

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

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

