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Gandhi's Ideology And Its Reception Among Hindu Downtrodden.

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To amass profit, industrialization was used by western countries to possess the whole world's demand for goods. Innumerable ways, methods, strategies and techniques were adopted to undermine, destroy and erase the productions of small scale industries and artisans in countries of the world, especially the colonies. In a century's time, the west became the only supplier of goods to the world. As N. Divakar writes in his article, "Capital investment and expansion was the main goal of capital countries rather than geographical expansion. They used the industrial technology as their main instrument to carve themselves as capital powers." (Divakar 31) The western countries who adopted capitalism used democracy as an ideology to create the illusion of free and liberal citizens. According to Gandhi, Democracy promises individualism but it works not through individuals but individual representatives who holds all the power. Naturally the masses run behind power for survival making them servile for a few politicians. Capitalism channelizes the idea of freedom and individualism in economic terms. It infuses the idea that an individual can adventure, work hard to become a billionaire or laze around to become a pauper. It incorporates the idea that happiness is only material happiness and all other aspects of psychological well being and social well being are subservient to material pleasures. An

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individual in a capitalist democracy competes with the global capital set up for survival. He has to learn international legal system, knowledge systems, commerce, communication and international language systems to become competent in the system. He has to communicate with people who are alien to him – related only in business terms. In such a situation an individual need not have any acquaintance with people around him, relatives, neighbors, community and society around him. No sense of provincialism, nativity is essential to survive in globalized world. This is what Gandhi opposes in capitalism. He wants an individual to survive through his immediate environment.

According to Gandhi, an individual has to produce for the sake of his immediate environment, market his produce in the same environment, develop relations, sustain rapport within the community society which would satisfy all the higher needs of an individual like the needs of safety, security, belongingness, enlightenment and actualization. In such an environment an individual will have all virtues of truth, obedience, modesty, commitment, responsibility. Otherwise the immediate society would not support his enterprise. A small society which nurtures and mends individuals will become competent to satisfy the needs of the individual. It develops holistic and responsible individuals who live peacefully and happily. Individuals will involve in community life. Society contributes to individuals and individuals create its self reliant identity. Gandhi wanted such small societies and not global society. He wanted natural law to operate in the formation of societal structures. A society or community should decide its own norms, ways of life, economy and culture. Gandhi did not support global transport, communication, multinational companies.

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Gandhi agrees with Marx that economic structure determines the superstructure- politics, legal structure and consciousness. But, contrary toMarx, he does not support the idea of dethroning bourgeois to acquire the throne of power by the proletariat. Both capitalist and a socialist are dangerous according to Gandhi because both offer and centralize power in a few powerful leaders. Socialist countries nurture leaders who become dictatorial. Millions and millions of citizens in the nation have to rely on these few rulers. When such is the case, individual emancipation can happen in small community power setups where maximum people can enjoy power and community responsibilities can be fixed. Moreover, modern day ailments such as ecological imbalance through big industries, establishments, irresponsibility among citizens, apathy and neglect of natural resources and community property can be completely erased through Gandhi's decentralized administration in village communities. Ambedkar called this ideology of Gandhi as Advaitism or monoism.I call this as holistic individualism.Monoism is individualistic and heartless according to Ambedkar.

Gandhi believed that the villages in India relied on local resources. By division of labor within the village, the villages had achieved economic self-sufficiency and independence. Developing on the existing village economy would require less efforts and resources than establishing big industries, roads, communication systems in model of the capitalist west by supplanting and disruption of the whole village economy. According to Gandhi, village economies are the ways and means for the development of holistic individualism. As Deepak Rengasamy writes in his article, "Why did Ambedkar hate Gandhi"? "Gandhi adored village life, despite all its weakness of caste system in villages, the caste system ensured a stable and peaceful life for more than 2000 years. None of the civilizations of the world has seen such stability". Also the village life

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possesses some great attractions, self sufficient model, simple way of life, no hectic competition as in market economy hence less scope for unethical practices, so, if by anyway caste system can be purged from its fallacies, he thought India will be a heaven on earth". (Rengasamy)In all situations, Gandhi was highly calculative in economic terms. His canvass was large. Gandhi looked at Indian situation from the wise, utilitarian, comprehensive, holistic, omnipresent perspective while Ambedkar looked at India situation from the angle of the downtrodden and marginalized sections. This holistic individualism world view of Gandhi faced opposition from Ambedkar and whole set of the downtrodden and marginalized sections in India. Gandhi admired the caste system. Saravan quotes Arundati Roy who quotes Gandhi's words. Gandhi says, "I believe that if Hindu society has been able to stand for many centuries, it is because it is founded on the caste system- but was against its hierarchy. Mahatma doesn't want the caste system abolished. He does not want to dine with untouchables but we must be prepared to go near or touch them, as you go near a cow or a horse". (Sarvan).

On the contrary, Ambedkar disliked the idea of village economy. He wanted his people to escape the caste system prevailing in villages and come to egalitarian cities with industries who would pay them according to their work and treat them better than the upper caste Hindus. He wrote, " To the untouchables, Hinduism is a 'veritable chamber of horrors, the iron law of caste, the heartless law of karma and the senseless law of status by birth are veritable instruments of torture which Hinduism has forged against the untouchables. Villages are the seats of caste system" (Ambedkar)Dr Ambedkar was against the system of Panchayat Raj. The Panchayat Raj was a council of village elders, usually from upper castes. They had traditionally promoted the wealth and well-being of the upper castes and denied opportunities to the lower castes. They had

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condemned the lower castes to their wretched lot" (Ambedkar)The Dalits and the marginalized genders argue that if power is decentralized to small communities and small village societies, then the dominant classes like the upperclass, male rich existing in these societies, who have enjoyed favors from times immemorial, would occupy all powerful positions and cripple the down trodden and marginalized sections like the Dalits, women, children permanently. Gandhi opposed this move of Ambedkar. He forethought that if the human beings including marginalized sections are provided only resources in capitalist industrial societieswithout soul training and self control they would become licentious, cruel and pleasure seeking without community consciousness.

When communal award was sanctioned by the British government in 1932, Gandhi saw the award as a threat to this holistic individualism. His trust in holistic individualism felt sad about the communal award. Communal award meant people belonging to one religious community vote for a candidate of their own religion. All the national leaders felt that the British used this system to divide the people of India. It was part of divide and rule policy of the British. He declared fasting unto death in Yarvada jail. The national leaders persuaded Ambedkar to make an agreement with Gandhi for the cancellation of the award. And accordingly Ambedkar agreed for the Poona pact with lot of criticism. It is also said that Ambedkar feared that if he did not agree to Poona pact, then the upper caste Hindus would massacre the lower caste groups all over India. He wrote, "There was nothing noble in the fast. It was a foul and filthy act- the worst of coercion against a helpless people to give up their constitutional safeguards- and agree to live at the mercy of Hindus. It was a wile and wicked act" (Saravan)Perry Anderson wrote on Gandhi's move as a very calculated one. Perry Anderson writes, "There were mathematical calculations in

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Gandhi's mind. Gandhi feared, he asserts, that if untouchables were subtracted from the Hindu block in India, its predominance over the Muslim community would be weakened." (Anderson)

As a black man, Gandhi was against untouchablity right from the time he experienced illtreatment from the whites in South Africa. To remove these threats for holistic individualism, he dedicated his life to the removal of untouchability. He called untouchability as an evil. The abject life of Negros in a white dominated South Africa affected him so much that he did not want his down trodden people in India suffer the same. According to Gandhi, if Hinduism cannot purge itself of untouchability there is no point in keeping Hinduism as a religion.In 1938 Gandhi prayed and requested citizens of India that untouchability get perished, if this doesn't happen, it is far better that Hinduism perished. After Gandhi faced unexpected discordance within Hinduism from the downtrodden, he decided to dedicate himself to the upliftment of the marginalized sections. He called them gods children or Harijans.

For all evils of the world, Gandhi had a single panacea - all encompassing solution i.eSwarajor Self rule or self control. He was influenced by various examples of self control existing in Indian mythology right from SatyaHarishchandra, Bhaktakumbara to BhagwanShree Ram. These personalities are symbols of devotion and commitment to certain principles to the extent of sacrificing their lives. Such a commitment to principles would evoke certain soul force which would help them in practice of satyagraha and non violence. Opposite to pleasure seeking, indulgence and gratification, development of this self control or asceticism or transcendentalism among his citizens was ultimate goal of Mahatma Gandhi even beyond attaining political freedom in India from the British. Gandhi proposed self control and sacrifice for both the upper castes and lower castes for the eradication of untouchability. Gandhi disliked the apathy,

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laziness, dirt which was habituated by the untouchables. Gandhi said that all Harijans should invariably be asked to observe all the ordinary rules of cleanliness and they should assert themselves and nonviolently. He felt that nobody forced an untouchable to be a scavenger or a sweeper. He asks the untouchables to take the various examples of lower class people like Ramdas, Chaitanya, Kanaka Das who achieved great heights as saints by their commitment and devotion to their duty and God.

For the upper castes he asked the upper classes to declare themselves as untouchables and live also as such and he says " That will be a substantial and organic method of amalgamating the caste- Hindus and Harijans into one body of Hinduism. Harijans too adopt names which will never signify an untouchable, and this as the best way to get rid of untouchability" (Harijan). He recommends the upper classes families to adopt untouchable children in their villages. He himself adopted a small untouchable girl in his ashram. He called for the revision of all Puranas and Mahakavya's in India to be thoroughly revised to get rid of untouchability. He declared nonviolent movement against sanatanist to bring due regards for harijans. He writes, "Patience and gentleness should be exercised until the sanatanists heat melt." (Harijan) He goes to the extent of making the villages as socialist so that resources in the villages are equally divided among all the castes and communities.

Gandhi felt that the real remedy for this curse lies in chasing away the feeling of inferiority among the untouchables and feeling of superiority among the upper class Hindus. Everyone should be his own scavenger he declared. Gandhi compared the service of Bhangi with that of mother's. he writes, " A Bhangi does for the society what a mother does for her baby. A Bhangi can exist without a Brahmin but a Brahmin cannot exist without a Bhangi. If the Bhangi had

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been given due recognition as equal to that of a Brahmin, their inhabitants would have freed themselves from the ravages of the host of diseases caused by uncleanliness" (Harijan) ' A Bhangi should have through knowledge of the principles of sanitation, that presupposes a scientific knowledge of the requirements of his profession. He should consider it "Only as a sacred duty and should not dream of amassing wealth from it. The sweepers and scavengers hold the key to the health of every area in their pockets. Gandhi further said that it is open to anyone to be classified as untouchable. Not just the downtrodden and the marginalized.

During struggle for independence, thousands of princely states, kingdoms, royal families, communities, majority castes, classes were ready to do anything at Gandhi's call. When Indians were ready to sacrifice life for Gandhi's call, nothing was impossible in that ideal world. Many rich families had given the jewellery of their women at the call of Mahatma Gandhi for freedom from the British.This context was suitable and fertile for Gandhi's mental engineering of the world view of asceticism, transcendentalism to soak into the Indian masses.

Gandhi tried to convince these marginalized sections by proposing division of skills for genders, amalgamation of the Dalits with the upper classes etc. He offered women to take up the duties and jobs of nursing, homemaking, entertaining, teaching while he offered men to take up physicallystrenuous activities, military activities, transporting, marketing etc. Ultimately, these solutions could not convince these marginalized sections. They argued that the global capitalist economy would allow everyone to earn them livelihood according to one's capacity and not based on age old hierarchy of castes and communities in small village societies and communities.

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After Gandhi, the above ascetic world view is not easy to practice in the world of hedonism, pleasure seeking and machaivalism. Therefore Ambedkar put concrete special provisions, policies and programs into the constitution for the upliftment of marginalized classes. These concrete practices have made Indian mindset towards marginalized sections as a split one. If the practice of discrimination is unprofitable, the upper caste sections act as an organic Hindu religion, but at the personal sphere they are divided. The upper classes are not ready to get their girls and sons married to untouchables. Untouchability is still a malady of Indian society because of the vote bank politics of the political parties.

To sum up, Gandhi's world view of holistic individualism through asceticism, and transcendentalismin both upper classes and castes and the lower classes and castes becomes an excellent model for implementation in the post capitalist world if it accommodates the marginalized and the downtrodden on par with the dominant upperclass, rich, male in economic, cultural and political terms in small communities and societies. This accommodation may be through reservation system, redistribution of economic resources in the villages or positive sops incentives in the small community organization etc to the marginalized communities. This has not become a reality even after 70 years of Indian independence. Metamorphic structural changes in polity and economy are also necessary.

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