

Unraveling Historical Knots in *Gandhi-Ambedkar* by Premanand Gajvee

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Abstract: *By examining the debate representation at the heart of Dalit discourse and identity through Gandhi and Ambedkar as occupying two extreme poles along the political, social, cultural, and religious axis, this paper shall analyse Premanand Gajvee's, a renowned Marathi Dalit Playwright, play **Gandhi-Ambedkar**. Gajvee's experimental rendition uniquely brings up the historical debate to feed the popular imagination and objectively looks at the two political leaders.*

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In the play *Gandhi-Ambedkar* Gajvee reconstructs two mavericks from India's political and social history and through their interface brings home the lost or often misread dynamics of caste politics in India. It is not simply a reconstruction of political debacles between Gandhi and Ambedkar but a personal space has been imagined in the process through which we understand two personalities as well stripped off their powerful aura and come out as humane figures fighting with their shortcomings and failures as well. Two central figures of the Dalit movement during the nationalist phase were Mahatma Gandhi and B. R. Ambedkar. If we closely look at the Mahar movement of the 20th century then these two figures contributed to the debate of Dalit discourse which was irrevocably going to shape the caste discourse nationally. Nagaraj in the essay "Self-Purification vs Self-Respect" studies the relationship between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Referring to their contests and clashes he mentions how each of them "continued to refer to the other as 'fool' and 'heretic' (not necessarily using these very words) till the end of their respective lives." (Nagaraj 43) If we look at Gajvee's *Kirwant* the fool in the play plays the role of an important interlocutor who interjects in between with comments, observations, criticism, and in fact becomes another self of their interiority which creates an interface for debate and self-debate.

Gajvee's objective representation once again brings to light the nuances of caste politics which powerfully engages the audience/readers. As he presents through their interface issues of caste, untouchability, legality, politics, culture, and religion the reworking of specific historic events dredge the existence of parallel worldviews of Dalits and Hindus respectively. Gajvee as a self-conscious writer aware of the politics of aesthetics maintains the autonomy of his art by revitalizing the debate of caste in a rounded manner not creating polarizing positions. It is true that both Gandhi and Ambedkar fought till the very end for the emancipation of unotuchbales though in very different ways so much so that their differences never reconciled. Gajvee deftly represents this side of their relationship but not by creating simple binaries between the two rather he imagines a central character in this play whose omniscience becomes revealing for them as well as the audience. The character of the Clown remains a constant companion for Gandhi and Ambedkar whose criticism makes them uneasy, force them to rethink, and reveal their true intentions regarding each other. The intervention not just remains within the structures of this form but the Clowns insightful comments and critique leaves many unanswered questions for its listeners outside the play prodding them to reinvent Ambedkarite politics. Ambedkar's major contribution to the Dalit movement has been significant as he ardently worked to unify low-caste people across the nation politically, culturally, and religiously. In several of his speeches and essays he had directly or indirectly addressed and attacked caste Hindus and the Hindu religion, the bedrock

of caste system. Gajvee staggeringly represents these ideas for the contemporary masses to revive engagement with Ambedkar's ideas that go beyond the identity politics.

As the Clown ends his first long monologue leaving the audience with uneasy questions pertaining to nation, nationalist allegiance, land, civil rights and so on suggesting the precarious notions of these concepts in a society that venerates a system bred on discrimination Gandhi and Ambedkar appear as their first interface begins. The location is Mani Bhawan in the year 1931. As Ambedkar enters Gandhi is perturbed as he is aware of Ambedkar's discontentment with him on the issue of caste and untouchability. Feeling homeless in a country despite their due claims to call it as their own Ambedkar posits how the Hindu caste system has estranged the untouchable community in their own land and created a hostile environment. He states much to Gandhi's chagrin, "Nobody with any respect for himself will think of this country and the Hindu religion as his. This country has committed such an unforgivable crime against us that even if we turn traitors..." (Gajvee 95) Ambedkar stops short of completing the statement that ostensibly depicts how his struggle against caste is seen anti-national.

Gandhi tactically tries to mitigate Ambedkar's hurt by stating that the nation acknowledges Ambedkar's effort during the first Round Table Conference to demand rights for self-rule ousting the colonial regime. Christophe Jaffrelot mentions how Ambedkar initially was against the separate electorates and only when he realized that the reform of Hindu society is impossible he advocated separate electorate plea. Also pivotal to note that Ambedkar wrote *The Untouchable and the Pax Britannica* on the eve of First Round Table conference and made best of his efforts to extract maximum gains for the untouchable community. This essay elucidates on the role of government and how it failed to address the caste issues. In this essay Ambedkar argues that to break caste, inter dining and inter marriage is essential and points towards the fact of British government's indifference towards the issue of caste bred criminality. While the rebuttal by the British rested on the fact that they never engineered caste so to say and that it is a part of Hindu culture Ambedkar nevertheless started seeing the importance of legal measures to fight caste. Ambedkar also emerged as a Dalit subject marked by his acquiring of political subjectivity which works in opposition to a Hindu framework. He acquired a sense of otherness to project a revolt. By the virtue of being a Dalit subject, this subject position is also reminiscent of humiliation and down-troddenness, of 'broken men'. By internalizing resistance it also signifies defiance and pride. The shaping of a Dalit subject position then is not just limited to expression of discrimination and pain but also acknowledging the fact of being humiliated or insulted.

Pax Britannica also gives evidence how Ambedkar was against the policies of the British. On the one hand he accuses them for not doing anything against the caste which can be seen as a tactical critique of the empire as he was able to attend the Round table conference. He was at the same time looking for concession from the empire. But Ambedkar might also have failed to realize the fact that the British had no moral obligation to speak or act on the behalf of the untouchables. While this move could also be tactical to push the government to enact his demand for separate electorate critics such as Arun Shourie has demeaned Ambedkar for being a stooge of the British government which stands a highly disparaging assessment of Ambedkar's motives. In *Worshipping False God* Shourie observes how Ambedkar did not contribute to the freedom struggle and his depiction of Ambedkar

rather turns out to be of as a self-centered man seeking to yield material gains from the British.

Ambedkar's original ideas and position regarding the British policies vis-à-vis his stance on caste and Hinduism got mired in the game of blaming and shaming. The fact that Ambedkar's core ideas have not comfortably sit with the functioning of state politics is a reality which the contemporary society and politics still attests. Either he is not nationalist enough or his ideas alarmingly threaten the complacent, exploitative capitalistic functioning of the state, for instance the recent incident of de-recognizing of Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle of IIT Madras is a case in point which faced accusation for spreading hatred and dividing communities. Arundhati Roy's sound assessment of the entire incident raises pertinent points. She states in a press statement:

At a time when Hindutva organizations and media outlets are outrageously celebrating Ambedkar the man who publicly denounced Hinduism, as though he is their very own man, at a time when the Hindu Nationalist's campaign of Ghar wapsi (a revamped version of the Arya Samaj's 'Shuddhi' program) has been launched to get Dalits to return to the "Hindu fold", why is it that when Ambedkar's real followers use the name or likeness of Ambedkar they get murdered like Surekha Bhotmange's family in Khairlanji?¹ (Roy Web)

By attacking the state machinery the APSC has indeed been 'anti-nationalist' for harming the interest of those in power and, "It is because they have seen through this charade and have put their finger on the most dangerous place. They have made the connection between Corporate Globalization and the perpetuation of caste." (Roy Web).

The appropriation of Ambedkar by the dominant religious groups and the fact that his radical ideas are mellowed down and read out of context to suit the purpose of the majority remains disturbingly endorsed. The culturalist movement initiated by Ambedkar always threatened the Hindu majority group making him a traitor in the eyes of the state. Appadurai's assertion with respect to such movements shows its impact on the society and the vulnerability of those who spearhead and function them. He says:

When identities are produced in a field of classification, mass mediation, mobilization, and entitlement dominated by politics at the level of the nation-state, however, they take cultural difference as their *conscious* object. These movements can take a variety of forms: they can be directed primarily towards self-expression, autonomy, and efforts at cultural survival, or they can be principally negative in form, characterized by racism, and the desire to dominate or eliminate other groups. This is a key distinction because culturalist movements for autonomy and dignity involving long-dominated groups (such as African-American in the United States and Dalits in India) are often tendentiously tarred with the same brush as those they oppose, as being somehow racist or antidemocratic. (Appadurai 147)

The first phase of Ambedkar's political struggle after he returned to India was tinted by Gandhian liberalism. He initiated Temple-entry movements in Maharashtra and was

¹ Khairlanji massacre is a reference to the 2006 murder incident of four family members of Bhotmange's family of Dalit community by the politically dominant Kunbi caste in Maharashtra (Source Wikipedia). Ananand Teltumbde in *The Persistence of Caste* through example of this incident suggests how caste still persists. "Teltumbde demonstrates how caste has shown amazing resilience-surviving feudalism, capitalist industrialization and a republican Constitution-to still be alive and well today, despite all denial under neoliberal globalization." (source Navayana.org)

inspired by Gandhi's weapon of satyagrah to fight oppression. In the play Gajvee represents this issue and we see Ambedkar engineering the Kalaram Temple Satyagrah. Gajvee shows Ambedkar's annoyance over Gandhi's criticism regarding his political move hinting at Gandhi's desire to solely address the issue of untouchability. His remark to Ambedkar illustrates this as he says,

Dr Ambedkar, I have been grappling with the problem of untouchables from even before you were born. And here you stand telling me that my mind needs cleansing? In fact the problem of untouchables belongs to social and religious conference. Despite this, I have introduced the question into the agenda of the Congress... For me this problem is more important, closer to my heart, than even the Hindu-Muslim question. (Gajvee 96)

One of the crucial points that Gandhi raises here is treating the issue of untouchability as a social and religious problem and not a political one which Ambedkar has done undoubtedly. According to Gandhi untouchability was only a sinful practice started by a few corrupt power-hungry Brahmins that seeped into the caste system which is by essence is pure and unalloyed by discriminatory practices. The nature of Gandhi's liberal politics partially opened doors for the untouchables treating them as deprived, naïve, and passive subjects who needed help of upper caste reformers to fight this system. Gandhi's project was a spiritual and religious one and sought to integrate the untouchables within the Hindu fold treating them paternalistically. In Gandhi's worldview the question of political and economic rights was non-existent. His spiritual base discredited the materiality of the caste discourse. Ambedkar understood this fact early in his career and therefore he never came to a consensus with Gandhi on the issue of caste system. Gajvee reverberates this interface in the play as Ambedkar comments out of angst, "Souls like you are incapable of raising the level of society, because you are like fleeting illusion. That's why we do not wish to rely on great souls like you. Your pity is not going to help us. Untouchables are, without doubt, a separate and independent community like the Sikhs and the Muslims." (Gajvee 97)

Gandhi's prompt reply that untouchables belong to the Hindu community is a clear defensive to safeguard Hindu culture and ideology. He refuses to accept the idea that the untouchables are a different community having different cultural tradition and hence distinct from the Hindus. If we look at the context of Gandhi-Ambedkar debate it becomes clear that Gandhi considered himself as the sole representative of the untouchable community. Jaffrelot makes this crucial point as well in *Analyzing and Fighting Caste* suggesting how it perturbed Gandhi when the issue of separate electorates was raised by Ambedkar. He states, "When Ambedkar asked Gandhi what he thought of the debates of the first Round Table, the Mahatma replied that he was 'asked the political separation of Untouchable from Hindu', a barely veiled criticism of separate electorates." (Jaffrelot 57) In the play Gandhi states, "By raising the questions of untouchables you managed to obstruct the main agenda of the conference...there was no need for a second representative of untouchables when I had been their true representative even before you." (Gajvee 97)

Gandhi's incomprehensibility regarding Ambedkar's position on caste system was fairly limited as he treated the matter a purely religious one. For him the onus was to be on the caste Hindus to alleviate such a practice as they have started it in the first place. He sought for a cleansing process for the caste Hindus who could exonerate themselves of this horrendous sin. D.R. Nagaraj in *The Flaming Feet* evocatively exerts how Gandhi masterminded this whole framework to end the practice of untouchability. Gandhi's politics

of self-purification triggered the politics of the revolt against untouchability. Keeping caste out of purview Gandhian movement “had placed a great deal of moral responsibility on the caste Hindu self. A profound ethical halo would envelop the caste Hindu, which would look almost spiritual.” (Nagaraj 45) Gajvee develops on similar thread when Gandhi says to Ambedkar that untouchability, “...is a blot on the Hindu faith and it is for those who see themselves as high caste to erase it.” (Gajvee 98) The interchange comes to a bitter end with Ambedkar cautioning Gandhi of dissolving the political purpose of the movement and coming in between the liberation of the untouchables. As Ambedkar leaves the Clown enters and pesters Gandhi with questions. The Clown shows Gandhi the vulnerability of his position in front of Ambedkar who has strongly shaken him mentally and affected his image of mahatma. He also persuades Gandhi into thinking about what could be done to counter Ambedkar’s claims. As he leaves he reminds Gandhi once again of how powerful Ambedkar has become and opposing his potent vision and theory is difficult.

As a reprieve from the highhanded politics Ambedkar wittily says to the Clown that his medium of art lends him an uncommon and exclusive status which is powerfully able to hold audiences’ attention towards any idea or issue. Ambedkar accepts the fact that the power to reach out to the masses is a big advantage to him and states, “One game of yours gets results than ten of my speeches don’t.” (Gajvee 99) Realizing the potential of theatrical forms Ambedkar makes potent remarks as he further comments, “I know how art understands the workings of the human heart and assails the very core of it. The tamashas are still alive in our villages, the jalsa and khele with their clowns committed to the cause of social education. They launch such undercover attacks that...” (Gajvee 100) This gives rise to a number of concerns here I think. First of all there is an embedded effort by the writer to tease out the argument of how aesthetics and politics work in the contemporary times. Secondly the most important place remains that of the audience/readers whose exposure to artistic forms is revealing which further gives dimension to a work of art. The former argument takes us to the debate which remains crux of this research that whether both aesthetic autonomy and principles of social commitment can be maintained by a writer whose approach is indubitably political as we have seen and yet someone who is at the very outset rejects social or political titles regarding his place in this discourse. Gajvee undeniably redefines ways through his innovative dramatic tropes that without succumbing to the firm tenets of Dalit literature as formulated by a number of Dalit theorists one can still be political without losing aesthetic autonomy. His evident deviance from the stock ways of representing Dalit subject position through form and content also addresses the non-Dalit audience which becomes an essential feature of contemporary literature bringing varied concerns under its ambit. By not targeting a specific set of audience Gajvee’s works in fact reaches out to everyone to disturb the complacency unwittingly demanding renewal of beliefs and ideas. Gajvee here also redefines the way in which tamasha or jalsa are perceived by the society. Ambedkar himself at one point suggested that the low caste must leave such practices that are markers of their low caste status. In the book *Indian Folk Theatres* Juli Hollander remarks how for the castes like Mangs and Mahars in Maharashtra such artistic representations indelibly became part of their lives. She quotes Gajvee who says:

As for folk theatre forms, Dalits have naturally wanted to distance themselves from those. Dr. Ambedkar had called upon his followers to shed their old practices; and this included the Tamasha. The women who danced and sang in Tamashas and the men who played the musical instruments were, as often as not, from Dr.

Ambedkar's caste. In their eyes, now, the Tamasha was not so much an outlet for their artistic talents as a means of exploitation which they were only too happy to leave behind. (Hollander 84)

Gajvee's redefinition of such artistic forms and how they can be powerful means of activism and social justice coming through Ambedkar in the above dialogue indeed works through reworking with his ideas. As long as the integrity of such forms and their content is maintained not subscribing to kitschy elements these mediums for Gajvee can powerfully impact the masses in a unique way.

The second point is more complex to deliberate on as audiences'/readers' response or effect on them cannot be quantified. But it is fair to pay attention to the kind of Dalit subjects these political speeches/essays and artistic works intend to address. Ambedkar's life as a public intellectual was entirely invested to fight for the rights of the untouchables. His works including various speeches, essays and books were not just academic in nature but he was importantly textualizing the caste theorizing it so in order to fight it. Himself never a good orator Ambedkar paid minute attention to written drafts before final presentation. Valerian Rodrigues testifies this aspect of Ambedkar's personality in the Introduction to *The Essential Writings of B R Ambedkar*. In opposition to Gandhi Ambedkar's oratorical and political acumen was less in degree despite his strong rationalistic approach critiquing Gandhi's sentimental and inadequate understanding of the position of untouchables. Ambedkar understood the gullibility of the low-caste masses and how intrinsically religion oriented their mind and lifestyle was. He was helpless in this regard with his wife Ramabai, for instance they had diverging viewpoints regarding Pandharpur temple as Jaffrelot notes.

Before converting to Buddhism it took Ambedkar almost his entire life to think of choosing an alternate religion for the untouchables. He attended various meetings with non-Hindu religious group but ultimately refused to convert to any other religion that was a religion of book or had a book of law and subscribed to various customs to be followed. Moreover, Ambedkar realized how other religions were equally discriminating on the basis of caste and therefore this paved way for Ambedkar's magnificently crafted book *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, published posthumously. Ambedkar not just wrote the book but crafted a new religion in itself that was evolutionary in nature for every individual who choose to adopt it insulated to the hostile and discriminatory practice existing in society. Moreover, a new religion gave new identity to the untouchables ultimately making them religiously and culturally distinct from the Hindus. It was Ambedkar who had once said that religion was the opium of the masses re-writing famous Marxist dictum, then why did he go ahead and realize the importance of a religious identity. For Nagaraj it was an acknowledgement of Gandhian viewpoint and how pivotal the role of religious identity played in the culturalist movement began by Ambedkar. Unlike E.V. Ramswamy Naicker, Ambedkar did not see atheism as a solution to this problem. It is fair to point out that Ambedkar was aware of the limited perspective of the untouchable community who had been oppressed since ages, mostly illiterate, and hegemonised by caste Hindu ideologues and so the choice of new religion was also tactical. But what value could Ambedkar's written word held out for the untouchables then if it were to be addressed to a majority of illiterate untouchables. Certainly his writings demanded acute awareness and literariness from the readers therefore it also suggests the need of instructors or a coterie of translators of Ambedkar's message for the illiterate untouchable masses. Coming back to the argument raised above about the medium through which an artist can articulate his message and reading Gajvee's implication in this regard,

what Ambedkar comments above as a response to the Clown reflects the issues discussed to open the forum between politics, art, and its consumption. The limitation that Ambedkar's position suffered is seen here to be supplemented by the imaginative work of art that has the power to connect with the masses across social, cultural, and political barriers.

As the conversation between the Clown and Ambedkar takes a comic turn Ambedkar justifies his opposition to Gandhi's views. Giving a subalternist view of historiography he says, "The hands that beg also have the strength to hold a cane. Think of Shidnak, Kainak and their deeds. My people's hands gifted the Peshwas another Panipat in the Koregaon battle." (Gajvee 100) The Clown accuses how the untouchables had been anti-nationalist who served in the British army but Ambedkar continues to put his point forth suggesting how the untouchables never had a country. He reminds the Clown how Gandhi himself supported the British in World War 2.

Ambedkar saw political solution as the only solution to the problem of untouchables and Jaffrelot and Zelliott emphasize this fact in their study. His political move was condemned by Gandhi. The struggle for social and political liberty and at the same to culturally define their position remains integral to Dalit discourse. Ambedkar tried to revoke the hegemonic authorities of the caste-Hindus that gave prime importance to religion and spirituality. Such polarizing positions defined the conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi. Nagaraj comments in this regard:

Babasaheb defined the problem in terms of building an independent political identity for Dalits in the structures of social, economic, and political power, whereas for Gandhiji it was purely a religious question, and that too an internal one for Hinduism. (Nagaraj 35)

As the setting shifts in the play, it is 1932 and Gandhi has announced fast unto death to demand revocation of communal award granted by the British to the untouchable community. Seeing Gandhi fast the Clown promptly remarks to him, "Is it for inner cleansing or a cover-up for your political failure? You behave in such incomprehensible ways sometimes." (Gajvee 102) While this makes Gandhi troubled yet it remains unfathomable to him how he has come in between the justice for the untouchables. The allegiance to the Hindu dharma blinds him. The Clown does not stop here and claims further to him, "You are the champion of truth, yet you cannot accept truth. You have started this fast out of fear that Dr Ambedkar will bring your political prestige into dust." (Gajvee 103) But for Gandhi his ultimate will remains to render himself in saving Hindu Dharma. As retort he points out how even after the accursed practice of untouchability the untouchables have remained within the Hindu-fold and goes onto say that, "This means there is some secret power in the Hindu faith which I cannot explain. Indeed I am convinced that the fifth varna is an integral part of the larger Hindu family." (Gajvee 104) On the Gandhian politics Nagaraj aptly poists:

The paradox was that Gandhiji challenged and sought to shake the very foundation of Hindu society, but Congress Harijans did not pose any real threat to the social and cultural establishment. The awed leadership remained pious Hindus by and large. (Nagaraj 47)

In *Caste of Mind* Nicholas Dirks suggests that caste is a colonial invention and that earlier there were no hard and fast rules pertaining to caste rules which relegated a section people to an inferior status. With colonial rule caste line became re-inscribed and regimented. The census hardened or ossified the caste binaries. But on the other hand this system also for the first time saw the homogenization of untouchables into one category by making them a

social category capable of deriving a political identity. The colonial apparatus brought to the fore the potential of Depressed Classes and Ambedkar saw its revolutionary impact vividly. As once the untouchables begin to see themselves as a different lobby they can unify themselves collectively. Gandhi saw the danger in such identity formation which could split Hinduism. Therefore he tried to assuage the pain of the untouchables by being sensitive towards them and fighting against untouchability. Gandhi in the similar vein replied to Ambedkar's *Annihilation of Caste* depriving his own arguments of logic and emphasizing on the Hindu culture as an organic whole of which untouchables were an indivisible part.

The ultimate fallout of the Poona pact had irrevocably severed Ambedkar from the Hindu fold. This was a phase when Ambedkar had already started thinking of choosing an alternative religious identity. Gajvee remarkably reconstructs Ambedkar's speech that expresses his anguish and disgust with Hinduism. Ambedkar had understood how religion makes a man helpless and prohibits any individual development. As Ambedkar completes his speech Gandhi is shown to be perturbed more than ever before. Ambedkar sharply attacks him and says, "How is entering a temple going to help us better our condition? Now we have only one goal in mind to destroy the four Varnas. I want to destroy the four Varnas and create a single religion based on humanity and humanism. If I cannot achieve that, we will not only give up temples but the Hindu religion itself." (Gajvee 108) But the attack not just ends here as Ambedkar painfully confesses to the Clown how the infection of graded inequality within the fifth varna is responsible for misleading the Dalit movement. There were many factors that led to such a setback. Jaffrelot at length mentions the reform movements even headed by Dalits were not anti-caste or anti-Hindu fitting into M.N.L Srinivasan's theory of Sanskritization and Brahminization. Ambedkar himself adopted such a trajectory initially but saw its futility.

Gajvee also brings in the aspect of mysticism which was innate to Gandhian model of thinking. Ambedkar states in the play, "Inner voice! The magic of this voice has bewitched even the finest minds of the country. When this inner voice begins to hum and sing mysteriously the most knowledgeable people become hypnotized, so what can we expect from the ordinary people? The spectacle of the inner voice can always be staged to draw crowds; but it won't help society move even a fraction of an inch forward. The day people discover this will be a happy day for this country." (Gajvee 112)

As opposed to this outlook the conversation between the Clown and Gandhi highlights the fact about Gandhi's orientation towards literacy and education. Quite to the Clown's shock Gandhi admits how the notions of inner voice, religion, and self-respect are superior to knowledge. The spiritual knowledge and man's religious notions must be pre-defined and shaped before he can attain secular knowledge. By giving peak into Gandhi's personal life the Clown reveals how Gandhi never felt the need to teach his children. He says to the clown, "When it comes to choosing between the knowledge of letters and self-respect, self-respect wins each time." (Gajvee 113) The Clown terrified by such a remark foretells, "If that is done armies of ignorant illiterates will be raised in this land." (Gajvee 113) However Ambedkar was of view that social revolution must precede religious revolution and this is explicated well in *Annihilation of Caste*.

Gandhi's staunch denial of bringing in the material aspects of Dalit emancipation struggle makes his politics quite problematic. His satyagrah of the 'inner voice' lends the entire revolutionary project mystical subscribing primarily to conformist notion of Hinduism. His constant emphasis on the religious and spiritual essence of life confuses the Clown. His

understanding of the untouchable project remains deeply religious and the answer to it also remains in Hindu religion. He states to the Clown, "I took an oath that I would dress only in a loincloth for as long as my brothers were not fully dressed. Even the cloth I wore had to be woven from yarn spun on the charkha. This loincloth, my rosary and Ram's name on my lips—they are all the same." (Gajvee 114) Gandhi's prime importance given to village economy overwhelms other social and political aspects of emancipation. Nagaraj in *The Flaming Feet* once again sees Gandhian village worldview and suggest that for a reformed revolutionary spirit it must be understood with Ambedkarite skepticism.

Even the Clown remain dubious of such narrow perspective by unapologetically claiming to Gandhi that, "For you the charkha is the string of beads for chanting Ram's name. But I doubt whether chanting Ram's name will save this country." (Gajvee 115) If Gandhi awaits the return of Ram's kingdom then the Clown asks some relevant in this regard. He says,

The kingdom of Ram is a state that belonged to a particular time aeons ago. Times have changed. How can the kingdom of Ram come into being now? Can we turn back the wheel of time? If the attempt is made, stubbornly, someone like me would still have a question. What will the Ram in your kingdom be like? Will he be fully clothed, adequately fed and have the protection of at least a hut if not a house? What will your Ram be like, tell me? One who takes care of Sita or one who falls victim to a dhobi's word? One who gives Shambuka the right to study or one who champions the rule of brahmins?" (Gajvee 115)

Such pertinent questions indubitably establish the fact how a Hindu imagined nation or society fails to give a sense of community to other sections of society who are culturally and religiously distinct. Can a Hindu structure of history, myth, rituals, and traditions be able accommodate, respect, let exist communities who do not subscribe to them? Can Gandhi's revival of village economy is sufficient enough to address the diverse needs of people in the world that is constantly changing under a global capitalistic framework? Though Gandhi fails to answer the Clown's questions the discourse nevertheless expands the meaning of Dalit movement in India bringing in multifarious aspects of political, economic, and cultural living under the impact of modernity.

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