

Introduction to Modern Indian Political Thought
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Lecture – 23
B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956)

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B.R. AMBEDKAR
(1891 - 1956)

Key themes

- Caste
- Liberal democracy & Constitutional morality

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Hello and welcome friends, to this second lecture on B.R. Ambedkar. In the previous lecture we have discussed his education, his personal life, his political engagement. And many of his political campaign to fight against the caste operation or caste discrimination, and many Satyagraha's to assert the Dalits or untouchables access to public places like tanks, temples, or whales. And also we have discussed his differences on the question of caste from the reforms movement or the political position being taken by congress, or it is leadership including Gandhi. And, then we have also discussed his views on partition.

Now, today in this lecture we will focus his views on Caste, by looking at his text Annihilation of Caste. And, on the basis of this text we will try to understand many of them insights or the critical assessment that he provides about the caste. And, caste as a problem to form a society or a nation which is based on the principle of fraternity or which allow mutual respect among the fellow being. So, how caste and caste based

discrimination, place a role of hindrance or impediments in forging such relationship which is based on the conception of liberty, equality, fraternity, or mutual respect.

So, we will study these from this text. And, also we will try to understand his difference from Gandhi. And the role of such differences was not a kind of antithetical a to each other, but they also said a lot of common vision or similar visions for the future of India, that we will also discussed by concluding on this lecture.

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Caste system and its annihilation

“Know Truth as Truth and Untruth as Untruth”
-Buddha

“He that will not reason is a bigot; He that cannot reason is a fool; He that dare not reason is a slave”.
-H Drummond

- In 1936, Ambedkar was invited by the Jat Pat Todak Mandal, a Hindu caste reform organization based in the Punjab, to deliver the presidential address at their annual conference. However, when Ambedkar sent them the text of his address the invitation was withdrawn following disagreements over certain passages in the text. However, the speech titled as Annihilation of Caste was published and became one of his most influential work on caste system in India.
- He was so dissatisfied with the contemporary activities of Hindu social and religious reform movements that in the preface of this work he wrote, What can any one expect from a relationship so tragic as the relationship between the reforming sect of Caste Hindus and the self respecting sect of Untouchables, where the former have no desire to alienate their orthodox fellows and the latter have no alternative but to insist upon reform being carried out?

So, to begin with his views on caste and 2 quotation I have sighted here is from the original text he wrote in 1936, which is titled as Annihilation of Caste.

So, in this text, he quoted Buddha and writes “Know Truth as Truth and Untruth as Untruth”. This is the toughest task for any individual political activist or a thinker to identify, to understand or to recognise truth as truth or untruth as untruth. So, this is the intellectual task or responsibility of any individual, to understand, or to examine, or to identify, the real problems, the root cause of such problems and how to eradicate such problems.

So, Ambedkar do not have a kind of philosophical or philosophical in a sense of merely is speculative exercise about the caste issue, and how to reform it and how to solve the caste and untouchable problems? He was having a very rational approach to first understand the caste and what sustain the caste? What is the root cause of the

reproduction of this caste based discrimination in everyday life? And what could be the effective solution to the caste system? So, he was then not a kind of mysterious or a kind of a sceptical approach towards the social problems. So, he in my assessment by this quotation mean; the responsibility of a thinker or a individual, political activist is to understand what is truth and understand it as a truth or untruth as untruth.

And, the second which comes more closer to his approach towards a lot of social and political problems in India, and also the solution that he was providing from the Drummond Quotation. That is “he that will not reason is a bigot and he that cannot reason is a fool; and he that dare not reason is a slave”. So, the reason for rationality is a very basis of thought or understanding for Ambedkar. And, he categorise different kind of individuals, on the basis of their capability or their use of reason among the bigot or a fool or a slave.

And therefore, in his understanding of social problems or social challenges India. He wanted to have a rational or logical, approach to understanding or identifying the problem. And, then providing the rational or logical solution to overcome it on to force a relationship which will allow India to develop or immerge as a nation based on the principle of fraternity and equality. So, the question of reason remains very crucial to his political and social thought.

Now, if you come to this text on Annihilation of Caste this text was prepared basically as a lecturer or a address to the annual conference of Jat Pat Todak Mandal in Punjab. So, in 1936 Ambedkar was invited by the Jat Pat Todak Mandal a Hindu caste reforms organisation based in Punjab, to deliver the presidential address at their annual conference. When Ambedkar send them the text of his address the invitation was withdrawn following disagreements over certain passages in the text.

Now, this gives us a sense of differences even among those who were fighting for social reforms, fighting for removing untouchability or to solve the caste system or to remove or to fight, the caste system or caste based discrimination. So, there are different layers even among those who were trying to fight for a social justice. Especially, those were fighting for reforming the caste or fighting untouchability.

So, this Jat Pat Todak is one of such Hindu social organisation comity to social reform. But, they withdraw their support to the Ambedkar, because of certain passages where this

organisation differ from Ambedkar. And, that gives us a sense of the sharpness of the differences between Ambedkar and the Congress and many other organisations also committed to social and economic reforms as also they were fighting for the political freedom.

So, this invitation was withdrawn. However, Ambedkar went ahead and publish this address which is entitled as “Annihilation of Caste” and this becomes one of the most influential works on caste system in India. Ambedkar wrote many things and he one needs to emphasize on this point annihilation. So, the Ambedkar is not talking about reforming caste system. He is talking about annihilating just doing away with this whole system of caste.

Therefore, his response is very different from the Congress and Gandhi and many other organisations such as Jat Pat Todak Mandal about caste reforms. So, for Ambedkar the issue or the objective is not just to reform the caste, but to annihilate the caste and without such annihilation there is no possibility of forging a relationship based on fraternity or mutual respect or equality.

So, he was dissatisfied with the contemporary activities of Hindu social and religious reforms movement, that in the preface of this work he wrote. And, that gives us the sense of his angriest or his anger against not just or dated or exploitative system of caste, but also the reforms that was being undertaken by many organisations or activist minus.

So, in this preface of Annihilation of Caste he writes, what can anyone expect from a relationship; so, tragic as the relationship between the reforming sect of caste Hindus and the self-respecting sect of the Untouchables. Now, this point one needs to understand the relationship between the reforming sect of the caste Hindus and this self respecting sect of untouchables, where the farmers have no desire to alienate their orthodox fellows and later have no alternative, but to insist upon reform being carried out.

So, this gives us the real serve confrontation between 2 set of social reform movement; one is led by caste Hindus trying to reform the caste and yet not willing to alienate their orthodox elements. So, you might have heard about the initial decades of Indian renaissance, here there is emphasis on social reforms religious reforms, gender reforms, or providing education to the women reform in the family, but these are not extended to

reform the whole structure of caste which reproduces differences, which is exploitative or which subjugate or which exploit and operates the worst number of untouchables.

Now, to this kind of this set of social reforms Ambedkar was saying that they reform is not to reform the family or to reform this system, but to assert which is about this self-respecting sect of the untouchables. So, the assertion of self-respect or dignity or fighting for the self-respect and dignity, that is very different from the reformist, or a kind of reformist approach where orthodoxy, continue to be practiced or to be included in this approach or in their movement for social reforms.

So, Ambedkar was clearly distinguishing between these 2 set of reformers where; one is what reform in the family or caste that concerns their lives or their collective self. But the other hand the movement that was being led by Ambedkar and many organisation which is about fighting for this self-respect. So, the question of reform to contain or to continue with the orthodox elements or to include the orthodoxy, not well neat them, that is being practiced by many organisations or groups..

On the other hand, Ambedkar was promoting or leading a movement or identifying the movement, which is about asserting the self-respect, fighting for the self-respect, and dignity. And therefore, the 2 is often at loggerhead with each other and Ambedkar is focusing more towards this social reforms. At this point one also needs to understand that when we were fighting for them political independence, and I have been referring to this again and again in my previous lecture.

There is a kind of shift in our anti colonially struggle where we have started from social religious reforms movement, but then the priority was shifted to political independence and political freedom first. And then it was being thought a thought out by many leaders or groups, that political freedom can also be achieved first and we should all come together to fight for our political freedom. The social reforms and other things can we can take a later on once we achieve the independence.

But, many people or Ambedkar in the next lecture when we will discuss his views on liberal democracy, and constitutional morality will see that how he continue to argue and caution the constitution make a that, political independence or political democracy, without social and economic democracy will be meaningless, it will not work for long.

And, so many many leaders and groups were arguing about simultaneous or continuous focus on or fighting for the social reforms or the social hierarchy that was there. So, here in this slide one gets the sense that for Ambedkar, the objective is not just to reform and continue to include the orthodoxy and orthodox element in the society, but to annihilate, but to remove this whole eradicate the whole system of caste and caste based discrimination.

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➤ In *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar, probably for the first time, raised many profound questions regarding caste system. The caste system is governing principles of Hindu society and the castes are of unequal ranks. These inequalities deeply disturbed Ambedkar and compelled him to strongly criticize Hindu society and its religion as well.

➤ He argued that the graded inequality is the normative anchor of the caste system and it restricts the reach of equality to the members of the lower castes. Regarding untouchability he said, “Untouchability is not a simple matter; it is the mother of all our poverty and lowliness and it has brought us to the abject state we are in today. If we want to raise ourselves out of it, we must undertake this task. We cannot be saved in any other way. It is a task not for our benefit alone; it is also for the benefit of the nation”.

So, in *Annihilation of Caste* Ambedkar, probably for the first time, raised many profound questions about the caste system or regarding the caste system. The system is governing principle of Hindu society. So, every is fear of life from birth to death and social, to economic, to religious, to culture, to political, life of Hindu society is by and large governed by the caste and these castes are unequal in ranks. And, these inequalities deeply disturbed Ambedkar, and he himself was subjected to such discrimination and humiliation based on caste discrimination.

So, he was deeply disturbed by such differences of humiliation and that compared him to a strongly criticize Hindu society. And, also he gradually developed critique of Hindu religion as such. So, for him Hindu religion or Hindu society the 6 society in many ways, and it is interesting that when many people argue about the continuous existence of Hindu civilization for millennia. For Ambedkar that is not heroic. If society which cannot treat it is on fellow members with respect with dignity and continue to reproduce

differences and treat others with contempt, then kind of existence for Ambedkar is simply disgusting or not acceptable and certainly not something which one can celebrate.

So, he gradually developed his criticism and later on he as we have discussed in our previous lecture, converted to Buddhism. Because of his hope or any hope that he might have had about reforms or reforms within the Hindu religion to eradicate or annihilate caste. He considered or he completely lost the faith of any reform certainly after the Hindu code bill controversy, or the conservatism, or orthodoxy and its domination, on the polity, society, and economy of India, that he later on converted to Buddhism. And he many from 1930s onwards itself developed a kind of distance or a kind of critique to this whole religious edifice of Hinduism and continuously said that: I was born a Hindu, but I will not die as a Hindu and that remains continuously.

But, before doing that he of course studied many religions including Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism and finally, decided to convert to Buddhism which he did in 1956. So, he argued that the graded inequality is a normative anchor of the caste system and it restricts the reach of equality to the members of lower castes. So, the inequality or the caste based discrimination that is there in India is graded. That means the position or the treatment that a member of a particular caste will receive from the member of other caste will depend upon a station of their community in the hierarchy of the caste system.

So, everyone does not suffer the same kind of differences of same kind of humiliation or discriminations. Their humiliation or discrimination or contempt or admiration everything depends on the status of their existence or their group in the caste hierarchy. So, this is a very complex system of graded inequality. And therefore, he argued that it is very difficult to unite all the caste to fight against the whole system. Because, there are contempt discrimination or humiliation at the same time simultaneously they privilege, that is associated to such system also. So, this graded inequality or hierarchy is a normative anchor of caste system which restricts the reach of equality to the members especially of the lower caste.

So, the members of different castes cannot be treated equally, because of this graded inequality that permits all it is fear of Hindu society. So, regarding untouchability he said, untouchability is not a simple matter. It is the mother of all poverty and lowliness and it has brought us to the present state we are in today. If, we want to raise ourselves out

of it, we must undertake the task and we cannot be saved in any other way. It is a task not for our benefit alone it is also for the benefit of the nation.

Now, he is making interesting point here, where is saying that qualities is also perhaps necessary for us to understand or make a distinction between the caste system or untouchability or the question of untouchability. So, on caste he has written very extensively, but all his fight. Of course, there is a kind of interconnection between the caste system which leads to untouchability, but the caste system and the caste society is very different from those who are excluded from the hierarchy or the in the question of untouchability. And, throughout his life he was politically involved in the struggle for fighting for self-respect and dignity of the untouchable.

So, for him this untouchability is the root cause or the mother of all poverty and lowliness among the untouchables and that has brought us to the object condition, where it is very difficult event to consciously understand that one is subjected to humiliation or discrimination. So, one submit voluntarily submit to such humiliation or condition and considered it as their feet, as their lord because of their birth. So, from that object condition of existence to rise and to fight for the self-dignity or the self-respect is what Ambedkar was trying to achieve and trying to fight for.

So, and that fight for Ambedkar then cannot be led by any other groups or be it Congress or be it Colonial Government, but the untouchables themselves have to fight for a for such status such self self-respect. So, we have to we have to remember that when there was a negotiation between Colonial Government and Congress and the Muslims. He was trying to create a autonomous or separate political group of untouchables and to safeguard their interest and their protection and for that he was trying to have constantly negotiation and he succeeded to a great extent in achieving. So, achieving those safeguards for them for the untouchables, both from the colonial rule to different round table conference and a legislation and always listen and also from the constituent assembly where he was the chairman of the drafting committee.

So, he is understanding about such fight for self-respect and dignity can be achieved only when untouchables fight for themselves. So, there is no expectation from other groups or other organisations fighting on their behalf for their self, self-respect. And, this movement this is struggle for Ambedkar is not just for their own benefit. But for the

benefit of a nation: because for Ambedkar the possibility of a political community without social equality and the sense of fellow feeling of fraternity is unsustainable. And therefore, he was very sceptical about the prospect of India as in a sandwich continues to practice such exploitative system as caste or untouchability.

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➤ His criticisms on caste system were based on many grounds. He writes that, “*The effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His responsibility is to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden, and morality has become caste-bound.*”

➤ He criticized caste system because caste is not just a division of labour, it is a division of labourers. He said, “*It is a pity that Caste even today has its defenders...the Caste System is not merely a division of labour. It is also a division of labourers. Civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour. But in no civilized society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into watertight compartments. The Caste System is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour—it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers.*”

So, his criticism on caste system where based on many grounds and he writes the effect of caste on the ethics of Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. And, this is something about the celebration of India's existence for millennia, but there is obstruction, there is a restriction of public spirit all coming together to fight when there is a external invasion or there is a common challenges for the whole society which is prevented obstructed in India. Because, the practices of caste which does not allow such public spirit or the common solidarity to immerse in the first place.

So, you writes the effect of caste on the ethics of Hindus is simply deplorable and caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity; caste has made public opinion impossible, because the public opinion in India is largely governed by the station of the individual in the caste hierarchy. So, there is no true public opinion so, to save. A Hindu public is his caste his responsibility is to his caste, his loyalty is restricted only to his caste, virtue has become caste ridden and morality has become caste-bound.

In such a society how one can think of a public aspirate or public opinion which represents the interest of all sections of society, where even the morality ethics and virtue

is caste driven or caste bound. So, in that kind of society the possibility of emerging a political community which should be sustainable, which can continue for long is something which he was very sceptical about. And the criticism that he has against the caste system or the Hindu religion which give sanction to such practices or because this practices followed by millions, because they believe in the Hindu Shastra according to his they thought this practices or the social practices or evil practices of caste and untouchability is justified.

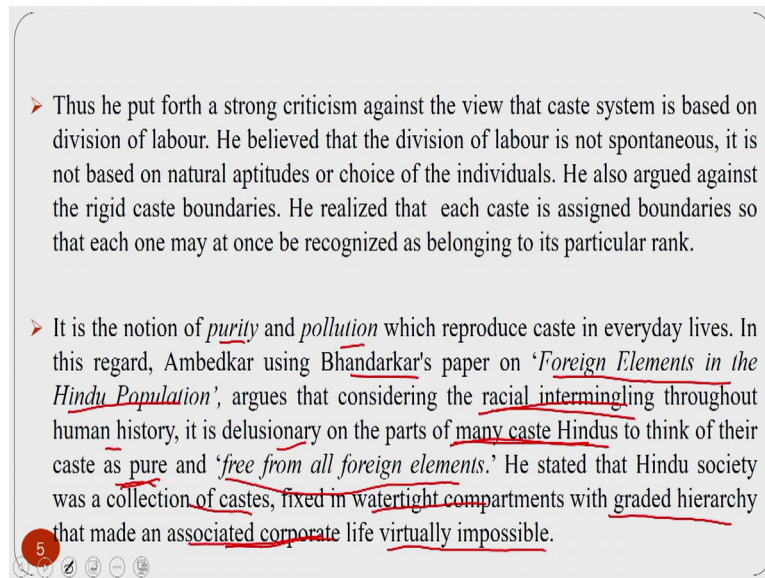
So, he criticize caste system, because caste is not just a and this is also the rational argument he is putting forward. So, first of all there were many justification of caste system. And, one of such justification is that caste is basically division of labour. And, every society has such division of labour later on it has acquired degenerated for and that can be reformed, but caste system in itself is not wrong because there is a division of labour on the basis of caste.

So, he criticize such arguments and argue that caste is not just a division of labour, but it is also a division of labourers. And, said it is pretty that caste even today has it is defenders. So, as many people were defending the caste system. The caste is not merely division of labour, it is also a division of labourers civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour, but in no civilized society is division of labour accompanied by this unnatural division of labourers into watertight compartments.

So, the caste system is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour, it is a hierarchy. In which divisions of labourers are graded one above the other. So, that is the inequality or the discrimination based on caste is not one to one and one universal which is applicable to everyone. It is graded depending upon the station of ones life in this hierarchy one over the other.

In no other country is the division of labour accompanied by this gradation of labourers. So, he was very critical of those who were arguing or justifying caste as the basis of division of labour which is good in itself, but it has degenerated which one can reform and therefore caste does not need to be annihilated or eradicated.

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- Thus he put forth a strong criticism against the view that caste system is based on division of labour. He believed that the division of labour is not spontaneous, it is not based on natural aptitudes or choice of the individuals. He also argued against the rigid caste boundaries. He realized that each caste is assigned boundaries so that each one may at once be recognized as belonging to its particular rank.
- It is the notion of *purity* and *pollution* which reproduce caste in everyday lives. In this regard, Ambedkar using Bhandarkar's paper on '*Foreign Elements in the Hindu Population*', argues that considering the racial intermingling throughout human history, it is delusory on the parts of many caste Hindus to think of their caste as pure and '*free from all foreign elements*.' He stated that Hindu society was a collection of castes, fixed in watertight compartments with graded hierarchy that made an associated corporate life virtually impossible.

So, he put forth a strong criticism against that view, that caste is division of labour and he believe that the division of labour is not spontaneous, it is not based on the natural aptitude of the individual and most importantly that the choice of individual is not guaranteed or not given in this division of so called labour. Because, it does not depends on the aptitude of the person or the worth of the person, but because he was born into a caste, he must perform certain function certain duty that is associated to that particular caste.

So, it has nothing to do with the aptitude of the individual or the choice of the individual where that individual is comfortable or efficient in doing such work or some other works. So, in this caste based division of labour. So, to the question of aptitude or choice is simply absentee. He also argued against the rigid caste boundaries he realise that each caste is assigned boundaries. So, that each one may at once we recognise as belonging to it is particular caste. So, there is the rigidity in this caste system, where everyone is his role or her role is fixed according to his caste and that started from Brahmins, it was followed by the lower caste and further lower down the orders. And so, every caste becomes a kind of closed groups in itself and their role was fixed, and there is no possibility of ever coming out of such conditions or such status.

So, for caste system to operate or to shape the everyday life of Indian, it is the notion of purity and pollution which reproduced caste in everyday lives of Indians. And, in this

regard, Ambedkar using Bhandarkar's paper on 'Foreign Elements in the Hindu Population', argues that considering the racial intermingling throughout the human history, it is delusionary on the parts of many caste Hindus to think about their caste as pure and 'free from all the foreign elements'.

So, this basis of caste discrimination and caste hierarchy which rests on the notion of purity and pollution is a punctured by Ambedkar, where he is using Bhandarkar's paper on foreign elements in the Hindu population to argue, that it is delusionary on the part of caste Hindus to think of their caste as pure and free from foreign elements considering them racial intermingling throughout the human history.

So, he is stated that Hindu society was a collection of castes, fixed in watertight compartments with graded hierarchy that made an associated corporate life virtually impossible. So, the argument against the caste and caste discrimination is based on this understanding, that it obstruct the growth of associated corporate life impossible in Hindu society. Because of this graded hierarchy and watertight compartmentalization of different caste and their sectarian living.

So, the morality and ethics or the norms of public life it shaped by the particular caste and communal identity, and, not really a kind of free associational living which can help in constructing a progressive forward looking society in India.

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➤ Ambedkar argued that caste prevents Hindus from forming a real society or nation. Caste has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. "In every Hindu the consciousness that exists is the consciousness of his caste. That is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation". This way Ambedkar painfully stated that the worst feature of the caste system is an anti-social spirit.

➤ He argued that caste is a powerful weapon for preventing all reforms. As the law gives each caste an autonomy to regulate its membership and punish dissenters with excommunication. Caste in the hands of the orthodox has been a powerful weapon for persecuting the reformers and for killing all reforms.

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So, Ambedkar argued that caste prevents Hindu from forming a real society or a nation. Where everyone each member is treated equally. And, caste has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. He writes in every Hindu the consciousness that exist is the consciousness of his caste. And, not the whole society as so, it divides and it divides not just in social and economic sense, but also in psychological emotional and moral and ethical sense.

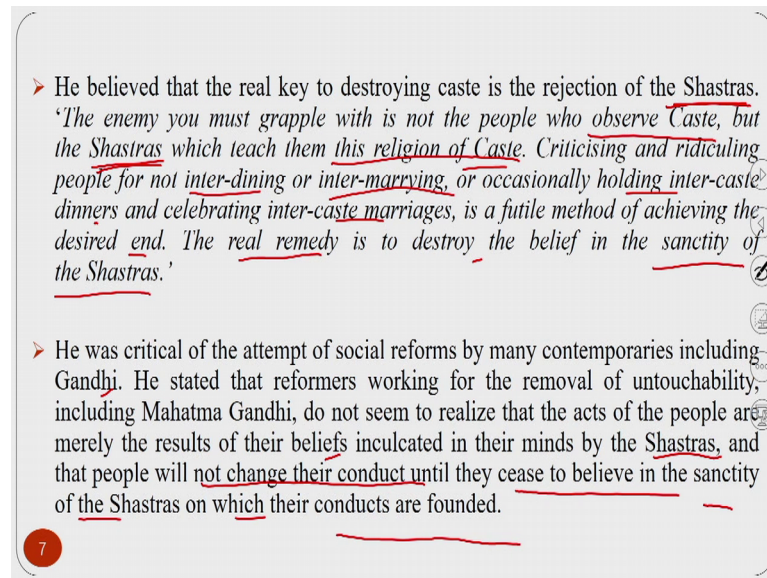
So, the consciousness or the consigs that or ethics, that a individual Hindu carries is the consigs consciousness or the ethics of his particular caste or her particular caste. And, that is the reason why the Hindus cannot be said to form a society or a nation. This is the biggest hindrance according to Ambedkar in forging in a national identity or a collective identity among the Hindus.

So, this way Ambedkar painfully stated the worst feature of caste system as anti-social spirit in does not allowed to form a collective identity. So, he argue that caste is a powerful weapon for preventing all reforms. As the law gives it caste and autonomy to regulate it is membership and punish dissenters with excommunication. So, the social bigot or excommunication was very prevalent in India to punish those dissenters and those who were arguing for any social reforms.

However, write this point one also needs to remember the struggle against the caste system or caste hierarchy or the priestly class is not new. From the very beginning the rise of Buddhism or Jainism, then in Medieval Times the Bhakti or Sufi movement is also in a sense struggle or a assertion against the hierarchy, or against the discrimination based on status with economics or social or religious. And, there this movement continued and acquire more political form during the anti-colonial struggle and Ambedkar provided the foundational, or the intellectual foundation for such a struggle and also led many political movement for reforming or for annihilating such practices.

So, in his opinion caste in the hands of orthodox has been a powerful weapon therefore, for persecuting the reformers and killing all reforms. So, the caste must be annihilated for any social, economic and political reforms to happen, because without such annihilation no reforms is possible. In fact, it provides a kind of weapon in the hands of orthodoxy to prohibit all kind of reforms or punish all kind of reformers.

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- He believed that the real key to destroying caste is the rejection of the Shastras. *'The enemy you must grapple with is not the people who observe Caste, but the Shastras which teach them this religion of Caste. Criticising and ridiculing people for not inter-dining or inter-marrying, or occasionally holding inter-caste dinners and celebrating inter-caste marriages, is a futile method of achieving the desired end. The real remedy is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shastras.'*
- He was critical of the attempt of social reforms by many contemporaries including Gandhi. He stated that reformers working for the removal of untouchability, including Mahatma Gandhi, do not seem to realize that the acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated in their minds by the Shastras, and that people will not change their conduct until they cease to believe in the sanctity of the Shastras on which their conducts are founded.

So, he believed at the real key to destroying caste is rejection of Shashtra's. So, how to reform destroyed caste, he writes the enemy you must grapple with is not the people who observe caste, but the Shashtra's the Hindu text or religious text, which teach them this religion of caste. Criticizing and ridiculing people for not inter dining or inter marrying, or occasional holding inter caste dinner and celebrating inter caste marriages is a futile method of achieving the desired end. Of course, he argued for inter caste marriage or inter caste it only as way for forward to fight caste based discrimination.

But, the real remedy for destroying caste or religion of caste is to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the Shashtra's; so the millions of Hindu followers practice or reproduced caste in their daily lives believing in the Shashtra's sanction of such practices. So, the religion is deeply embedded in their sense of caste based discrimination or the caste hierarchy. So, he was arguing for the fighting the fighting the authority of the caste which provide sanction to such caste practices.

And, there he differ from Gandhi and many Congress leaders where the argued, that the Hinduism does not really talk about caste and caste based discrimination, essentially in Hinduism everyone is treated equally. And everyone is capable of realizing the supreme self or to connect with the supreme self or 18 the a spiritual heights with. So, there is no prohibition on the basis of caste and other things also. So, the connection between

Hinduism and the caste system that Ambedkar argued for was contestant and critique by many leaders including Gandhi.

Ambedkar was critical of the attempt of social reforms by many contemporaries including Gandhi. He stated that reforms working for the removal of untouchability including Mahatma Gandhi do not seem to realize that the acts of the people or discriminatory acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated in their minds by the Shastras. And, that people will not change their conduct until this is to believe in the sanctity of the Shastras on which their conducts are founded.

So, for Ambedkar those social reformers fighting for this practices of caste or untouchability need to understand that the people. And their belief in the caste based discrimination is based on their belief in the Shastras or the text which give sanction to such practices. So, unless that is destroyed or that is fight it there cannot be change in the conduct of the people. Even when many reformers themselves in their individual life free themselves from the caste based discrimination, but for the millions their practices is governed by their belief in the religious sanction of such caste practices.

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➤ He also felt that the prohibitions in the Hindu religion against intermarriage, interdining, inter-drinking and social intercourse have been set to show people of unequal ranks their actual status in the society. That is, these bounds are symbols of inequality. He believed that only intermarriage can end untouchability.

➤ He believed that a true religion cultivates responsibility for one's actions. 'A religious act may not be a correct act but must at least be a responsible act. To permit of this responsibility, religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules it ceases to be religion as it kills responsibility which is the essence of a truly religious act.' He argued that Hinduism is nothing but a set of rules only. He founded a lot of doctrinal cleavages within Hinduism.

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So, he also felt that the prohibition in the Hindu religion against intermarriage, interdining, inter drinking, or social intercourse have been set to show people of unequal ranks their actual status in the society. So, the caste is something which actually produced and reproduced in everyday life, when on the question of marriage is the most

important way to maintain the class caste exclusivity to prevent any kind of intercourse between or among different castes.

So, that is this bonds or symbols of inequality, inter dining, inter drinking, or inter caste marriages are the mechanism through which the status of an individual is shown in the caste Hindu society. And, he believed that the only intermarriage can lead to true bond to have fun and not just inter drinking, inter dining, or just formal interaction between and among the castes. So, he did consider inter caste marriages as the possible solution for the development of true bonds among and different caste in Hindu society. And, also to fight against the religious takes which give authority to such caste discrimination.

So, he believe that a true religion. Therefore, one also needs to understand that he is not against a religion he is against. So, many people may have this sense that Ambedkar is fighting the religion. Actually he is reinterpreting the religion, which believes in social harmony, which believes in social equality, which believes in true fellow feelings and the face full of fraternity liberty and justice and equality.

So, he believe that a true religions cultivate responsibility for one action. A religious act may not be a correct act, but must at least be a responsible act. To permit of this responsibility religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules, it ceases to be religion as it kills responsibility which is the essence of truly religious act.

So, he argue that Hinduism is nothing, but a set of rules that governs the everyday lives and not a matter of principle which is about the responsibility of individual towards self towards the other, and not just a set of rules which governs or dictates the everyday lives and choices of the individual. And, he founded a lot of doctrinal cleavages within the Hinduism. And that is why he gradually develop a criticism against the Hinduism or Sikhness identified the Sikh practices within Hinduism and lost all hope in reforming such religion also.

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Gandhi – Ambedkar debate

- Ambedkar studied Gandhian intervention in nationalist movement very closely. In his works like *‘Mr Gandhi and the emancipation of the Untouchables’*, *‘Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah’* and *‘What Congress and Gandhi Have done to the Untouchables’* he critically examines the views of Gandhi and Gandhism on caste and its limitations in solving caste problems.
- Initially Ambedkar was convinced about Gandhi’s attempts to reform society; and believed that this could bring about political reforms as well. However, he became skeptical towards Gandhi when he felt that Gandhi succumbed to the pressure of orthodoxy and placed the untouchables at the mercy of caste Hindus. This suspicion became clearer when he felt that Gandhi was trying to placate Muslims while isolating the untouchables during the round table conference.

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Now, to study this Gandhi Ambedkar debate we find that Ambedkar studied Gandhi very closely. And especially the Gandhian intervention the overall mass mobilization that Gandhi led. And therefore, from 1920s when Gandhi was leading the mass movement and giving a kind of combined movement against the British rule or the foreign rule. And prime priority of attaining political independence and then moving to social and other religious reforms. Ambedkar took a different route by engaging with the colonial ruler, colonial administrator, and through his association with the colonial rule. He was also trying to protect the interest of the untouchables or the Dalits, at the same time when he was also involved in many Satyagraha or many nonviolent hesitational politics for the assertion of self-respect and dignity of untouchables within the Hindu society.

So, these 2 figures Gandhi and Ambedkar is very interesting to understand their visions and. In fact, Ambedkar's views and his politics did influence the Gandhi is from 1930s still his 1948. He continuously try to eradicate untouchability or social discrimination based on caste and he called them harijans. And he was equally perhaps involved in this eradication of caste and in the question of untouchability as well.

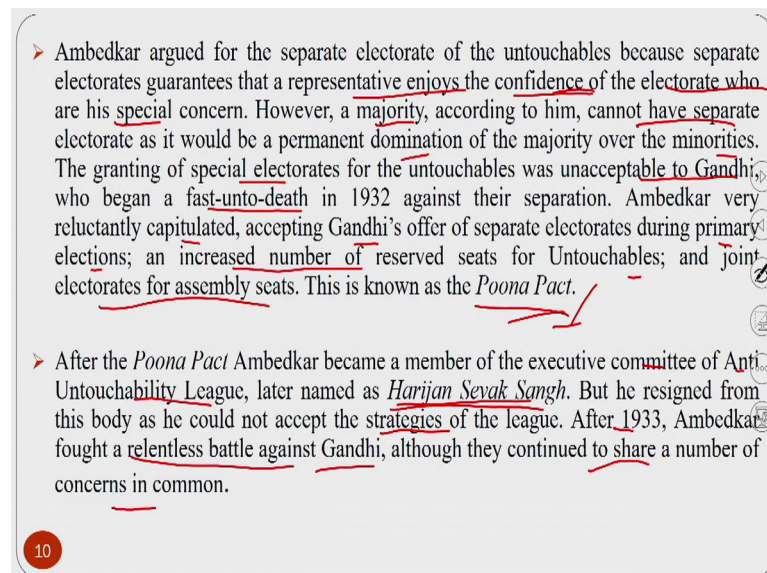
So, Ambedkar studied Gandhian intervention in nationalist movement very closely in his works like *‘Mr Gandhi and emancipation of the Untouchables’* *‘Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah’* and *‘What Congress and Gandhi Have done to the Untouchables’* he critically examine views of Gandhi and Gandhism on caste and it is limitation in their approach in

solving the caste problems. So, there is lots of confusing or speculative arguments in the Gandhian which Ambedkar found, and he provide claims to provide a solid or a kind of pragmatic political solution to the problem of caste and untouchability.

So, initially Ambedkar was convinced about Gandhis attempts to reform society and believe that this could bring about political reforms as well. However, he became sceptical towards Gandhi and felt that succumbed to the pressure of orthodoxy and placed the untouchables at the mercy of caste Hindus. So, the changing of hurt or the kind of politics Gandhi followed led Ambedkar to question or interrogate his methods and politics a what social reforms and especially to protect the interest of untouchables or Dalits.

So, this suspicion became much more clearer felt that Gandhi was trying to placate Muslims while isolating the untouchables during the round table conference. And when they met in second round table conference from then on there a difference is on caste question or the separate electorates for the untouchables becomes much more sharper however, both of them to where his conscious or a sincere effort to eradicate or to remove removed caste and untouchability from Hindu society.

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➤ Ambedkar argued for the separate electorate of the untouchables because separate electorates guarantees that a representative enjoys the confidence of the electorate who are his special concern. However, a majority, according to him, cannot have separate electorate as it would be a permanent domination of the majority over the minorities. The granting of special electorates for the untouchables was unacceptable to Gandhi, who began a fast-unto-death in 1932 against their separation. Ambedkar very reluctantly capitulated, accepting Gandhi's offer of separate electorates during primary elections; an increased number of reserved seats for Untouchables; and joint electorates for assembly seats. This is known as the Poona Pact.

➤ After the Poona Pact Ambedkar became a member of the executive committee of Anti Untouchability League, later named as Harijan Sevak Sangh. But he resigned from this body as he could not accept the strategies of the league. After 1933, Ambedkar fought a relentless battle against Gandhi, although they continued to share a number of concerns in common.

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Ambedkar argued for the separate electorate for the untouchables, because separate electorates guarantees that a representative enjoys the confidence of the electorate who are his special concern. However, a majority, according to him, cannot have separate

electorate as it would be a permanent domination of the majority over the minority. The granting of a special electorates for the untouchables was unacceptable to Gandhi, because he did not want further destruction or further fragmentation of Hindu society. He wanted to consolidate or integrate the excluded community from the fold of Hindu region or Hinduism.

So, Gandhian notion of Hindu or Hinduism is much more inclusive or about integrating differences or different communities or excluded communities within the fold of Hinduism. However, this communal award or separate electorates for the untouchables was about providing separate electorates for the untouchables on the basis of their identity the caste identity which is different from the majoritarian Hindu community. So, these special electorates we have discuss the circumstances in our previous lecture which you can refer to.

So, in 1932 when this award was granted to the untouchables largely because of Ambedkars negotiation in all the 3 round table conference with the British, Gandhi started fast unto death. And, Ambedkar very reluctantly because of the political pressure or the social pressure yielded to such demand and accepted Gandhi's offer of separate electorates during the primary elections. And increase number of reserve seats for the untouchables and joint electorates for them assembly seats. This is known as Poona pact.

And, we have discussed also in our previous lecture how this pact does not satisfied or and the differences between Ambedkar and the Gandhi. So, many of the followers of Gandhi believe that Gandhi has yielded a lot to Ambedkar. And, Ambedkar believe cheated or his followers felt cheated by the foreseeable compromise that Gandhi force upon them. So, after the Poona pact Ambedkar became a member of the executive committee of an anti untouchability league that was formed, which is also named as Harijan Sevak Sangh, but he resigned from this body as he could not accept the strategies of the league to eradicate or annihilist caste.

And, after 1933 Ambedkar fought a relentless battle against Gandhi although they continue to share a number of consensus in common which we will discuss.

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➤ From this time on, Gandhi and Ambedkar pursued distinctly separate paths— Gandhi giving the name “Harijan” (people of God) to Untouchables and pleading with caste Hindus to abolish Untouchability, and Ambedkar forming a political party. The party attempted to abolish hereditary discriminations in village economic structures and to question the use of the term ‘Harijan’.

➤ One of the elements of Gandhi’s attitude that disturbed Ambedkar the most was his idealization of the *chatur (four) varna system*. Gandhi believed that all people could be classed according to occupations of equal dignity within the four broad rubrics of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra; and that the Untouchables, who fall outside the classical *varna system*, should be included as Shudras. This, of course, was unacceptable to Ambedkar. He argued that the reorganization of the Hindu Society on the basis of Chaturvarnya is harmful and that the Hindu Society must be reorganized on a religious basis which recognizes the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

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So, from this time on Gandhi and Ambedkar pursued distinctly separate paths, Gandhi giving the name “Harijan” people of god to untouchables and from 1930s. He is equally or perhaps more active in the social and economic sphere, then in the political sphere; so Gandhi giving the name harijan to untouchables and pleading with caste Hindus to abolish untouchability. So, there is a kind of pleading or a kind of request for change in hard to remove untouchability or abolish untouchability, for it was a political fight, it was legal political fight which cannot be achieved merely by appeal or pleading to the caste Hindu who are privileged, or if you who are beneficiary of such exploitative system of a caste discrimination our untouchability.

Therefore, he form a political party and the party attempted to abolish hereditary discrimination in village economic structure. And, also question the term ‘Harijan’. For Ambedkar untouchable is someone who is broken or Marati word as we discussed for Dalit that he used is about someone who is broken and broken in spirit to fight even for their self respect. And, this is the greatest contribution of Ambedkar perhaps to develop the consciousness of a sense of empowerment. Among those communities who were in such a submit to a state that they were not even consists of their discrimination or humanly or they constant humiliation. So, he was very critical of this term which is Gandhian term and that is Harijan.

So, one of the elements of Gandhis attitude that disturb Ambedkar the most was his idolization of Chathur Vara system or Varnas from dharma in Gandhi. Gandhi believe that all people could be clashed according to occupation of equal dignity within the 4

broad rubrics of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra and untouchables can be included within the classical Varna which falls outside the Varna system should be included as Shudras.

So, for Gandhi these divisions between 4 varna and his differentiation between Varna and caste is something which Ambedkar found very confusing very problematic to understand the problems. However, for Gandhi such divisions are not necessarily exploitative because it is about occupations different occupations as such. So, he thought these occupation of all kind are equal in birth.

And he has experimented in many of his ashrams, but largely outside his ashrams in the everyday lives the people do not have same respect or mutual respect to all occupations. So, in India there is a kind of contempt towards the low lower occupations and those who are involve in a particular occupations. Unlike Gandhian belief of equal respect or equal dignity to all occupation which is his justification for Varnasram from or Chaturvarna systems.

Ambedkar found it very problematic in fact, disgusting in his assessment. So, this of course, was unacceptable to Ambedkar. And, he argued that the reorganization of Hindu society on the basis of Chatur Varna is harmful and that the Hindu society must be reorganised on a religious basis which recognises the principle of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

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- Ambedkar, on the other hand, was in search of the ideology that justifies such exploitative system of caste. He felt that tradition was this ideology. Injustice based on caste could not have continued unless it was legitimized by a tradition. He also believed that the tradition of Hindu society was predominated by Brahminical interests. As such, he could not ignore the role of tradition in situating caste as a moral code of Hindu society. This prompted Ambedkar to take a critical view of the entire Hindu (Brahminical) traditions.
- However, the differences in the structures of their discourses did not hide their common visions. Both believed that social transformations could come about only by social actions. Therefore, they relied heavily on mobilizing people against injustices. Social actions perceived by Gandhi and Ambedkar were democratic; it was in the form of popular struggles. Gandhi many times appeared to be favoring compromises and avoiding 'conflicts'. Ambedkar, too, is seen by many (even by his followers) as a supporter of non-violent politics.

So Ambedkar studied the caste system and critically analysed the justification it receives from Hindu scriptures. His thought does not deal merely with removal of untouchability which was, but one part of anti-caste movement. He was also concerned with the overall Annihilation of Caste, not just the discrimination of the caste and reforming the caste, but the Annihilation of Caste is what Ambedkar was aiming for our fighting for.

Gandhi of course, was in favour of abolition of caste based discrimination. In personal conduct he did not practice caste as many social reforms did not, but Indian articulation on engagement they substantially differ for Ambedkarites kind of understanding or approach to caste. But, he intended to emphasize more on the question of untouchability than on the caste system as a whole. Gandhi tends to search possible areas of cooperation and integration of the caste where Ambedkar was trying and fighting for the annihilation of the caste.

So, it is interesting to see how Gandhi and Ambedkar negotiated with tradition. And their difference are sharp here as well. So, Gandhi engages in a creative dialogue with tradition he tries to find out the element of truth in tradition and emphasise on those truths. In many cases he attached new meanings to traditional symbols. And, he gives an impression that he is asking for nothing new in substance, but for the continuance old. So, even the Satya, Ahimsa or the vocabulary that Gandhi used in a new way. Inverting a lot of their logical or intellectual space in the tradition and he inverse that too suit the politics of the modern times or the mass mobilization that he was he was leading.

So, Gandhi try to have a kind of constructive dialogue with the tradition, or find the elements of truth in those tradition and trying to revive those truths in the modern politics.

Ambedkar on the other hand was in search of the ideology justifies such exploitive system such as caste. He felt that tradition was this ideology. Injustice based on caste could not have continued unless it was legitimized by a tradition. He also believe that the tradition of Hindu society was predominated by Brahminical interests. As such he could not ignore the role of tradition in situating caste as a moral code of Hindu society. This prompted Ambedkar to take a critical view of entire Hindu traditions or Hinduism which he also considered as the Brahmanical tradition.

So; however, the difference in the structure of their discourse did not hide their common visions which they share N D Nagaraja and many scholars in contemporary terms, he is talking about the possible dialogue between Ambedkar and Gandhi on the question of social and economic transformation. Especially for those who are at the lowest level of caste hierarchy. Both believe that the social transformation could come about only by social action. So, the role of social actions or its activities are as important as its articulation in by the thinkers.

. So, therefore, they relied heavily on mobilizing people or public opinion against such injustice based on caste. Social actions perceived by Gandhi and Ambedkar were for them both democratic; it was in the form of popular struggles Gandhi many times appear to be favouring compromises and avoiding conflicts. So, the Gandhian politics was about popular a struggle which many times fever compromises of a conflict or confrontation. Ambedkar to seen by many even by his followers as a supporter of non-violent protest or politics or educational politics to assert the self-respect or the dignity of the untouchables.

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- The Ambedkarite critique of Gandhi is centered on the latter's fast-unto-death in opposition to the MacDonal Award or separate electorates for Dalits. However this act had two different criticism. In the word of Gopal Guru. *'The critique leads to two opposing conceptions. The male Ambedkarite looks at Gandhi's fast as an act of utter unfairness in as much as it coerces Ambedkar into accepting the Poona Pact. Conversely, female Ambedkarites positively assess the role of Ambedkar who, in their judgment, acted fairly in saving the life of Gandhi by signing the Poona Pact.'*
- And therefore, Gandhi -Ambedkar debate is crucial to understand the political philosophy of these two great philosophers whose ideas helped in shaping the public and political discourse even in contemporary India. One should also understand that Gandhian and Ambedkarian discourses are not antithetical. Both are concerned with the issue of emancipations as well as transformations of Hindu society from the clutches of caste and untouchability.

So, the Ambedkarite critique of Gandhi is centred on the latest fast unto death in a position to McDonald Award or separate electorates for Dalits. However, this act had 2 different criticisms. In the word of Gopal Guru, “the critique leads to 2 opposing conception of this act the mail Ambedkarites look at Gandhi’s fast as an act of unfairness

in as much as it coerced Ambedkar into accepting the Poona pact. Conversely female Ambedkarites positively assess the role of Ambedkar who in their judgement acted fairly in saving the life of Mahatma Gandhi signing the Poona pact. So, there is a difference between 2 gender within the Ambedkarites movement about Gandhi and his role and his dialogue with Ambedkar on the caste question.

And therefore, Gandhi Ambedkar debate remains crucial to understand the political philosophy of these 2 great philosophers whose ideas help shaping the public and political discourse in contemporary India. One should also understand that Gandhian and Ambedkarites discourse are not antithetical, it should be Ambedkarites. Both are concerned with the issue of emancipation as well as transformation of Hindu society from the classes of caste and untouchability.

So, despite of their difference is they were also arguing for emancipation or liberation of society, which is caste ridden or based on caste discriminations and untouchability, which prohibit, or which weakens the bond or the relationship between and among members of the same political community or same nation.

So, this is all on this question of caste and Gandhi Ambedkar debates, but finally, one also needs to understand in the contemporary politics the reemergence of Ambedkar as an icon, or use of Ambedkar as a symbol for any political struggles which is also about social and economic transformation, social justice, or egalitarian society. Somewhere in this discourse his focus on annihilation or eradication of caste is somewhere lost. And, there is now new kind of politics which is emerging where many caste is trying to fight for the recognition as a as OBC or SC or ST.

So, they politics in post-independence India has taken a different turn then perhaps Ambedkar was arguing for, that is about eradication or Annihilation of Caste to create a society; to create a nation which would be based on the principle of Equality, Justice, and Liberty.

But however, Gandhi and Ambedkar and dialogue between the 2 remains crucial and can provide the possible solution to create a post-colonial society, which would be much more egalitarian, much more fair, or just society where the individual and the collective group or community. Can prosper or that will help in strengthening the nation or it is prosperity as well. So, many scholars is also arguing about this possible and dialogue or

revisiting the dialogue between Gandhi and Ambedkar to understand the problem of caste in even in contemporary India and how to fight it?

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6. 'Political Thought in Modern India' by Thomas Pantham and K L Deutsch ✓
7. 'Makers of Modern India' by Ramchandra Guha ✓
8. 'Understanding Ambedkar's Construction of National Movement' by Gopal Guru, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1998 ✓

So, on this question of caste in Ambedkar you can refer to some of these takes most importantly is this original text by Ambedkar which Annihilation of Caste. And, also you can refer to some of the chapters from Valerian Rodrigues the essential writings of B R Ambedkar. And, also some articles in EPW about Gandhi Ambedkar interface, when shall the twain meet or Ambedkar as a political philosopher. Other text which we have been referring in this course sources of Indian tradition or political thought in Modern India, also makers of modern India by Ramachandra Guha you can refer to and also 'Understanding Ambedkar's Contribution of Construction of National Movement' by Gopal Guru, this text you can refer to.

That is all for today. In the next class we are going to discuss Ambedkar's views on a liberal democracy and constitutional morality that would be also the concluding lecture on Ambedkar. So, thanks for listening, thank you all.

Thank you.