

## **The Nationalism debate: A modern Indian perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Indian scholars and western scholars have presented different views regarding emergence of Indian nationalism. Scholars like Benedict Anderson are of the view that Indian Nationalism emerged in India because of British rule. According to Anderson, print media and railways helped in the emergence of nationalism. Valentine Chirol refuses Indian Nationalism. Another British scholar, Christopher Belle has tried to find the roots of Indian nationalism in ancient India. According to him, good government and patriotism always existed in ancient India. Anthony Smith focuses on understanding the origins and formation of modern nations to understand nationalism. Cultural identity is an important part of nations. Smith has found ethno-history as an important part of modern nations. The major concern with ethno-symbolism is the manner in which modern world's nations have been formed. Smith has seen nationalism as a modern ideological movement. Nationalism is aspiration for various social groups to defend, create or maintain nations. Nationalism maintains autonomy, identity and unity of nations. SekharBandyopadhyay argues about the reasons that were responsible for the rise of nationalism in India. Cristopher Jaffrelot writes about the monopolization of the Hindu nationalist movement on the front pages of Indian newspaper in 1990s when BhartiyaJanta Party (BJP) came strongly Indian political arena. RadhakumudMookerji argues about the existence of nationalism in ancient Indian society, particularly, in Hindu culture. Mookerji states that ancient Indian society had a systematic bureaucracy, rules and laws. Big empires were setup by the kings like Chandragupta Maurya, Asoka and Gupta Kings. Trade and commerce developed during these empires. Mahatma Gandhi argues about nationalism through his non-violent ideology whereas RavindraNath Tagore sees nationalism as a tool of violence. In this sense, the present paper is an attempt to understand the debate on Indian nationalism. This paper will also limelight on different views on the ideology and nature of Indian nationalism.

**Keywords:** *Nationalism, Spiritual Nationalism, Indian National Movement, Activism.*

### **1. Introduction**

Nationalism emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century with the social and political changes of European nations. Enlightenment in Europe was the main reason behind the emergence of nationalism. Before the 19th century, many social and political revolutions like British revolution, American Revolution and French

Revolution took place which helped in the emergence of nationalism. These movements inspired many countries of Asia and Africa and nationalist ideology spread in Asian and African countries (Kedourie. 1961). In Third World countries, nationalism emerged because of colonization and colonial domination. Religion, language, culture, ethnicity, economic, political and social conditions etc. played an important role in third world countries. Because of these reasons, different nationalist ideologies developed in different countries. Nationalist ideologies are the modern form of local patriotism which have always existed. Nationalist ideologies emerged because of ethnic and cultural identity (Lahouari. 1997).

Nationalism emerged in India because of colonial intervention in Indian social, economic, political and religious affairs. During the governor general ship of Hastings, colonial government intervened in social institutions of India. British education policy was another important factor which contributed in the emergence of nationalism in India. The Charter Act of 1813 allowed Christian missionaries to come to India. And, in the same year, Colonial government allocated one lakh rupees for the development of Education in India. English became the medium of education which helped Indians to go to various countries and understand their social conditions (Bandyopadhyay, 2009)

Formation of Indian National Congress in 1885 gave a political platform to various leaders who contributed in Indian national movement. Some of these leaders were Ferozshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, Madan Mohan Malviya, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Tilak, Savarkar, Aurobindo, and Gandhi. At first, the concept of nationalism was propagated by these leaders in India during Indian national movement.

### **1.1 Meaning of Nationalism.**

Nationalism is an ideology that stresses allegiance to one's nation as a major political virtue and national preservation and self-determination as prime political imperatives. In its varied forms, nationalism has proved an immensely powerful force for popular mobilization over two centuries in almost every part of the world.

Nationalism is an abstract concept and a concrete reality. It is a positive consciousness of unity, homogeneity and national aspiration. The positive and negative aspects of nationalism are provided by the history of its development (Dash, 1958). Nationalism is aspiration for various social groups to defend, create or maintain nations. Nationalism maintains autonomy, identity and unity of nations. Smith defines nationalism as an ideological movement which helps to attain and maintain identity, unity and autonomy of a social group (Smith, 2005). Nationalism is political doctrine of self-determination. It is linked with sovereignty. The nationalism can be different for the different social groups in multi-cultural countries because of different culture, identity and political status. (Nanda, 2006). Religion, culture, language, ethnicity etc. are the main sources of nationalism in Asian and African countries.

## **2. Objectives of the Research**

- To study the Understand the concept of nationalism.
- To understand the debate on Indian nationalism.

### 3. Literature Review

Schubert (2006) This paper assesses the debate on contemporary Taiwanese nationalism and national identity. In general, it confirms the observation made by many scholars that the island's history and political development have led to contending or competing identities. This 'identity split' has not impeded Taiwan in becoming a nation in its own right, however. The ongoing process of nation-building on the island is essentially based on an overarching quest for sovereignty and the desire on the part of the people to soundly identify with their liberal democratic state. More recent trends, though, suggest that Taiwan's national identity may gradually be closing the gates to the prospect of 'one China,' transforming it from 'civic' into 'civic-cum-ethnic.' The PRC faces a dilemma in this respect: if it maintains its pressure on Taiwan, it will fuel Taiwanese nationalism even further. Should China choose to modify its position on the 'one China' principle and become more flexible, however, then it will encourage Taiwanese nationalism to consolidate the existing 'identity divide' between the island and the mainland, thus strengthening the Taiwanese nation.

O'Donnell (2007) The article explores the relationship of multiculturalism to social solidarity. The multicultural nature of Britain is accepted as a welcome reality but certain problems in relation to the development of multiculturalism in Britain are acknowledged. Various approaches to buttress or replace multiculturalism are reviewed. These are: a strengthened and/or reconstituted nationalism ('Britishness'); human rights; and social equality. The issue of citizenship recurs throughout. It is argued that a combined emphasis on human rights and greater social equality offer a better basis than nationalism for strengthening solidarity in Britain, especially in the longer term. Sociological theory offers a fruitful if strangely neglected starting point for understanding social solidarity. I draw critically on Durkheim and Marx to obtain some objective perspective on this controversial matter.

Partrick (2013) conducted a study on The relatively new states of the Arabian Gulf do not have a 'nationalist' history as understood elsewhere in the Middle East. Not born out of a struggle for national selfdetermination, nor, for much of the modern state era, seeking territorial aggrandizement, Gulf Arab leaders have tended to use tribal and religious identities to reinforce their domestic legitimacy. However, these other identities weaken national coherence. In the current context of internal disquiet about foreign population numbers, Iran's rising regional prominence and sectarian sensitivities within some GCC states, national identity is increasingly being employed as a state-building tool. However, steps to boost national identity do not necessarily create coherent national communities. As the state-led invention of national tradition is stepped up, usually without reference to disparate and sometimes disputatious groups, inclusion is not being felt across the national communities. While progress has arguably been made in some GCC states in at least addressing the limitations to national coherence, nationalism in the Gulf remains a highly contested notion, liable to promote as much as conceal national division.

Cawood&Oshokoya (2013) This article is a continuation of a series of publications by the authors on the international debate on resource nationalism, with specific reference to South Africa. Previous outcomes have shown that mine nationalization is not a solution for South Africa, and that maintaining stability of the current mineral and tax regimes is fundamental. It will not be wise to replace existing law and policy

instruments until there is a better understanding of the distinction between fact and public perception about the impact of the current system. The new scheme of state custodianship linked to a mining royalty that effectively targets economic rents provides for effective resource use. The methodology in this article is to consider how South Africa's mineral tax regime can be tweaked to achieve optimal management and benefit from mineral extraction and associated rents by avoiding changes feared by investors. The major finding is that the current suite of instruments can be considered a suitable platform for optimal management of resource rents. However, it will be necessary to first investigate ways of improving the mineral beneficiation intent of the royalty structure, and secondly investigate whether the mineral rent portion of the royalty formula can be ring-fenced for the purpose of establishing a sovereign wealth fund.

Dubey (2017) conducted a study on the nation states have emerged and been shaped through an evolutionary process. The major factors triggering their emergence have been rise of capitalism, breakdown of empires, independence of colonial territories and, in recent years, the disintegration of large federal states. The character and the authority of nation states have been shaped initially by the interstate system of the Treaty of Westphalia and largely by the French Revolution and the United Nations (UN) Charter, rise of regionalism and globalisation. Nationalism continues to thrive and remain dominant all over the world mainly because its possible substitutes such as global capitalism, socialist internationalism and UN multilateralism did not prove viable. The major challenges the nation states face today are coping with new problems arising within their territories and those which affect the very survival of mankind. The Indian nationalism embraces the entire variety of elements which go into the making of a nation state. It has been a subject of bitter controversy starting from India's independence movement. To be true to its ethos reflected in the Indian Constitution, it must remain pluralistic, inclusive and humanitarian.

#### **4. Methodology**

It has been mainly used by empirical and rational. Moreover, following philosophical studies of its secondary data it is mainly helped by television, newspaper, book, journal, research paper, internet (web resources) and discussion of the people related to the issue.

#### **5. Debate on Indian Nationalism**

Nationalism is one of the most debatable topics in academic as well as political institution in world around. Indian national movement was a product of nationalism in India. It is a debatable issue that did nationalism emerge at first in Europe or Indian society had the notion of nationalism before colonial period? But in spite of this debate, it has become clear that nationalism came in debate in India during colonial period. Many Indian thinkers and leaders gave their view on nationalism during colonial period. Here, the attempt is to understand the debate on nationalism in India during colonial period.

Narendranath Datta, commonly known as Swami Vivekananda advocated spiritual nationalism. Subhas Chandra Bose stated about Vivekananda that Swami Vivekananda was the father of Indian spiritual nationalism. His ideas became famous when he participated in the „Parliament of Religion“ in 1893 at Chicago“. He stated that India was the centre of the world's spirituality. He accepted that many problems

were in India like untouchability and exploitation but he also accepted that these problems could be solve through spirituality. Vivekananda was not against of taking ideas from other countries but he suggested that Hindus must not give up his religion. Swami Vivekananda recognised the importance of INC but was of the view that awakening of the nation should not only be limited to political and social movements. For Vivekananda, it was awakening of religion which would provide nationalism with vitality. He believed that Indian nationalism could be effective as a mass movement only if it acquired a religious content. For Vivekananda, Hinduism was tolerant and broadminded. In this way, Vivekananda tried to relate Hinduism and spirituality with Indian nationalism (Gokhale, 1964).

Savarkar came in Indian politics when INC was dominated by moderate leadership. During Swadeshi movement, Savarkar was undergraduate student and came with the contact of nationalist leaders. He was a revolutionary extremist leaders of Indian national movement. After the rebellion of 1857, many Indian intellectuals, philosophers, novelists, spiritual leaders, reformers and poets emerged in India who cultivated Hindu anti-colonial nationalist discourse. The ideology of this group was known as extremism. Savarkar came with the contact of extremist leaders during swadeshi movement of 1905. In 1906 he went to London for to study law. Savarkar established „Abhinava Bharat“ society in London which organised a lecture on nationalism on the fifteenth anniversary of the outbreak of the rebellion of 1857. Savarkar was arrested in sedition charge (Bakhle. 2010). VinayakDamodarSavarkar is considered as the centre of gravity of Hindu nationalism. He was the first extremist leader who did not hesitate to use violence against British government. He was one of the most important propagators of Hindu Rashtra. His view on nationalism and Hindutva can be seen in his book, „Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?“ which he wrote in 1923. For national Unity, Savarkar considered three things very important. These three things were geographical unity, racial features and common culture. Savarkar did not believe in Hindu religion but he focused on the Hindu culture. For Savarkar, Hindu is one who lives in the area beyond the Indus river, between the Himalaya and Indian Ocean (Jaffrelot, 2007). During Swadesi movement of 1905, leaders like Aurobindo joined the extremist wing of the INC. His political philosophy was based on *BandeMataram* and had a spiritual imperative for the motherland (Singh. 1990/1991)

BalGangadharTilak was a nationalist leader of Indian national movement. His philosophy of nationalism was rooted in revivalist orientalism. Tilak is considered as the founder of cultural nationalism in India. Tilak articulated his view on nationalism in his two famous magazines, Kesari and Mahratta. His nationalism was based on strong cultural and religious revival of Hinduism. And, for the revival of cultural nationalism, Tilak started religious Ganapani festival in 1893 and introduced Shivaji festival in 1896. With the help of these two festivals, Tilak tries to mobilise masses. In this way, Tilak focused on cultural nationalism (Gnaneshwari, 2017)

RavindraNath Tagore was a poet of Bengal who participated in Indian national movement through his writings. He wrote a book “Nationalism” (1917), in which he expressed his view on nationalism. He wrote about nationalism in the West, Japan and in India. Tagore writes about the culture and values in ancient India which lost their relevance with the passing of time. He makes distinction between the West and India. According to him, India’s homes, fields, temples of worship, schools, simple laws and peaceful

administration belonged to her. Tagore writes about the nation. According to Tagore “a nation is that aspect which a whole population assume when organized for a mechanical purpose” (Tagore. 1917) Tagore names nation as the organization of politics and commerce. Explaining about the nations, Tagore states that Moghals and Pathans were human races, not nation. In present time, we can love or hate them, fought for them or against them or we can complain that the Empire, they created, we also had equal share. But now, we have to deal not with kings or human races but with a nation-we, who are no nation ourselves. Writing about the nationalism in India, Tagore argues that our problem is not political but social. He states that this problem is not only in India but among all nations. Present politics is dominated by western ideas and India is trying to copy the same ideas. Indians must be remember that European had their racial unity, they has insufficient natural resources, therefore, their civilization had naturally taken the character of political and commercial aggressiveness.

Gandhi was one of the most important leaders of Indian national movement who gave his view on nationalism. Gandhi's political philosophy developed in South Africa. It can be said that Gandhi formulated his political philosophy in South Africa and practiced it in India. Gandhi explains his view on nationalism and internationalism. He writes that he is patriotic because he is human. According to Gandhi, one cannot become internationalist without being nationalist. Gandhi never saw nationalism as evil. He says that narrowness and selfishness are evils. Gandhi is of the view that there should be the feeling of brotherhood among men of different countries. He says that our nationalism should not be a danger for other nations. Gandhi's view on nationalism can be understood by his book “Hind Swaraj” which he wrote in 1909. David Hardiman argues that “Hind Swaraj” provided a new spirit to nationalist militancy. In second decade of 20th century, Gandhi voiced strongly about Indian nationalism. Ravindranath Tagore did not agree with Gandhi's nationalist view. Tagore could see only violence and greed in nationalism. When Gandhi launched non-cooperation movement in 1920, Tagore stated that Gandhi was playing with fire. Nevertheless Gandhi rejected violent nationalism. Gandhi used terms like Swaraj, Swadeshi and Indian civilization instead of nation. Gandhi believed in Internationalism. He was of the view that internationalism is possible only when peoples of different countries will organise and will able to act as one man. In this sense, Gandhi's nationalism was broad. Hardiman says Gandhi's Nationalism as broad and catholic (Hardiman, 2003). Gandhi's nationalism was based on Ahimsa, Karmayoga, Ram, Rajya, Tapasya and Moksha. M.K. Gandhi's idea of nationalism was inclusive. Gandhi was confident that Indian nationalism had golden opportunity to teach something new to the world. The model of a functioning multi-lingual and multi-religious nation. His nationalism was not directly hatred or fear towards another ethnic, religion goal. Gandhi said, “My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism”. Gandhi's view on nationalism was different from other leaders in British India. Gandhi emphasised a non-violent nationalism. This study will try to interrogate the conceptual and ideological differences between the discourse on nationalism among other leaders, thinkers and Gandhi.

Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the most important leaders of INC. After independence, he became the first prime minister of India. Nehru also presented his view on nationalism. S.C. Dash has written about Nehru's



view on Nationalism. In 1939 Nehru had said, "Nationalism is in ill odour today in the West and has become the parent of aggressiveness, intolerance and brutal violence". For Nehru, nationalism was negative manifestation. Nehru had internationalist approach on the place on nationalism. Nehru was of the view that our problems could be solved only after having worldwide thinking. Nehru was of the view that there was connection between world's events and Indian national problems. In this way, Nehru considered nationalism as negative force (Dash, 1958).

## 6. Conclusion

Indian nationalism was the product of colonial intervention in Indian socio-economic, political and religious affairs. Nationalism played an important role in Indian national movement. The debate on Indian nationalism shows that nationalism in India had various types. Swami Vivekananda related nationalism with religion, whereas Tilak related nationalism with culture. Leaders like Aurobindo and Savarkar related nationalism with Hinduism. Tagore had faith in Indian tradition and was of the view that Indian past glorious civilization but with the passes of time, Indian lost its glorious tradition. He criticized nationalism because he was of the view that modern form of nationalism was based on violence. In spite of nationalism, Tagore focused on internationalism. Gandhi and Tagore were good friends but both had different view on nationalism. Gandhi was of the view that one cannot become internationalist until he becomes nationalist. Gandhi also not accepted violent nationalism. But he was not against nationalism. Gandhi saw humanism and brotherhood as an important part of nationalism. Nehru also had negative view on nationalism. In Nehru's view, nationalism had become the source of violence, intolerance and aggressiveness. In this way, different Indian thinkers had different view on Indian nationalism.

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