

Divergence Thought of Gandhi and Ambedkar about Hinduism and Dalit

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Abstract:- *Buddhism as a religion would end up dampening the militancy of the dalits. However, many caste Hindus persisted in seeing the neo-Buddhists as untouchables. The Dalit movements which have not embraced Buddhism are busy securing social, economic and political gains for their members. Some of the non-Buddhist Dalit leaders have been influenced by Marxism and Secularism. They do not see the religious question as being of importance. They do not see any need to convert to Buddhism.*

Key words: *Divergence, ambiguity, orthodox, elevation*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The main question is: Do the depressed classes desire Temple entry or do they not? This main question is viewed by the Depressed Classes by two points of view. One is the materialistic point of view. Starting from it, the Depressed Classes think that the surest way of elevation lies in education, higher employment and better ways of earning a living. Once they become respectable the religious outlook of the orthodox towards them is sure to undergo change, and even if it didn't happen, it can do no injury to their material interest. Proceeding on these lines the Depressed classes say that they will not spend their resources on such an empty thing as Temple Entry. There is another reason why they do not care to fight for it. Their argument is the argument of self-respect. Not very long ago there used to be boards on club doors and other social resorts maintained by Europeans in India, which said "Dogs and Indians" are not allowed. The temples of Hindus carry similar boards today, the only difference is that the boards on the Hindu temples practically say: "All Hindus and all animals including gods are admitted, the only Untouchables are not admitted". The situation in both cases is of parity. But Hindus never begged for admission in a place from which he has been excluded by the arrogance of the Hindus? This is the reason of the Depressed Class man who is interested in material welfare. He is prepared to say the Hindus, "to open or not to open your temples is a question for you to consider and not for me to agitate. If you think, it is bad manners not to respect the sacredness of human personality, open your temple and be a gentleman. If you rather be a Hindu than a gentleman, then shut the doors and damn yourself for I don't care to come." I found it necessary to put the argument in this form, because I want to disabuse the minds of men like Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya of their belief that the Depressed Classes are looking forward for their patronage. The second point of view is the spiritual one. As religious minded people, do the depressed classes desire temple entry or do they not? That is the question. From the spiritual point of view, they are not indifferent to temple entry as they would be, if the material point of view alone were to prevail. But their final must depend upon the reply which Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindu gives to the question namely: What is the drive behind this offer of temple entry Is temple entry to be the final goal of the advancement in the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold? Or is it only the first step and if it is that first step, what is the ultimate goal? Temple entry as a final goal, the Depressed Classes can never support. Indeed they will not only reject it, but they would then regard themselves rejected by Hindu Society and free to find their own destiny elsewhere. On the other hand, if it is only to be a first step they may be inclined to support it. The position would then be analogous to what is happening in India today. All Indians have claimed Dominion status for India. The actual constitution will fall short of Dominion status and many Indians will accept it. Why? The answer is that as the goal of Dominion status, no one would have accepted the goal is defined, it does not matter much if it is to be reached by steps and not in one jump. But if the British had not accepted the partial reforms which many are now willing to accept. In the same way, if Mahatma Gandhi and the reformers were to proclaim what the goal which they have set before themselves is for the advancement of the social status of the Depressed Classes in the Hindu fold, it would be easier for the Depressed Classes to define their attitude towards Temple entry. The goal of the Depressed Classes might as well be stated here for the information and consideration of all concerned.

Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindus are prepared for this or not, let it be known once and for all that nothing short of this will satisfy the depressed classes and make them accept temple entry. To accept temple entry and be content with it, is to temporise with evil and barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in there is, however, one more argument which Mahatma Gandhi and the reforming Hindu may advance against the position I have taken, they may say: "acceptance by the depressed classes of temple entry now, will not prevent them from agitating hereafter for the abolition of Chaturvarna and caste. If that is the view, I like to meet the argument right at this stage so as to clinch the issue and clear the road for future developments. My reply is that it is true that the my right at this stage so as to clinch the issue and clear the road for future developments. My reply is that it is true that the my right to agitate for the abolition of Chaturvarna and caste system will not be lost, if I accept temple entry now. But the question is on what side Mahatma Gandhi will be when the question is put. If he will be in the camp of my opponents, I must tell him I can't be in camp now. If he will be in my camp he ought to be in it now.

(Almost all the depressed classes leaders of Dr. Ambedkar's persuasions, endorsed the view of leader. Srinivasan, Permtai and Malik upheld views of their leader.

Gandhi issued a statement in reply in which he stated: "I am a Hindu, not merely because I am born in the Hindu fold, but I am one by conviction and choice. There is no superiority or inferiority in Hinduism of my conception. But when Dr. Ambedkar wants to fight Varnashram itself, I cannot be in his camp, because I believe Varnashram to be an integral part of Hinduism).

I can give only my impressions of them, for what they are worth. The first thing that strikes me is that it would be difficult to find two persons who would rival them for their colossal egotism, to whom personal ascendancy is everything and the cause of the country a mere counter on the table. They have made India politics a matter of personal feud. Consequences have no terror for them; indeed they either forget the cause, or if they remember it, they overlook it with a complacency which saves them from any remorse. They choose to stand on a pedestal of splendid isolation. They wall themselves off from their equals. They prefer to open themselves to their inferiors. They are very unhappy at and impatient of criticism, but are very happy to be fawned upon by flunkies. Both have developed a wonderful stagecraft and arrange things in such a way that they are always in the limelight wherever they go. Each of course claims to be supreme. If supremacy was their only claim, it would be small wonder. In addition to supremacy each claims infallibility for himself. Plus IX during whose sacred regime as pope the issue of infallibility was raging said – "before I was pope I believed in Papal infallibility, now I feel it". This is exactly the attitude of the two leaders whom providence – may I say in his unguarded moments- has appointed to lead us.

Diverging perceptions in the struggle against oppression among those who contributed to the social advancement of the Harijans, Gandhi and Ambedkar are the most important. The former came from a caste of Vaishya status, While the latter was born into an untouchable caste; the former approached the problem from the standpoint of an upper caste Hindu who wanted to rot out untouchability from the fabric of society, the latter identified himself with the struggle against the upper caste Hindus across the centuries. Gandhi, as a believing Hindu, felt that Hinduism needed to be reformed of the excrescence of Untouchability. Ambedkaar, on the contrary, was convinced that the problem was a part of Hinduism and was enshrined in its sacred scriptures. It is our opinion that the differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar are not merely personal approaches. They continue to be debated within Indian Society even today. In what follows we shall look at some significant situation where the differing positions of the two leaders emerge. After this we shall make a brief examination of the backgrounds and values which influenced and motivated their styles of leadership in their respective struggles against Untouchability. The Vaikom Satyagraha the demand for social and religious reforms was slowly gaining ground in Travancore State in the Nineteen Twenties. In 1918, The Exhale caste had already appealed to the government to open out the temples in the state to all Hindus. They later followed up with a threat to convert themselves to Christianity if the government did not act decisively. It was in this climate that the vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25) took place. The issue concerned the use of a road which ran beside the temple at Vaikom. Untouchables and other low castes were not permitted to use this road.

A few followers of Sri. Narayana Guru, several caste Hindus and a Syrian orthodox Christian began a Satyagraha to open out the road to the untouchable caste Gandhi visited the area and began a negotiation with a Nambudri Brahman trustee of the temple. Mahadev Desais notes of that negotiation reveal Gandhi's reformist approach to the problem; Gandhiji: Is it fair to exclude a whole section of Hindus, because of their supposed low birth, from public roads which can be used by non-Hindus, by criminals and bad characters, and even by dogs and cattle? Nambudri Trustee; But how can it be helped/ They are reaping the reward of their Karma Gandhiji: No doubly they are suffering for their Karma by being born as untouchables. But why must you add to the punishment? Are they worse than even criminals and beasts? Nambudri trustee: They must be so, for otherwise God would not condemn them to be born untouchables. From the discussion quoted above we get some idea of the traditional understanding of the position of the untouchable castes and Gandhi's divergence from this position. For the Nambudiri Trustee the notion of untouchability could not be separated from the being of the

untouchable, which was a result of his Karma. It is clear from this discussion that while Gandhi's espousal of the cause against untouchability is of great social importance, his reasoning appeared self – contradictory. The position taken by the Nambudiry Trustee was nearer the traditional understanding of Karma. Gandhi made a departure from tradition by rejecting the practice of untouchability without giving up the system of caste.

Ambedkar's reaction to Gandhi's action at Vaikom was qualified. While he felt that the latter was not going far enough in his crusade against untouchability, he nevertheless admitted that 'when one is spurned by everyone, even the sympathy shown by Mahatma Gandhi is of no little importance'. (on another occasion Ambedkar stated that Gandhi supported the temple entry movement because he wanted to weaken the distinction between Hindus and untouchables, thereby hoping to deny the latters demand for political rights) Nothing that the Brahmans at Vaikam had used scripture to justify untouchability, Ambedkar said, This clearly indicated that either we should burn all these scriptures or verify and examine the validity of their rules regarding untouchability and if we are unable to prove their falseness or invalidity, are we to suffer untouchability till the end of time! ... truly these scriptures are an issue to people. The Government should have confiscated them long ago"

The Differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar still continue to haunt the various Dalit movements and reformist Hindu organisation. For the reformist Hindu organizations the big dilemma is to keep the Harijans within their fold without watering down Hindu values and beliefs. This is not an easy task; for Harijans see lurking paternalism and upper – caste biases even within those organisation which have formally condemned untouchability. We have the Jatav untouchables could not hope to be treated as equals with the rest. He therefore advocated another identity through conversion to Buddhism. This did help considerably in giving the dalits (mainly in Maharashtra) a new sense of purpose and militancy, although some people have stated that Buddhism as a religion would end up dampening the militancy of the dalits. However, many caste Hindus persisted in seeing the neo-Buddhists as untouchables. The Dalit movements which have not embraced Buddhism are busy securing social, economic and political gains for their members. Some of the non- Buddihist Dalit leaders have been influenced by Marxism and Secularism. They do not see the religious question as being of importance. They do not see any need to convert to Buddhism, In our opinion, this position is fraught with ambiguity. Can the Dalit masses in the rural areas content themselves with rejecting Hinduism without finding an alternative religious identity? We do not think so. It is out opinion that many of the non- Buddhist Dalit masses will remain Hindu in some sense or the other while struggling for economic, political, Social and educational rights.

II. CONCLUSION

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