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Dr. Ambedkar in the Global Context



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**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi:
A Comparative Study****Prof. Rahul G. Mahure**

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Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the chief architect of the India shared many things in common. There existed sharp contradiction also in their approaches to social reforms and in details relating to political freedom. The scheme in Gandhi was very comprehensive; it never allowed social reform to remain aside of political freedom. Gandhi burning foreign clothes and B.R. Ambedkar burning *Manusmrithi* were no mere acts of sentiments; for both foreign clothes and Manusmrithi had the effect of bondage and slavery for the countrymen. A Pinch of salt from God's ocean was a political catharsis and 'a drop handful of water from the Mahad tank' was the proclamation of social philosophy. These were no symbolic gestures; they were the outward manifestations or portents of the new emerging social and political patterns, for India, in the offing. Gandhi made it clear as, "The cities live upon the villages, India is daily growing poorer. In losing the spinning wheel we lost our left lung. We are, therefore, suffering from galloping consumption it is a sin to be foreign cloth in burning foreign cloth I burn my shame".

M. K. Gandhi's perspectives

Gandhi held that if the country remains dependent on the master for its material necessities, education and social harmony it could never be independent. Here it is to be noted that Gandhi's love for the village was not that of a mystic or that of an orthodox, not one bound by tradition alone; he fully realized that the downtrodden, 'Hanjians', as he called them were tied down to the village, so the village structure was of utmost concern in his scheme. Gandhi believed that freedom was never to be bestowed; it has to be wrested from authority by those who demand it and intend to use it, whereas B.R. Ambedkar expected bestowing of freedom by the imperial rulers. Constitutional rigidity and complexities did not form a part of Gandhi and perspectives, he preferred a suitable constitution to work a democracy; unlike B.R. Ambedkar he was not constrained by dogmatic consideration in this regard. Gandhi had a simple preposition in this. In his opinion, Free India Government would set up a constitution suited to the Indian genius, evolved without dictation from outside, the dictating factor will not be an outside one but wisdom. Parliamentary system of government was the model approved by B.R. Ambedkar for independent India, but Gandhi had very little respect for the parliamentary system of governance. Likewise, both Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar shared differing views on the nature and scope of democracy as a method of government. Democracy getting converted to mass democracy with a propensity for domination by leaders was seen as a dangerous drift by Gandhi. B.R. Ambedkar was unconcerned about such a possibility, instead, he developed an inclination for mass democracy where pressure can be built up by the advancement of the depressed. Gandhian vintage was establishment of swadeshi and swarajya for one and all, not only for the few westernized, all segments were to be permeated, the poor and hitherto kept out outcastes as well. But politics of atomization was not the means adopted because he foresaw that mobilization based on castes and confined uplift through public employment and state regulated aid were only peripheral in effect. This marks a distinction between Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar; the latter was for mobilization on the basis of caste and uplift mainly through the instrumentality of the state. Both Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar were political and social activists. In the approach of

B.R.Ambedkar certain categories were very rigid but Gandhi had no rigidities of ideology or principles except the uncompromising category of nonviolence.

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar's perspectives

B.R.Ambedkar, on the other hand, had a fair Proclivity for liberal ideology and appurtenant institutional frame and structures. B.R.Ambedkar had strong caste identity too. Gandhi had neither religious identity or caste identity alone, these two formed only subsidiary or subordinate partners in cultural identity and political orders. B.R.Ambedkar's politics highlighted the aspect of Indian disunity whereas Gandhian politics showed the aspect of Indian unity. In 'Hind Swaraj' Gandhi pleads and establishes that India has always been a nation prior to the onset of the imperial rule and it was the British who broke this cultural unity. B.R.Ambedkar subscribed to the notion that Indian unity was the by-product of British legal system introduced by the colonial state. Gandhi had a full know of the inner secrets of the colonial rule, the way they played faction and groups in India against one another. This was necessitated by domestic compulsions in Britain and the dwindling economy of the British. Here, Gandhi framed the opposition or responses to colonial rule fully reading these realities. The British strategy was to keep the different common testis get; in the opinion of William Shirer, "The game was to keep the Hindus and the Muslims, and other minorities as untouchables, squabbling among themselves so that the Government could proclaim that until the Indians themselves agreed on what they wanted it was futile for the Government to make any proposals of its own. B.R.Ambedkar was eager to take advantage of such a situation expecting that the colonial state would make sincere efforts of uplift of the neglected strata, and to that extent he had faith in the colonial political order. To Gandhi 'Gramraj' is 'Ramraj' and is real independence. But B.R.Ambedkar took strong exception to this, for the status quoits nature of the Indian villages denies equality and fraternity and also liberty. So he held that there is nothing to be proud of Indian village system, rather we shall be ashamed of it. B.R.Ambedkar vehemently opposed the use of compulsion or force for social integration and reform. Proper education to make the individual long for change, reform and integration as the stance of both B.R.Ambedkar and Gandhi. The Gandhi an approach of naming the 'depressed' and 'untouchables' as 'Harijan' did not find approval with B.R.Ambedkar, for he regarded this as clever scheme to give the untouchables a sweat name by Gandhi. Hence, when the Depressed Classes League was renamed Harijan Sevak Sangh by Gandhi, B.R.Ambedkar protested and left it pleading that for Gandhi removal of untouchability was only a platform, not a sincere programme. As different from Gandhi, B.R.Ambedkar held that the centre of religion must be between man and man, not between man and God alone as in Gandhi. Like Gandhi, B.R.Ambedkar too wanted to cast away the evil practices in Hinduism, his attempt was to reform and reconstruct, not to destroy in full. In his own words.

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar's Social Ideology

Blending deal is and pragmatism in a fair manner, in equal measures. B.R.Ambedkar desisted from pleading a blunt destroying of the social order however iniquitous it is. He always attempted to offer something better in the place of a degenerate social order. Like Gandhi he sought to create an order conducive to the flourish of democracy, sought to solve the problem of social disharmony and disintegration through peaceful rehabilitation of the downtrodden. Gandhi disagreed with B.R.Ambedkar's denouncing of the Vedas and scriptures. He Gandhi held that caste has nothing to do with religious precincts and spirituality, caste and 'Varna' are different, and caste is pervasive degeneration. Gandhi explains that, "A religion has to be judged not by its worst specimens, but by the best it might have produced for that and that alone can be used as the standard to aspire to, if not to improve upon". Also he was very clear that political role of religion shall be integrative, not divisive, encouraging caste antagonism will have divisive

impact. Promoting solidarity by removing caste antagonism was his theme. B.R. Ambedkar on the contrary, clearly defined his group and proclaimed that he stood for the backward people or 'depressed classes'. But he spoke only on behalf of the untouchables and he had only sympathies for others. Precisely, only Mahars were his target group. even in converting to Buddhism B.R. Ambedkar was not concerned about the whole untouchables converting. He was well aware of caste divisions further proliferating into sub castes and sub-castes maintaining conscious exclusivity of their. This attitudinal pattern was alien in the Gandhi a paradigm. B.R. Ambedkar ideology' was emancipation of the deprived, 'articulation' was by showing the de-humanizing effect of castes, expression was by denouncing the caste Hindu exploitation, mobilization was by organizing only the untouchables, in 'action' 'we' is the deprived mainly the Mahars and 'adversaries' were caste Hindu touchable. In effect the approach had divisive results and aggravated the schism and exacerbates antagonism, both in articulation and action Cohesiveness to promote unity is slender For Gandhi Ideology IS social mobility and cohesion and throwing away of colonial value system, 'articulation' is by depicting the evils of Satanic Civilization, expression is by desisting the perpetuation of the exploitative colonial structures and values, mobilization is by promoting social unity, appealing to Indigenous cultural values, in action we mean the whole of Indian society and adversaries are virtually nil or at the maximum the suppressive imperial state system. In all respects social harmony and symmetry is stressed, social mobility is ensured and antagonistic stances have no place. B.R. Ambedkar by treating the untouchables as a separate block fine-tuned his relationship with the colonial establishment, but was let down by it in 1947. This attempted collaborative stand in actual effect, if not in principle and action, proved to be of no vital use. Gandhi consistently opposed such collaborative stands. The Poona fast and subsequent pact was a turning point from the angle of development and incorporation of the depressed classes to the main body politic and society. B.R. Ambedkar eschewed the scheme of separate political identity for the depressed classes by means of separate electorate, he settled for reserved constituencies in which votes for depressed classes candidates will be cast even by caste Hindus.

Conclusion

B.R. Ambedkar mainly fought against the latter, political independence was only of secondary importance for him, social and economic freedom for the depressed classes was his first priority. Even though both Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar identified the evil of untouchability as the foremost bane of the social order they differed in their methods and approaches for its removal. B.R. Ambedkar wanted this to be done through laws and constitutional methods. Gandhi treated it as a moral stigma to be erased out by acts of atonement. B.R. Ambedkar held that reliance on change of heart alone is not sufficient, it moral atonement is to be re-enforced by leg-constitutional measures. Gandhi counted leg constitutional method only of very limited utility, he was for moral, and conscience related remedy for the evil. Both were reformers fired by the dire immediate need for restructuring the malaise order. Both Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar had vast and variegated types of expression of nationalism and patriotism before them; these expressions belonged to the pre-1857 and post-1857 periods. Developments, social, political and religious of these periods greatly went into moulding their perceptions. They equally were embroiled with the question of borrowing Western frame for Indian socio-economic structures. Gandhi never wanted to build the present and future exclusively on the past; nor did the Western traditions and practices fascinate him. With a sound common sense approach he was able to cobble together all sections of the people with him, the Anatomists and outcasts. Politicization and empowerment of the untouchables was of important concern for Gandhi, lest they well not feel integrated to the Hindu order. To B.R. Ambedkar this was of prime importance, but to be achieved by segregating themselves from the Hindu fold. Gandhi did not subscribe to the notion

of divide into majority-minority communities. B.R.Ambedkar on the other hand viewed the whole issue from the angle of the depressed classes alone and wanted a separate solution for their problems. On a horizontal level Varnashrama was acceptable to Gandhi. He found quite a lot of utility in this, for it wards off unnecessary competition and material cravings by making people occupy their traditional calling, there was no superiorinferior dignity attached to vocation by Gandhi. He regarded Varnashrama as the invention of Dharma, the result of continuous each for truth.

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