

Nationalism in primordial and modern settings

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Abstract

Nationalism is a commitment to the nation about following its ideals and striving for national development. In Indian context it is about taking forward the pledge which is considered as the guiding light of the Constitution i.e. Preamble and its ideals of secularism, democratic participation, justice, liberal outlook, etc.

In the light of the above discussed ideals dissent, debate and protest are an integral part of Nationalism. Only when we debate will we take forward the concept of Uniform civil code as aspired by our constitution in article 44. Our Nation is made up of different cultures and regions and we must provide space of their own growth and development along with the development of nation as a whole. Every citizen has the right to dissent when he doesn't agree as provided by our constitution through freedom of speech and expression in article 19. The same article 19 goes forward to allow peaceful assembly to protest.

India must embrace the positive concept of Nationalism and not jingoism in the name of Nationalism. It must take forward the agenda of development in the form of Digital India, Swachhh Bharat, Start up- Stand up India and Make in India. Provide opportunity of dialogue to the Kashmiris for the overall progress of the nation without compromising on the internal and external security. Drop article 124A from IPC which acts to stifle freedom of speech and expression. Nationalism should be inclusive and not exclusive.

Keywords: nationalism, patriotism

Introduction

Objective of study

1. To understand the concept of nationalism in historical settings
2. To review the contemporary trends in India and related issues of nationalism.

Nationalism is an extreme form of patriotism marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries. Nationalism refers to loyalty and devotion of a person to his own country. It involves national consciousness where dissent, debate, criticism and peaceful protest become an integral part of nationalism. It is a shared group feeling in the significance of a geographical and sometimes demographic region seeking independence for its culture or ethnicity that holds that group together. This can be expressed as a belief or political ideology that involves an individual identifying with or becoming attached to one's nation. Nationalism involves national identity, by contrast with the related concept of patriotism, which involves the social conditioning and personal behaviours that support a state's decisions and actions.

From a political or sociological perspective, there are two main perspectives on the origins and basis of nationalism. One is the primordialist perspective that describes nationalism as a reflection of the ancient and perceived evolutionary tendency of humans to organize into distinct groupings based on an affinity of birth. The other is the modernist perspective that describes nationalism as a recent phenomenon that requires the structural conditions of modern society in order to exist.

Nationalism is not an absolute concept (like say religion or ethnicity) and can be interpreted differently by different people. For some, it is equal to saving cows as

the symbol of their loved nation at any cost even if it to force someone not to kill them. But I think nationalism by whatever means we define, in the long term has to derive its value from the people of the nation, not the symbols (cows, gods, or even constitution), or the territory or even the culture (same ethnicity or linguistics etc.).

Spreading of Nationalism in pre-independent India

The invention of printing press has led to the greatest reforms in the human history i.e., "The Renaissance." Though the early newspapers were started in English, eventually the vernacular has helped penetrate the ideologies of the national leaders and the national movement. Such was the impact of these newspapers that the actionist viceroys like Lytton, Curzon and others have tried to obstruct the functioning of these newspapers through acts like the Vernacular press Act, Incitement to Offences Act and Indian Press Act of 1910 etc. Despite official resistance, these have impacted the Indian National Movement in the following ways:

1. Consolidating Nationalism: Nationalism hitherto was prevalent only among the middle class and those who had western education. With the penetration of the Vernacular Press, this has reached the most remote areas of the country, where those educated in the vernaculars have discussed it even with the uneducated.
2. Exposing the atrocities: This was done by all the major news papers, for instance Tilak in Kesari has spoken up about the Plague epidemic and inaction of the British, for which he was eventually prosecuted.

The drain theory propounded by moderate leaders such as Dadabai Naoroji and D.E Wachaet

3. Arousing self confidence: Several leaders have tried to arouse self confidence among Indians by informing about the glorious past of India and has thus aroused self confidence among Indians.
4. Reforms in social sphere: The vernacular press has also tried to reform various social issues such as caste discrimination, womens rights and even religious reforms. News papers Sambad Kaumudi Darpan, Satyarth Prakash have worked for these reforms.
5. Role in Revolutionary Terrorism: Vernacular press has been at the roots of growth of the revolutionary nationalism movement. They propogated their ideas through news papers such as Sandhya, Kal, Yugantar etc.

Most newspapers were started by the moderate nationalists and many local leaders across the country. The English Press has brought the leaders across the country together, while the Vernacular has penetrated their ideologies into the masses. Eventually congress and other organisations have taken up the issues roused by these newspapers.

Nationalism in India (before and after Independence comparison)

India is unity in diversity" P.J.L Nehru. India have many language religion and ethnic values but one thing that bind us is our nationalism. Nationalism is good for any country. People stay together, work together in peace, which is the most essential factor for growth and prosperity.

- **Conservative vs. Liberal:** The nationalists of freedom struggle saw India as something to be conserved and preserved from outside influences and British exploitation. Today's nationalist seeks amalgamation of India with the greater currents flowing across the globalised world.
- Whereas the nationalist sentiment during national struggle had a puritanical identity, today, nationalism derives its identity from the forces of fusion and intermixing.
- **Self-promoting vs. Self-Critical:** During the freedom struggle, when India was not yet a nation, it was important to create an aura around the idea of India as a nation. Propaganda, moving speeches of leaders and the mood on the street all revealed a sense of pride when discussing nationalism, whereas today, when India is a secure nation- nationalist sentiment cannot afford to indulge in senseless pride. Especially since after nearly 70 years of Independence, India is still one of the poorest nations, nationalism seeks to remain self-critical, promotes dissent as the essence of democracy and moves forward by finding holes in the narrative and ideology of the country as a whole.
- **Exclusive vs. Inclusive:** The idea of nationalism during freedom struggle arose from the need to drive out the colonial yoke. Today, it is all about growth and prosperity while ensuring nobody gets left behind. How far this sentiment has translated into

action and result is debatable but that is how nationalism has come to be seen in this enlightened age.

- **Democratic vs. Fascist:** Negatively, the nationalism of freedom struggle was much more tolerant to internal dissent. Moderates and extremists danced around separate ideologies but eventually knew they had to come together and did. Today's nationalism by contrast presents the impossibility of reconciling opposing ideologies. Today, the ultra-nationalism (extremist) is intolerant and the moderate nationalism is a bit too tolerant.

Nationalism in Europe vs. India

Nationalism in west is different from nationalism in INDIA. Nationalism in west was struggle for homogeneity on basis of religion and language. But struggle in India was to reconcile with diversity, inclusive, demand for Rights and self-government from the colonial masters and it was in fact a fight against colonialism, racism and hegemony. The European concept of nationalism owes its genesis in completely different milieu as compared to Indian version. The 19th and early 20th century nationalism of Europe was driven by the spirit of self -determination. For eg. Magyars of Hungary, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, polis all wanted to have a separate nation of their own and that's why they rose against the Habsburg empire and slowly went on to have an nation of their own. This was characterized by complete violence, bloodshed, conquests, assassinations etc. but in Indian context this situation was different. We were mostly guided by the vision of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi who was the epitome of non-violence. This is not to undermine the contribution of revolutionaries but an overall analysis. The element of coercion present in European nationalism was missing to that extent in Indian nationalism. Our nation is a by-product of non-violence and anti-colonial principles that were actually applied in real world to gain the independence of our people. Though we may find naga violence, LalDenga issue in north eastern India but the overall approach was to get them under the democratic setup offered by our constitution. The situation of contemporary India may be different but the kind of foundations have been laid down by forefathers, the guiding light will definitely lead us to better India.

In short it won't be wrong to say that European nationalism led to different nations getting created where as in India, we as a nation (though still in building) were first amalgamated and gradually nationalism got inculcated in every one of us in India.

Features of India's nationalism during freedom struggle:

1. It was progressive in nature. It started with reform movements like Brahmosamaj, satyashodhaksamajetc and as we progressed we finally realised that a sovereign independent nation was sine quo non.
2. The spirit of nationalism was not that of aggrandizing nature as compare to European one. The spirit of inclusiveness made sure everyone contributed to it in spite of having different ideologies for eg. the vision of Netaji SC Bose, Gandhiji and Ambedkar were bit different.

3. The Indian national congress was the torchbearer of Indian nationalism. INC comprised of people of different sectors, areas and cutting across all caste, class and gender, thereby providing PAN Indian character.
4. Indian nationalism was inspired majorly by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. The tools of satyagraha, moderation and constitutional methods were used.
5. It cut across rural urban divide as evident from 1942 August revolution where the whole India came on streets and made English men ponder upon tenability of colonial rule in India in near future.

Nationalism- It can make us or break us

Love for one country can never be a hindrance to growth and prosperity. The thing which matters is the way this emotion of nationalism is vented out.

If it is vented at realizing our fundamental duty of excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity, then India can become the next superpower. If it is used as violence against dissenting voice, then it can even destroy our country.

So we as Indians and our Govt, should strive to provide the correct ventilation valve to the youths of this country, so that our country may emerge as a model for the world.

Need of nationalism in contemporary settings

Till 1950 we had a different definition of nationalism, for that matter even till the time we were not self-sufficient in food and economic crisis hit us, we were actually more focused on petty problems, we still were struggling to be a proper nation.

But with advent of globalization and opening up of our economy, we have seen a dramatic shift, from being a collusion of states, we have taken our nation as India on international platforms and hence today we have moved from internal conflicts to a united population. We are moving towards the wider definition of nationalism.

Coming to rights, indeed without rights and its safeguard the purpose of state gets forfeited, but it's high time, that with such a huge population and in a democratic set up we need to move from govt to governance, and that needs patriotism.

Today's India as a nation to grow, prosper & flourish needs a 'civic nationalism' based on universal values like tolerance, mutual respect & mutual reliance in combination with 'economic nationalism' respecting multilateralism to lift the people out of poverty, to address economic inequality & to grow sustainably in long term.

1. Civic/non-ethnic nationalism which was driving force in our freedom struggle has unparalleled contribution to India-as a 'nation in making' project based on democratic, heterogeneous & inclusive principles.
2. With Brexit, rise of right wing parties in Europe & India, rise of ISIS, triumph phenomenon it is said that nationalism is on revival all over the globe but to distinguish it from civic/ constructive nationalism this revival trend is based on more evil xenophobic, religious, jingoist forms of nationalism.

3. Religious nationalism relevant in today's Indian context which may disturb the social cohesion is bad for economic growth because stable & long term economic growth cannot be achieved apart from civic & social solidarity.
4. Consolidation of religious nationalism in India makes non-Hindus 2nd class citizen thereby cutting them from economic growth project.
5. What India needs today, cannot be created merely by economic growth because rising GDP numbers are not equal to public justice but need is along with it to address economic inequality & poverty.
6. Let's build up the India as a society whose growth in GDP, in term of reduced inequality, reduced poverty & nationalism based on religious freedom, social solidarity and global fraternity can be counted in long term.

Challenges to Nationalism

It's a popularly known thought that "The world cannot respect people who can't respect themselves"

The principle of what is 'nation' is written in constitution. Devotion towards that principle is called nationalism. Nationalism here is much broader and higher than any identity of caste, religion, group etc.

India often mentioned in world reports as third world country, nation where people need to be taught about public sanitation etc. These problems cannot be solved by government initiatives alone. They need behavioral change in the masses, this very basic change is hinged on the idea of Nationalism.

India's performance on the Corruption control is too well known. The lack of love towards one's country and care towards people is what breeds corruption. If nationalism is present in right proportions corruption can be checked at individual level itself.

Unlike USA, Canada Indian democracy is surrounded by countries who all do not share friendly relations with us, some constantly area at proxy war with the Indian state. It is not possible to sustain these attacks and maintain a working democracy without the emotional attachment towards country.

India is a hopelessly diverse country with diversity across language, ethnicity, rationality and many such dimensions. To keep a unified India it is very much necessary that we keep asserting upon the identity that unifies all of us. Strong assertion of nationalism will prohibit USSR type disintegration.

However it is very much possible that idea of 'nationalism' could be defined in very narrow terms and lumped elements in the society slowly pushing country towards fundamentalism. Learning from history care must be taken that the idea of nationalism in India always remains progressive and inclusive.

Further, excess of anything is never good, especially, when your jingoistic nationalist attitude is threatening another being's life or work environment. It even gets worse when the people do not understand the real values of our country, and take actions based on what they think is right and their thought process is mostly based on revenge, financial benefit or to retain the power in a

certain area. Our nation is a by-product of non-violence and anti-colonial principles that were actually applied in real world to gain the independence of our people. Our constitution and judiciary is created after keeping the Civil liberties at the core. Our cardinal leaders were the champions in fighting for Civil liberties. So, when you see these self-appointed religious police taking the law in their own hands by them are in violation of all the important values of our nation and judiciary. They can even be branded as local terrorists or separatist guerrillas. Having said that, I would not refrain from the fact that our country will do everything in its capacity to maintain the integrity of the nation because that's the part of our constitution. We have even taken military actions to save the unity of our states. One such example is "Operation Blue Star", which was counter act to stop the terrorists from curtailing major part of Punjab from India's control, and the current example is the perennial controversial circumstance of "Kashmir". One would easily jump on conclusion after seeing these examples that India is just trying to save its land from separatists, and that's what Nationalism means - "Saving the land" but that's a wrong interpretation, because it's much more complex situation from both security and political perspective, and that's the reason we all should try our level best to understand these intricacies of our country's policies. Unfortunately, a humongous part of our youth is gaining political opinions from their Facebook News feed, that has nothing but click bait tabloid news articles with "Zero" context and misleading headlines. Social media has played a very crucial role in spreading negative viewpoints to people about what the "nationalism" is all about. We have to hit the precious books of past to understand the beauty of the democracy that was created for this land of opportunities by our great leads, sadly which has been sullied by greed and lust for power and money, wiping off all the real foundation of our nation.

Way Forward

India often mentioned in world reports as third world country, nation where people need to be taught about public sanitation etc. These problems cannot be solved by government initiatives alone. They need behavioral change in the masses, this very basic change is hinged on the idea of Nationalism. India's performance on the Corruption control is too well known. The lack of love towards ones country and care towards people is what breeds corruption. If nationalism is present in right proportions corruption can be checked at individual level itself. Unlike USA, Canada Indian democracy is surrounded by countries who all do not share friendly relations with us, some constantly area at proxy war with the Indian state. It is not possible to sustain these attacks and maintain a working democracy without the emotional attachment towards country. India is a hopelessly diverse country with diversity across language, ethnicity, regionality and many such dimensions. To keep a unified India it is very much necessary that we keep asserting upon the identity that unifies all of us. Strong assertion of nationalism will prohibit USSR type disintegration. However it is very much possible that idea of 'nationalism' could be defined in very narrow terms and

lumpen elements in the society slowly pushing country towards fundamentalism. Learning from history care must be taken that the idea of nationalism in India always remains progressive and inclusive.

The values of patriotism has to be inculcated since childhood itself. The clear distinction between nationalism & other wrong separationist tendencies shall be put forward by the government. Condemnation of atrocities committed in the name of nationalism has to be done. India will achieve growth & prosperity only when the rising nationalist feelings are focused on social & economic integration for people from all backgrounds, when we learn to practice nationalism beyond 15th August & 26th January.

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