

Ambedkar Vs Gandhian view on separate electorates

What is the issue?

In the early 1930s, the issue of separate electorates for lower castes became a source of major debate between the two of India's tallest leaders: Dr BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

What is the system currently followed in India?

- India has a system of caste-based reservations.
- It *sets aside* a certain number of seats for people belonging to castes that historically experienced social and economic discrimination.
- Reservations are applicable on higher education, government jobs, and even political office.
- There are a certain number of seats reserved for scheduled castes (SCs) and (STs) in all legislative bodies, including Parliament.

What is the alternative suggested against reservation?

- The alternative advocated by Dr BR Ambedkar was the separate electorates.
- **Separate electorate** - It is a mode of election with double vote, one for Scheduled castes (SCs) to vote for an SC candidate and the other for SCs to vote for in the general electorate.

Indian Councils Act, 1909 introduced for the first time, the principle of communal representation in India and created a separate electorate for Muslims

What are the different views held by Gandhi and Ambedkar?

Ambedkar	Gandhi
Views on caste	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambedkar rejected the institution of caste itself and emphasized political power in the hands of lower castes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gandhi advocated for reforming the caste system by abolishing untouchability.
On separate electorates	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambedkar suggested separate electorates to empower lower castes. • Joint electorates might help to integrate lower castes with Hindu fold, but it is not sufficient to challenge their submissive position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gandhi opposed the separate electorate as it would destroy Hinduism by wedging the community and help the British divide and rule. • Gandhi felt that it would reduce the power that caste Hindu leadership enjoyed by breaking the consolidated Hindu fold.
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What is the Poona Pact of 1932?

- **Gandhi's fast** - In 1932, Gandhi began a fast unto death in the Yerawada Jail against the British decision to create separate electorates based on caste.
- With pressure from Gandhi, Ambedkar signed the historic Poona Pact in 1932.
- According to this pact, Hindu joint electorate was retained and gave reserved seats to the depressed classes.
- It was signed by Ambedkar on behalf of the depressed classes and Madan Mohan Malviya on behalf of the Upper Caste Hindus.
- Ambedkar was never satisfied with the outcome of the Poona pact.

References

[The Indian Express | Ambedkar's View on Separate Electorates](#)

