

Nationalism in India: In the Mirror of Past and Present

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Abstract:

In the present world politics, Nationalism is the most burning issue. Actually, Nationalism is love of own nation and willingness to sacrifice for it. As a socio cultural product, Nationalism is the feeling of oneness among the people living in a particular nation. It brings people with similar thoughts and experiences together. Citizens in a nation can bond through their joint love of their own nation, which gives people pride about their own nation, and helps to do better than all other nations in the world. Generally it is assumed that, Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation, when they discover some unity that binds them together. This sense of collective belonging came partly through the experience of united struggles. In the context of India, Nationalism is a political ideology that has originated and evolved among Indian people during British rule. However, some scholars and political theorist believes that nationalism was prevailed even in ancient India. History witnesses about this fact that huge amount of blood had been shed on this land for the love and affection of nation. Therefore, Nationalism is said to be a strong feelings for one's own country. The present research article puts some light on the issue of Nationalism in India, on the basis of available literature, especially in the mirror of past and present.

Key words: Indian Nationalism, Nation, Nationalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word, 'Nationalism' means a universal feeling based on shared cultural norms, traditional institutions, racial heritage and a common historical experience. Along with this sense of shared identity, it is a collective desire to maintain one's own cultural, social and political values independent of outside control. A strong sense of Nationalism bound people to join together to form their own government without outside interference. Nationalism is like a religion in sense of psychological sentiments and feeling. It is a global term which is related to both mind and heart of the people and it is subjective, a condition of mind and a way of feeling, thinking and living. It is also a spiritual possession and instinct of human political behaviour (Singh, 1995). So, in a nut shell, it is a sense of identity with the nation, just like the family, is held together by a sense of kinship.

Psychologically, Nationalism can be explained as the need of individual to 'protect' his or her own 'sense of self'. Nationalism gives psychological security and meaning to an individual overwhelmed by the complexities and dislocation of modern industrialized society. Nationalism, thus is based on fear and the need to find sanctuary in conformity, homogeneity, and uniformity. It is an atavistic impulse that is based in self-prevention. Patriotism is a prerequisite factor for developing sense of nationalism. Yet it has also been argued that nationalism is a combination of patriotism and xenophobia (a dislike for outsiders), it is a 'process that is inclusive and exclusive at the same time' (Bandyopadhyay, 2009). However, (Gries, 2004), defines nationalism as 'any behaviour designed to restore, maintain, or advance public images of that community'. Nationalism has been most divisive in today's world. So, a proper sense of Nationalism must need to develop national identity and loyalty, among its citizens.

According to Berlin (1979), nationalism has been one of the greatest social and political phenomena of the last two centuries. It is very likely to remain a permanent feature of our world for the foreseeable future. Generally it is assumed that, Nationalism spreads when people begin to believe that they are all part of the same nation, when they discover some unity that binds them together. This sense of collective belonging came partly through the experience of united struggles. But there were also a variety of cultural processes through which nationalism captured people's imagination. History and fiction, folklore and songs, popular prints and symbols, all played a part in the making of nationalism. Nationalism is a long historical process which cannot be undone. It is rooted in man's gregariousness and his tribal instinct (Chaturvedi, 2005; Singh, 1995). In a real sense, nationalism is a national spark residing in the heart and mind of each civilized citizen. This spark of nationalism can be developed into a great flame by fanning through national symbol, songs, pride and glory. Once the feeling of nationalism is aroused, it crosses all the barriers and enables the individual to sacrifice anything on the altar of patriotism. History witnesses the fact that huge amount of blood had been shed on this planet for the love and affection of nation (Singh, 1995). The world famous revolutions like, The American Revolution (1776-83) and The French Revolution (1789-99), are the best examples of sprit of Nationalism. Hence, Nationalism is 'simultaneously universal and particular' in character (Goswani, 2004)

2. NATIONALISM IN INDIAN

Indian nationalism asserts that the Indian is a nation and it promotes the cultural unity of the Indians. In a general sense, it comprises political and social movements and sentiment inspired by a love for Indian culture, language and history, and a sense of pride of India and to be the Indian

people. Nationalism clearly became the principal basis for the organization of Indian civilization. The features of India had been remade by sense of nationalism. According to, Parashar (1996), along with some writers, J. L. Nehru also think that nationalism was prevailed even in ancient India.

Historically, in modern India, Nationalism is an effect of continuous deprivation and misrule by the British rulers. The British ruled India to promote their own interests. Eventually the peasants, the artisans and the workers realised that they had no political rights and virtually nothing was being done for their intellectual and cultural development. The educated and elite Indians also realised that economic exploitation by Britain was only increasing India's poverty and deprivation. Consequently, the majority of Indians realized that their interests were being sacrificed to those of British interests and prosperity. Thus, very slowly by gradually the anti-imperialist movement arose and developed in India in the form of Nationalism. The Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj did a lot for creating a national feeling among the citizens of India, which ultimately became the foundation for the development of nationalism (Singh, 1995). Some of the major responsible fact for grew up Nationalist sentiments among the general people of India at that time were as follows.

2.1. The Divide and Rule Policy of British - After the Great Revolt of 1857 the British Government followed a policy of Divide and Rule. First, it seeks the support of the Zamindars, Rulers of Princely States and other conservative sections of Indian society. The English educated class considered it the true representative of the Indian people. It, therefore, wanted more representation in the Legislative Councils and the same rights in public that the British nationals enjoyed in public services. The British rulers regarded India as a British colony. They wished to reserve the right of administration for themselves. Lord Ripon wanted the educated

class to support British rule in India while Lord Lytton sought the support of the conservative elements in society. Thus the imperialist policy of the British Government based on the principle of Divide and Rule of Indians led to the rise of anti-imperialist feelings in India. According to Hechter (2000), nationalism arose in India during the early twentieth century due to a shift in British rule from indirect to more direct, increasing the demand of local people for national sovereignty.

2.2. The English Educated Indians - The educated young men who know English were informed about the struggle of the people of Italy and Greece against foreign domination in their countries. Consequently, they got inspiration from the revolutions in France and America. When a uniform system of education was introduced in India it helped to evolve a common goal and uniform approach to the political leaders of the different regions. Although the English educated class was a minority of the whole population of India but its influence and leadership has mould public opinion as the newspapers, educational institutions and the advocates of the legal courts were all greatly influenced by the opinion of this group. The English education up to the end of the 19th century was confined to the upper and middle classes of society. Their views had become now became popular, and as a result the English education helped in lessening the traditional obstacles in the progress of the country. Patriotism and the feeling for liberty were not the gifts of English education. They pervaded the whole country even before English education was introduced. But English education helped evolving a new direction in the form of establishing a parliamentary form of government, which had been in existence in England long before its introduction in India, ultimately that results as a catalyst to arose the sense of nationalism among Indians.

2.3. The Media and Press - The media in the form of newspapers also, contributed a good deal to the development of nationalism in India. After the great revolt of 1857 the government tried to control these newspapers. The government prepared a report on Native Newspapers and tried to control its expansion. But the number of newspapers continued to increase and they became a very good medium of spreading ideas about various social and political rights among the common people in India. In West Bengal and Maharashtra these newspapers criticized the government policies. The government tried to put restrictions on these newspapers as they brought various problems such as injustice of the administration, racial discrimination, economic exploitation of Indians, autocratic style of administration etc. to the notice of the common Indian people. They expressed the opinion that the British rule in India was resulting in the moral, economic and intellectual degeneration of Indians. Lord Lytton got Vernacular Press Act of 1878 passed to check the growing criticism of government measures. But the press and the newspapers became more active after 1878 and the people protested against this measure by organizing meetings and submitting memoranda to the government and the members of British Parliament. Hence, the media and press of that time contributed much in development of sense of nationalism.

2.4. Nationalist Literature - Nationalist literature in the form of novels, essays and patriotic poetry also played an important role in arousing nationalism in India. For example, the novel Ananda Math by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was a source of great inspiration to all the nationalist leaders. The national song Vande-matram was a great awakening for the society. Other prominent nationalist writers, that contributed much by their nationalist literatures were Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali, Vishnu Shastri Chiplukar in Marathi, Subramanya Bharati in Tamil, Baratendu Harish

Chandra in Hindi and Allama Iqbal in Urdu. The famous lines of Allama Iqbal, "*Mazhab nahin sikhata aapas mein bair rakhna, hindi hai ham batan hai Hindustan hamara*" become the icon of nationalism in Indian.

2.5. The Political Associations - As early as 1830 the *Zamindars* of Bengal organized themselves into a Landholder's Society. They protested against the Act that empowered government to take in its possession all rent-free lands. Soon after, three political associations namely British Indian Association in Calcutta (1851), Madras Native Association in Madras (1852) and Bombay Association in Bombay (1852) were established. These Associations submitted memoranda to the British Government on contemporary political problems. But the government did not accept any of the suggestions of these Associations. In 1876 Surendra Nath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose organized the Indian Association. In Western India Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was organized in 1870. It contributed a good deal in creating sense of nationalism among the people in Maharashtra. As early as 1866 the East India Association was organized in London. It tried to let the people of England and the members of British Parliament know about the problems of Indians. So, ultimately these political associations twist the thoughts of the Indian towards their own nationalism.

2.6. The Poverty in India - All the farmers, artisans, craftsmen and later the factory workers were reduced to poverty on account of the economic policies of the British Government in India. Dadabhai Naoraji proved how British rule had resulted in the Drain of Wealth from India to Britain and according to him this was the real cause of poverty of India. It was the result of free trade policy followed by the British Government that failed to prove the interest of Indian artisans and craftsmen.

As a result of above discussed facts people expressed a desire to establish and maintain a self-governing political system. This has been act as a dominant social force in creation of modern and independent India. Therefore, Indian nationalism is the nationalism that asserts that the India as a nation and promotes the cultural unity. In a general sense, it comprises political and social movements and sentiment inspired by a love for Indian culture, language and history, and a sense of pride of India and the Indian people. So, sense of nationalism is the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governing political entity, which involves the desire to have a sovereign political community that has been most divisive in today's world.

Given the current world situation, it is certainly no surprise that political situations are paying much attention to the issue of nationalism. At this particular time, we are more likely to think the lack of nationalism which brings about, this association is the legacy of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the killings in Rwanda, the ongoing fighting in Chechnya, and many other examples that all too easily come to mind.

3. LITERATURE ON NATIONALISM IN INDIA

Many studies have been conducted keeping the Value of Nationalism in centre. Ghosh (1977) in his study entitled, 'Distribution of Four Social Values among certain selected Strata of youths and Prediction of good Citizenship with the help of the Values', found that that, Boys had significantly higher scores on all the four values than girls and these four values could predict the emergence of good citizenship in India. Vyas (1979) in his study entitled, 'Varanasi Main Shiksha (Education in Varanasi)- (1904-1947)', concluded that, there were two major trends of education prevalent in Varanasi, the materialistic Western education system emerging out of the British system of Education and geared to the bureaucratic

setup. The second trend in education took its birth as a reaction to the British Policy and system of education. The trend was based upon religion, Hindu Nationalism and old apophthegm Shiksha dharmain shobhate. The institutions run on these lines focused mainly on character building and religiosity. It developed Secularism in its real sense of the term and gave importance to liberal education. The special feature of education in Varanasi was its immunity from Communalism and Provincialism. The contribution of the Muslim institution to field of education in Varanasi was also remarkable. The establishment of National School and Muslim Academy was the symbol of change and national awareness among the Muslim community but due to backwardness and religious rigidity these institutions could not maintain their popularity and success. Integration of nationalism, religiosity, ancient wisdom and modern education was achieved by the establishment of the Banaras Hindu University. Bhardwaj (1985) in his study found that, the attitude of nationalism characteristically belongs to faith-oriented male and scientifically thinking female adolescents. The investigator has suggested that, since attitude play a very important role, suitable educational programmes should be organised in the school for proper development of attitudes among students. Gupta (1985) in his study concluded that education should develop a feeling of nationalism and international understanding for which suitable changes should be made in our school curriculum. Stress should also be laid to develop Indian culture and the Indian value system among learners. Kapur (1986) conducted a study entitled, 'The Moral Education of Primary School Children, A Sociological Perspective'. The study revealed that, the values of nationalism, secularism and democracy did not deny the values of primary socialization and also were more significant both in the lives of children in their homes and in the school. Zylowski (2012) in his study entitled, 'Comparative Nationalism: Imperial Legacies and the Strength of Nationalism (The Case of China and India since the 1990s)', concluded that, the legacy of

British rule played an important role in the formation of contemporary ethno-religious and secular nationalism in India.

4. THREATS OF NATIONALISM IN INDIAN

Although the phenomenon of nationalism is said to the essential value of citizens belongs to any nation, and in the context of India, its need more attention and importance to develop proper sense of nationalism in its citizens. But, unfortunately there exist a series of threats that act as a hurdle in the development of proper sense of nationalism in Indian citizens. Some most serious and fatal threats as follows,

- Casteism
- Corruption
- Communalism
- Diverse Languages
- Economic Differences
- Lack of proper Leadership
- Political and religious Parties
- Provincialism & Regionalism
- Social Differences
- Unsuitable Education, etc.

On the other hand, all these are those phenomenon by which persons belonging to any community are either discriminated against or shown favour regardless of their merits and demerits. These all are also against the lofty ideas of our constitutional values, such as Democracy and Secularism. In general, these are big hurdle in the way of nation building and nationalism. As a solution for all these threats a strong political will on the part of the leaders, courage on the part of the social reformers and above all an attitudinal change on the part of the members of various communities towards these threats is the need of time, which will surely help in eradicating these threats from the Indian society.

5. CONCLUSION

Nationalism is nothing but love of own country and willingness to sacrifice for it. This provides a need to live in a country and a want to be there. Nationalism brings people with similar thoughts and experiences together. Citizens in a country can bond through their joint love of their country, which gives people pride in their own country to do better than all other countries in the world.

Since, sense of nationalism is a political ideology that has originated and evolved among Indian people during British rule. Explaining the importance of Nationalism, Chaturvedi (2005), quotes C. J. H. Hayes, and write that, 'Men may change their politics, their wives, their religion, their philosophy; they cannot change their grandfathers'. Therefore, sense of nationalism, among people is very necessary because, in the absence of it, people were generally loyal to a city or to a particular leader rather than to their nation. Hence, education system of any country must try to develop a proper sense of nationalism among its future citizens, and in the context of India it is not an exception.

Our Education system should develop a feeling of nationalism and international understanding for which suitable changes should be made in our school curriculum. Stress should also be laid to develop Indian culture and the Indian value system among learners. In this contest, the cinema and other media too, can do much towards the creation of these attitudes. The political parties and organisations thriving on Casteism, Communalism, and Regionalism should need to be banned. Similarly journals and magazines fanning these phenomenon should be brought under the clutches of law. Specially for the threat of Casteism there should be limited use of the word 'caste'. Limited use of the word 'caste' will bring in its wake the disappearance of the distinctions based on caste. Consequently the feeling of Casteism will die a natural death.

Since, it is the feeling of nationalism in the citizens which is responsible to the rise or fall of a nation. Therefore, this feeling needs to be developed and strengthened by all possible ways and means. Education is the most potent and effective means for this great task, because all nation uses education as a powerful means to achieve its desired ends and goals.

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