

## Constituent Assembly Debate on Untouchability

Constituent Assembly debates are very important sources of material for the UPSC exam. In this article, we bring you the highlights of the Constituent Assembly debates on the topic of untouchability for the [IAS exam](#) polity, governance, and social issues segments.

### CA Debate on Untouchability

The Constituent Assembly Debate on Draft Article 11 (Article 17) started on 29th November 1948. Draft Article 11 was about the removal of Untouchability. The then Article 11 is Article 17 of the present Indian Constitution. **Mr. Naziruddin Ahmad** moved an amendment that -

*“That for article 11, the following article be substituted*

*No one shall on account of his religion or caste be treated or regarded as an “untouchable”; and its observance in any form may be made punishable by law.”*

- He moved the above amendment because the word “Untouchability” has no legal meaning.
- He clarified that the word “Untouchability” is not only applied for human beings but it is applied for a variety of things.
- The said amendment was negated because the framers were not interested in substituting the above aspects.
- Mr. Muniswamy Pillai wanted the abolition of Untouchability. He wanted that the abolition of Untouchability must be included in Article 11 of the Constitution.

**Dr. Mono Mohan Das** was of the opinion that the removal of Untouchability is an important [fundamental right](#).

- At the same time, he explained that any sort of special privileges and safeguards must not be given to minority communities.
- According to him, the said Article was to save most of the people from humiliation and disgrace.
- Unlike other countries, he wanted the practice of Untouchability to be made a punishable crime under the Constitution.
- He explained his point of view by quoting the words of Mahatma Gandhi i.e. “I do not want to be reborn, but if I am reborn, I wish that I should be born as a Harijan, as an untouchable, so that I may lead a continuous struggle, a lifelong struggle against the oppressions and indignities that have been heaped upon these classes of people.”
- He further added that the word “Swaraj” will become meaningless as long as Untouchability is not abolished.

**Mr. Santanu Kumar Das** proposed for the removal of social inequality.

- He demanded framing laws in this direction.

**Professor K.T. Shah** made a suggestion that the definition of Untouchability is nowhere given in the Constitution.

- Thus, a question arises as to what constitutes Untouchability.
- He said there could be problems in the future for understanding the term Untouchability.
- He suggested making corrections i.e. to use a different word instead of using the word “Untouchability”.

- According to him, if a person is placed under disability for a period of time, he is treated as an untouchable.
- His suggestion was not accepted by [Dr. B.R. Ambedkar](#).
- Thereafter, the motion regarding Article 11 was adopted and it was added to the Constitution.

The framers of the Constitution wanted to abolish Untouchability on account of religion or caste. They wanted that Untouchability on grounds of religion or caste must be totally prohibited. The framers revealed their faiths in the great reforms carried by Mahatma Gandhi, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, etc. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also showed his faith in the abolition of Untouchability in a complete manner. They wanted the said social inequality to be removed completely. They wanted Untouchability in any form to be made punishable by law.

