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## REVISITING AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHTS ON PAKISTAN

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### Abstract:

*Ambedkar's 'Thoughts on Pakistan' was taken up immediately after the passing of the Lahore Resolution on Pakistan. Perhaps Ambedkar's work is the earliest in the line of writings on Partition. It was actually a treatise submitted as a report to the Independent Labour Party which was subsequently published in the form of a book.*

*The idea of Pakistan is bound to have diverse opinions in the Indian milieu. The question is undoubtedly controversial. This is definitely an arena of controversy based purely on sentiments. In this given situation anyone intending to comprehend it finds more stupefaction and less understanding of the subject. It is here that the writing of Ambedkar brings in a ray of hope in our understanding of the problem of Partition of India.*

*The article tries to reflect the ideas as expressed by Ambedkar on the theme, in his work 'Thoughts on Pakistan' which eventually enables us to understand the issue without any prejudice over the subject of study.*

### KEY WORDS:

Ambedkar thoughts, Pakistan, partition, Partitiion of India, British, Muslims, Hindus, Congress.

### INTRODUCTION

The whole question of partition is the question of, to be or not to be. This question of partition or the Communal Question, which is otherwise called, has become so very important to us only because this has been talked about in the context of twentieth century India, when the creation of India and Pakistan as an entity took place. When we are talking about India, are we talking about British India or the India as it exists today, is a question that historian needs to answer.

If we are talking about British India, then the whole idea of Pakistan or the Partition of India should not at all be an issue. It is no doubt that when we are talking about partition we are definitely talking about the issue in the context of British India alone. That is because this part of the Indian subcontinent, even as late as 1947 had over 550 and odd princely states. The implication of this statement is that, there was a multiplicity of nations that existed in our construct of India as we see and understand as a nation today.

The whole problem or discussion arises simply because historians, scholars and critics have over simplified the matter in the context of time and space. This over simplification, in the context of time and space is the result for such an erroneous and an enormous amount of discussion on the issue of partition. No matter, how much so ever, we tend to discuss, probably we may still not comprehend the reason and the course of partition. This is because of the grave limitation posed by history as a subject itself, as it only offers post-facto explanations.

Ambedkar tries to deconstruct the history of partition and that of communalism by explaining in

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the sense of delimitation in time and space. He says that, it is true that once India comprised of areas extending up to Afghanistan and this was the time when Chandragupta was ruling over India. He also says, that it continued despite some reverses, even when Huian Tsang visited India during the seventh century A.D. Even at this time Huian Tsang records that the region was divided into five Indies (India's). What has happened after the visit of Huian Tsang, is a series of invasion of India at the hands of the Tartars (Md. Ghazni, Babur), Afghans (Ghori, Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Abdali) and by the Mongols (Timur). Starting from the raids of Mohammed Ghazni to the return of Ahmad Shah Abdalli, for a period of 762 years cannot be a period of no account.

Furthermore, in the midst of all these raids and reigns this geographical entity India never existed, as a political entity as there were innumerable kingdoms which have risen and fallen. The boundaries in the region between kingdoms and nations of India for all practical reasons have always remained fluid and shifting in continuum. The Indian unity as an abiding character, in the sense of kinship was conspicuously absent.<sup>1</sup>

Ambedkar further clarifies that more recently; the unity between India and Burma was forged in the year 1826 by the British expediency and continued to exist for over 110 years. In 1937 this unity was cut asunder again on account of British expediency and nobody had shed tears over it. He says, that there was more spiritual unity between Hindustan and Burma than between Pakistan and Hindustan. If there was no objection for the severance of Burma from India, there was no reason why there should be any objection for the severance of an area like Pakistan, which was politically detachable, socially hostile and spiritually alien to the rest of India. Hence to conclude, under the given circumstances, he considers the unity between Pakistan and Hindustan as merely a myth, inconsistent with practical reality.

Standing as it exists from the point of view of India of today, historians and scholars have tended to appropriate and interpret the history and culture of this land as a monolithic structure that has been the same from times immemorial to the present without any change. This is the folly which has been responsible in making the task of the historians difficult to understand the present challenges seeking explanations from the past. Be it the Indus Valley Civilization or the Vedic Age, it is not understood and explained in the context of time and space, as it existed then. But they are perforce foisted with opinions of the present and hence we unnecessarily quarrel over the issue of 'Who the authors of the Indus Civilization were'? In the debate their culture and civilization transgress boundaries of time and create complexity in the understanding of history.

Ambedkar's work on partition is probably one of the earliest works which was published in December 1940 just within a few months after the Lahore Resolution. Published as 'Thoughts on Pakistan', it was subsequently revised and reprinted as 'Pakistan or The Partition of India' in 1946 – a year before the actual partition. However, this book is bereft of discussions on the course and the aftermaths of partition.

Now be it as it may, look at the title that Ambedkar gives his work – 'Pakistan or The Partition of India'. It is very evident as the title suggests that he was talking about the two perspectives of Partition – To accept with diligence partition as a historical necessity or to be bogged down with reluctance of worries to the issue of Partition of India. Ambedkar though gives different perspectives leading to partition, in a subtle way espouses the cause of Pakistan as the surest way for communal peace in India.

### The British Implicated:

Ambedkar though sympathetic with the British stand for conferring the Communal Award, yet does not absolve them of the polemic involved in resolving the communal question. He says that the British will not for sure settle power upon an aggressive Hindu majority and make it its heir, leaving it to deal with the minorities at its sweet pleasure. "The British will insist upon some kind of settlement being reached between Hindus and the Muslims before they consent to any devolution of political power."<sup>2</sup>

Ambedkar was of the opinion that there was no inequity in the Award on the ground that it gave weightage to Muslim minorities in the Hindu Provinces. For, it also gave weightage to the Hindu minorities in Muslim Provinces. Similarly, there was no inequity in the Award, on the ground that it gave a statutory majority to the Muslims in Muslim Provinces in which they were in a majority. So also, the statutory limitation put upon the Muslim number of seats, also gave to the Hindus in Hindu Provinces a statutory Majority.

However, the Communal Award was iniquitous in the matter of electorates as it accorded unequal treatment to the Hindu and Muslim minorities. It granted the Muslim minorities in the Hindu Provinces the right of Self-determination in the matter of electorates, but it did not grant the same right to the Hindu minorities in the Muslim Provinces. Ambedkar says that, while the Muslims in the Muslim Provinces were given both statutory majority and separate electorate, the Communal Award was imposing upon the Hindu minorities' Muslim rule, which they could neither alter nor influence. This was the polemic of the

Communal Award, which the British had instituted and which had far reaching implications. This was the principle, wherein, a majority of one community was allowed to rule a minority of another community without requiring the majority to submit itself to suffrage of the minority, which Ambedkar calls as the “perversion of democratic principles.”<sup>3</sup>

**Calumny of the Hindu Hypocrisy:**

Ambedkar also exposes the hypocrisy of the high caste Hindus. He says that it is a hereditary trait of the high caste Hindus to oppose Pakistan for reason that it limits the field of their self-seeking careers. Of the many reasons for opposing Pakistan, one of it, Ambedkar says, was due to the selfishness of the high caste Hindus. It was the high caste Hindus who guide the Hindu masses and form Hindu opinions. They have a trait of character which often leads the Hindus to disaster. This trait, he says, is on account of their acquisitive instinct and an aversion to share with others the good things of life. It is in their monopoly of education and wealth, that they have captured the state. It has been their goal of life and their ambition to have this monopoly for themselves. Charged with this selfish idea of class domination, they had excluded the lower classes of Hindus from wealth, education and power and now they had extended the same principle over the Muslims as well.<sup>4</sup>

Ambedkar says that, if the high caste Hindus were resisting Pakistan on the only ground that it cuts off a field for gainful employment they were committing the greatest blunder. They may have succeeded in cheating the lower orders of the Hindus in the name of nationalism, but they could no longer cheat the Muslim majorities in the Muslim Provinces and continue to keep their monopoly of place and power. If that be the case, Ambedkar warns, that the Hindus if chosen to live under a Muslim majority, the chances were that they may lose everything. But if they agree for separation, they may not get more, but they will certainly not lose all.<sup>5</sup>

**Congress Stands' Exposed:**

Ambedkar traces the evolution of Muslim separation or the idea of partition to the Lucknow Pact of 1914. At the time of the Lucknow Pact, he says, the Muslims had raised the Communal Question in its lesser intent. In its lesser intent it found itself expressed in the Communal Award. It was at the Round Table Conference that the Muslims put forth a plan in its greater intent. At the Round Table Conference, the Muslims had presented a list of safeguards, formulated in the well-known fourteen points. The Hindu representatives at the Round Table Conference would not consent to it. It was at this point of time that the British intervened and gave the Communal decision. By that decision Ambedkar says, the Muslims got all their fourteen points. However, there was much bitterness amongst the Hindus against the Communal Award. But the interesting thing is that the Congress did not take part in the hostility displayed by the Hindus, but managed to get it changed with the consent of the Muslims. At this point of time also the Congress was careful enough not to wound the feelings of the Muslims. Even when the Resolution was moved in the Central Assembly condemning the Communal Award, the Congress remained neutral, neither opposing nor supporting it. The Muslims looked upon this Congress attitude as a friendly gesture.

In the subsequent elections, the victory of the Congress in the Hindu majority Provinces did not disturb the tranquility of the Muslims. They felt they had nothing to fear from the Congress and the prospects were that the Congress and the Muslim League would work the Constitution in partnership. But two years and three months of the Congress Government in the Hindu Provinces had completely disillusioned them and had made them the bitterest enemies of the Congress that led them to celebrate the 'Deliverance Day' on 22 December 1939, when the Congress ministry resigned. Hence Ambedkar says, the Muslims who at the Round Table Conference had joined in the demand for Swaraj, had now become the most ruthless opponents of Swaraj.

The reason for such a U turn being taken by the Muslims was firstly due to the refusal of the Congress to recognize the Muslim League or any other Muslim organization as the representative body of the Muslims. Secondly, it was also due to the refusal by the Congress to form coalition ministries in the Congress Provinces unless the Muslims resigned from their parties and joined the Congress and had signed the Congress pledge.

This attempt of the Congress to break all other parties in the country and to make the Congress as the only political party in the country simultaneously meant the political death of the Muslims as a free people.

The deduction from the above argument was that the Congress intended to make the Hindus the ruling race while the Muslims and other minorities to be subject race under the Swaraj. Ambedkar says that, the distinction between a ruling race and a subject race was enforced by the Congress while it was in the

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saddle of political power.

With this Ambedkar comes to the crux of the issue and says that the ideology underlying Pakistan is with regard to its hostility to one Central Government for India. He says, so long as this hostility persists “the ghost of Pakistan will cast its ominous shadow upon the political future of India.”<sup>6</sup>

The Muslims were hostile to one Central Government because that was the surest way of escape to them from the tyranny of a Hindu centre.

Before the Act of 1935, there were a majority of Provinces in which the Hindus were in a majority and the Muslims in a minority. There were only three provinces in which the Muslims were in a majority and the Hindus in a minority viz., Punjab, Bengal and North-West Frontier Province. However, since North-West Frontier Province did not have responsible government, for all practical purpose there were effectively only two Provinces where Muslims were in a majority.

The Muslims hence desired to have more number of Muslim Provinces with the motive of using it as a weapon to tyrannize the Hindu minorities, in case the Muslim minorities in the Hindu Province were tyrannized by the Hindu majority. Ambedkar calls this a dreadful plan, involving the maintenance of justice and peace by retaliation. He says, “It is a scheme of communal peace through a system of communal hostages.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the communal statutory majority based on separate communal electorates and the communal provinces constituted to tyrannize the minorities, were two evils which compose the 'communal problem'.

It is in the redressal of this terrible communal problem that he espouses Pakistan as an alternative to communal peace. This sort of problem Ambedkar says are not inherent in the scheme of Pakistan, but exists as a result of particular boundaries being fixed. Hence, he feels that the problem could be minimized by shifting the boundaries to constitute them as a homogenous unit of Pakistan, and for the rest, homogeneity to be produced by shifting the minority residuary population.<sup>8</sup>

The transfer of minorities for Ambedkar was the only lasting remedy for communal peace. He calls it as the “height of folly to give up so sure a way to communal peace.”

Ambedkar further goes on to explore that while Pakistan could be thus made a homogeneous state, it was difficult to make Hindustan homogeneous as the Muslims were all scattered all over Hindustan and that without the exchange of population, the problem of majority v/s minority would continue to remain in Hindustan only to produce disharmony.

However, Ambedkar argues that on this account one should not reject Pakistan. For he says, with the creation of Pakistan, the magnitude of the communal problem gets reduced, as otherwise it would involve six and half crores of Muslims, while with Pakistan it would involve just about two crores of Muslim population in India. Secondly, with the effect of Pakistan there would be a substantial reduction in their number in both the Council of States and in the Assembly. This he says was no small gain to the Hindus.

Ambedkar further says that, since the separation on linguistic basis had been accepted as a principle by the Congress itself, there was no use saying that, separation based on linguistic province and the claim to separation of Pakistan based on cultural differences were not one and the same. Ambedkar says that these two were a distinction without difference, since linguistic difference was simply another name for cultural difference. If creation of Pakistan is disruptive in its effort, it is no more disruptive than the separation of Hindu Provinces on linguistic base.

## CONCLUSION:

Ambedkar tackles the issue of partition of India in the context of time space without foregoing the future prospects of India. The polemic of the British, the Hindu and the Congress are opposed in the argument made by Ambedkar. He advocates partition as a remedy for lasting communal peace in India. To the many communal questions that India is facing today, Ambedkar's writings are an answer.

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