

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 |
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| 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 | |

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| <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](#)

