

“My fight against Untouchability, is a fight against the impure in Humanity.”

Untouchability – That’s what your mind says

-Swaitha Wesley

Untouchability is against the fundamental principles of humanity, it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseeable. These adjectives do not convey the full meaning of the thing itself. It is a crime for certain men, women and their children to touch, or to approach within stated distances, or to be seen by those who are called caste-Hindus.

Gandhiji was one amongst the first person to stand up against Untouchability. He publicly put the 'abolition' of **untouchability** as the essential prerequisite for India's true independence, whom he called Harijans, or “Children of God.”

Gandhi identified himself one amongst the untouchables. He had said, “if it were proved to me that [untouchability] is an essential part of Hinduism, I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself.” These were strong words, but the passion behind them sprang from Gandhi’s soul’s agony. He was really passionate on achieving his thoughts on treating them equally.

He strongly felt that if Caste system was removed, Untouchability would be removed. He would publically reject the idea of ‘High’ and ‘Low’ castes. Gandhi progressed further in his anti-untouchability drive by rejecting that the essence of the varna or the caste system by asserting that it was not determined by birth or heredity.

Gandhi did not like the idea of pursuing profession according to their caste or even marrying someone of your caste. He himself set an example for this. Starting with his grandfather, Gandhi states, his family had not been pursuing their hereditary duty over the last three generations that was assigned to them. Not only did he allow his son Ramdas to marry someone who was from a

different sub-caste but also allowed his other son Devadas to marry a girl who was from another varna altogether. Gandhi also married off his adopted daughter Lakshmi, who was an 'Untouchable', to a Brahmin boy.

Moreover, Gandhi tried to master many activities that were prohibited for his caste. He himself worked as a scavenger, a barber, a washerman, a cobbler, a tiller and a tailor – all 'unclean' works. He even forced his family to break pollution taboos by engaging them in shoemaking, leatherwork, cleaning of toilets – works profoundly 'polluting' to the 'caste Hindus'. He would invariably eat with people of different faiths and castes, including the 'Untouchables'. None of Gandhi's ashrams were built on the basic principle of the caste system or varnashrama dharma; and none of the caste restrictions were observed in his ashrams. From 1927 to 1932, he took up evidently the most contentious issue demanding from the 'caste Hindus' that the 'Untouchables' must have the same rights of entry in all the temples as the other Hindus. , managed to get the road next to the temple opened to all. In 1932, he went to the extent of undertaking a "fast unto death" over the question of opening the Guruvayur Temple, Malabar, for the 'Untouchables'. He was one amongst everyone, always fighting for what is deserved till his last breath.

At the end of the day, with all the issues going around; At the time of calamities, accident, emergency or trauma , we don't get affected on the basis of Caste, religion or color . At that moment , whoever is beside, it maybe a stranger or a friend or relative or enemy , it is that person who comes to our rescue. It is the term 'Humans' that help us; Humanity matters.....

"If it's out of your hands, it deserves freedom from your mind too."