Movement. Gandhiji started touring continuously against untouchability and as soon as it started to blow like a hurricane, the Hindu Mahasabha started a counter-movement against him, including the black flag protest.
- It was then that the anti-Gandhi movement in India first intensified. The climax was the first attempt to assassinate him on 25 June 1934, when a bomb was thrown at his car in Pune. This assassination attempt would not have happened if Gandhi had not met and spoken to Ambedkar.
- However, Gandhi's movement against untouchability intensified without a break. The temple entry protest and his work of blessing Dalits only if they were married to non-Dalits outside of caste gained momentum.
- When asked if he would tarnish the sanctity of Hinduism, Gandhi replied sternly, "If Hinduism is destroyed by my actions, let it be destroyed. I do not care. I have not come to save Hinduism. I want to change the face of Hinduism."
- However, Ambedkar did not fully approve of Gandhi's work to eradicate untouchability. He has repeatedly said that Gandhi was a traditional Hindu and that untouchability could not be eradicated by him. He criticized Gandhi as being like Garrison, who fought for black people in America.
- But on the other hand, Gandhi replies that I can understand Dr. Ambedkar's criticism. He has the right to spit on me. The way all upper caste Hindus treat untouchables is sinful. They have every right to spit on us. I will accept it if they do it.
- But Gandhiji never gave such a kind response to the Hindu religious fanatics who opposed him.

Gandhi Ambedkar relationship

- Jinnah invited Ambedkar to his country after the partition of India and Pakistan.
- The reason is that Ambedkar was elected from the then Bengal province in 1946. It belongs to Pakistan.
- But Gandhiji intervened and insisted on re-election of Ambedkar from the Bombay province.
- He also expressed his desire to make him a member of the Prime Ministerial Council in India.
- The differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar were never as hostile as the differences between Hindus.