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DICHOTOMY OF GANDHIIJI AND DR.AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

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Abstract:

It was Gandhiji who considered untouchability as a curse on Hinduism. He desired to be born as untouchable in the rebirth for the removal of curse. Hinduism has committed a sin while accepting the practice of untouchability. Even Muslims have got this contagious. The Muslims in S.Africa, E Africa and Cannada too are living like Brahmins. All this evil has happened due to untouchability. Gandhiji opposed the Ambedkar's view that it is necessary to vanish caste system for eradication of untouchability.

Introduction

Untouchability is not bye product of caste society but the result of higher and lower class conflict of ancient India. Gandhiji had a belief that it is not possible to remove untouchability by laws and sanctions but by reformation and converting the minds of caste Hindus about the untouchability practice. Whereas Ambedkar thought it feasible to eradicate by way of constitutional safeguards. But later after Poona Pact there was a tumultuous of opinions about religion, untouchability and discrimination and at last Ambedkar found the conversion as best and suitable way for resolving the evil of untouchability problem. Ambedkar's declaration became the reason for many discussions and debates among leaders and thinkers. Hence this study is undertaken to discuss the opinion of Gandhiji and Ambedkar to analyse and Ambedkar's substantive answers over the issue.

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2. Objectives of the study

1. To anaylse the various opinions of Gandhiji and Ambedkar over the issue of conversion as method for reformation and establishment of equality of status.
2. To know the Gandhiji's view on religion and its good practice.
3. To understand the views expressed by Ambedkar

3. Scope: the study is centered around the subject of conversion as a tool for establishment of justice and equity in the society.

4. Method; The opinions are randomly selected and analysed in historical method.

5. Sources: the information has been gathered from sources like newspapers, magazines, and journals like Harijan, Bombay Chronicle, Times of India, Janatha, Samatha and other such books. Emphasis has laid on Gandhiji's views. At the end Ambedkar's views have been discussed as analysis of the subject

6. Meaning of Religion according to Gandhiji

The main theme of Hinduism is not in the food habits but the thought, observation of etiquate, truth, non-violence. Religion is not a tool of exchange but a helpful process of individual's achievement. Other religions are like branches of big tree or flowers of garden. Therefore they are equal and true. They are perceived differently by different people. Hence is a mistake for advancement in advancing with peace in this world.

7. Gandhiji's reaction to conversion.

When Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar declared of his conversion to another religion many caste Hindus felt annoyed The basic threat was Hindus would be

in minority when compared to other religions. Gandhiji too criticized the conversion and tried hard to retain untouchability as part and parcel of Hinduism through 'Harijan Sevak Sangh'.

Dr.Ambedkar challenged Hinduism with idea of conversion. Gandhiji said "He showed his sense of comtempt against practice of untouchability, even though he got assistance of caste Hindus, by following another religion". He invited many luminaries to eradicate untouchability including Ambedkar

Gandhiji opined that mass conversion to Christianity or Islam has been suggested as a solution to a problem. One can embrace another religion if one can

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get solace. But religion is concerned with heart and it does not allow anyone to renounce one's religion. There many leaders who have been striving to eradicate untouchability and hence conversion is not a solution to problem.

As Conversion creates fear, my humble request is to define religion. As religion is a question of life and death, it continues even after death. A good husband loves his wife more than any other woman, it is beyond the blood relation. Likewise reliongion also and is concerned with heart.

Gandhiji further asserted that "If untouchables sustain the torture given by caste Hindus s then untouchability shall be idea Hindu in future. Those who threaten of renouncement of Hinduism are antireligious people"

There is no wonder if an untouchable is willing to get solace by embracing Christianity Having been fed up with exploitation of caste Hinduss, Hence caste Hinduss should change their idealogy towards untouchable as they are also part of their religion conversion is a side effect and it should be cused.

It is very sad that Gandhiji substantial to cruelty and violence when he says" The denial of entry of untouchable to a temple should not reason for.

renouncement of their ancestor's religion. The violent activities happening around today are not new but they are as old as religion itself."

Ambedkar's declaration of conversion (1935) has created a set back to the untouchable brethren as there were some caste Hindus who were lending helping hand to untouchables who were suffering from illiteracy, poverty and other problems at this juncture Ambedkar's decision of conversion once again created a set back to untouchable' said Gandhiji

When the entire Gandhiji movement is observed Gandhiji emerges as protector of Hinduism. Hence he is notorious as he strived hard to save Hinduism by persuading untouchables with his sole motif of savng Hinduism and to push thousands of dalit to darkness. His stunch agitation at Poona pact reveals Gandhiji as he was against untouchables. Ambedkar crticises Gandhiji as Gandhiji tried to persuade untouchable through Harijan Sevak Sangh, to retain untouchable as part of Hinduism.

Chiristian missionaries attracted unt by offering books, payng school fees and tied to convert to Christianity Gandhiji criticizes this idea by telling that this kind of conversation is like destroying the old dwelling house and going to a new house. It is very sad that the act of conversion by offering some concessions and facilities

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Gandhiji also tried to persuade leaders of other religions to abstain from such illegal conversion. Gandhiji also opined that the practice of conversion by offer should be banned and asserted that untouchble should be given an understanding that they should remain in Hinduism. Thus Gandhiji strongly critised amb's act of conversion.

Except the dalit leaders who opposed Ambedkar, other dalits had lost their voice against untouchability. Gandhiji created this conversion movement as individual one instead of considering it as mass conversion as a movement. It was a question of survival for all dalits. Thereby Gandhiji wanted to create a set back to other dalits.

M.K.Gandhiji while discussing with Dr mati expressed his view that "untouchables are so innocent as cows and they cannot understand the religious view of either Christianity or Islam and hence Ambedkar is taking undue advantage of such innocence'

Gandhiji said Dr.Ambedkar's decision of conversion is dangerous he also said that Ambedkar has decided thus only in order to trouble the Hindus. He is entitled for that. But it has created a sense of astonishment some reformers of Hinduism who have come forward for eradication of untouchability. None can seize the religious rights of untouchables as religious matters are concerned with individuals. Hence untouchables are free in religious matters.

Once dr. amb said to untouchble to convert to Islam in order to free themselves from xploitation of Hinduism in 1929. Hence 12 Mahar people embraced Islam in Jalagaon. Dr. Ambedkar's declaration of conversion creates sense of suspicion in Gandhiji. Hence he said that religion is not like dress or clothes to change whenever one desires so.

According to Gandhiji religion is a matter of one's life and death. In a village namely Kavita an untouchble wanted to send his children to school. This was a matter of serious criticism by many caste hindus. This incident is an example of utter impact on Babasaheb Ambedkar. Refereeing to incident of kavita village Gandhiji said that it is a very common to deprive untouchble from education in villages and an and an untouchable should not feel bad about such an incident and opt for conversion. This substation has brought a bad name for Gandhiji.

Gandhiji also said that I pray god that Dr. Ambedkar's dissatisfaction and contempt feeling should beredu ed. And urge him to change his mind. In spite of

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this if he still intends to embrace other religion, then his desire of eradication of untouchability will not befulfilled. There are crores of untouchable who do not yield to Ambedkar's clutches. They remain as Hindus rather than converting to other religion.

He said that the Hindus should not get angry for Ambedkar's act. But instead they should be bestowed with more strength to persuade Ambedkar to change his mind of conversion. He said that untouchability is nearing extinction and soon disappear.

Gandhiji also said that Ambedkar's wanted to take revenge on Hindu society and hence desired for conversion. It is prime goal of Harijan sevak Sangh to eradicate untouchability even if untouchables go to Islam or Christianity then also the attitude towards them does not change. Hindus have come forward to remove untouchability and create lawful position to harijans hence Ambedkar's decision is wrong. One of Gandhiji follower once hadasked a question to Ambedkar and his answer to it was that Ambedkar was desireous of going to Sikkism for which Gandhiji and other Hindus had consented happily.

Guru nanak too was a Hindu. Sikhs are part of Hinduism. There is a similarity of sikh culture tradition and customs therefore if harijan's call themselves as followers of sikkism them with what religion do caste hindus address these untouchables

8. Dr.Ambedkar's substatiaon for Buddhism

Gandhiji said that Ambedkar was taking Buddhism as he wanted to take revenge over Hinduism by embracing Buddhism. Ambedkar's response for this was that there was no sense in Gandhiji's statements he added that by looking to Hinduism and their practice it is analyzed that Hinduism no longer supports untouchable to come up in life. It is not suitable for development of untouchable. Inequality is the base for this religion. Congress and Gandhiji should give chance for lower class people to go to other religions and come forward and develop in their life. It is foolishness to follow the old religion only for the thing that our ancestors belonged to this religion, when a one experiences exploitation, deprivation, depression and suppression. Hinduism encourages separatism. If a cloth is not suitable to our body it is necessary to change that"

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Ambedkar had firm belief in Hinduism but he did not like the practice of hypocrisy in the name of religion. Man does not live for food alone, whereas he has a mind, religion is not human being but human being is not for religion. For the development of a human being the religion is very important.

He also opined that in order to gain the lost position in the society, they should follow and religious faith that creates equality and equal opportunity.
A religion is the result of culture. The culture cannot be changed time and again. If the religion is changed it is like changing the culture. Ambedkar had firmly understood that changing religion is not easy as changing the cloth. But the bad luck is that there was no other way other than conversion.

It is really heartening that whenever Ambedkar wanted to live as part of Hinduism, the same religion has shown its negligence and separatism. This kind of aloofness made him identify himself with other religion.

Ambedkar spent 21 years in search of good religion with equitable principles. After declaring his firm avow of converting to Buddhism lakhs of untouchables followed him and at last on 13th October 1956, Ambedkar along with his followers embraced Buddhism, and experienced the feeling of rebirth.

Conclusion

Gandhiji and Ambedkar are great leaders of 21st century. If one fought for protection and promotion of ancient religion another fought for liberation of exploited brethren who were experiencing inequality, injustice and humiliation for centuries.

There is no instance of Gandhiji who had practiced hunger strike for the cause of upliftment of untouchable. His fight was only for the protection and promotion of Hinduism, which was sternly opposed by Ambedkar

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