

## **Indian Nationalism and Multiculturalism**

**Dr. Dharambir**

**Assistant Professor**

**S. A. Jain College**

**Ambala City, Haryana, India**

**Abstract:** *Nationalism in its broader sense is one's pride, respect and love for his country. Occasionally extreme nationalism can get fanatical as well especially nationalism based on religion and fascist ideologies. On the contrary, nationalism based on culture of a country is constructive. When one talks about Indian nationalism, he will give emphasis to the pre independence period when nationalism was at its peak, especially at the time of freedom struggle. But Indian nationalism has been there since the time immemorial. There are different dimensions of Indian nationalism.*

**Keywords:-** Nationalism, Multiculturalism

From ancient time onwards, India had a nationalism based on its history and politics. For instance, ancient Gupta, Maurya and Asoka and modern Mughal empire did not think that their territory was complete until they had annexed all of the sub continent. So was the British. The nationalistic sentiments were intact despite the regional conflicts and the regional war between the tiny kingdoms in India.

Indian rebellion in 1857 united India and an extraordinary high spirited wave of nationalism started in India. In fact, if Britain had not ruled India, the modern state of India would not have been evolved. The Indian subcontinent would have been different nations like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bengal. It would have been like travelling in Europe through different languages, countries and culture. Jalian Walabagh incident turned on Indian nationalism even at the grass root level. Gandhi's religious harmony with different religions, brotherhood, acts against untouchability, way of peaceful agitation

like fasting, non-violence and civil disobedience, freedom struggle and Indian National Congress united common men of India and started a new nationalism. Nationalism based on Hinduism, Indian Islam and Sikhism has been detrimental to Indian nationalism. Indian Muslim nationalism led to partition.

In the modern times, British gave unity to the different factions in Indian society. The main reason was that society got united against a common rival, the British. That led to a newborn nationalism. In a multicultural state like India where there is no so called majority group to provide a national identity and nationalism based on their nature. Each tiny culture has got its own identity in India. If somebody asks, for the sake of having an Indian identity, a Hindu man speaking Hindi from Uttar Pradesh can be identified as a typical Indian. For instance, his movies will be viewed by all the cultures in India and has a relatively strong soft power over other cultures in India. He would not bother watching a Tamil movie from a small regional culture. Indians' identity can be considered as a banyan tree. The main stem is Hindi, its hanging pillar roots are Oriya, Bengali and Tamil. All these together constitute an Indian identity and thereby Indian nationalism. Separate Assamese, Sikh, Tamil and Maratha nationalism have been destructive to Indian nationalism. National identity should be the first priority and then comes the sub identities to have a strong Indian nationalism. War and cricket with a foreign country evoke Indian nationalism like mass hysteria.

About the leaders in nationalism, there should be a strong common factor between the rulers and the ruled. It is possible only in a democratic system. Leader and subjects should be the birds of the same feather. A more beautiful bird of another fancy feather will not be accepted as a leader. Instead a less beautiful bird of the same feather will be much appreciated. Imagine, a yellow skinned more efficient Japanese becoming Ugandan president. Colonialists subdued people of less faculties and less technologically advanced. If you have subdued means that you are superior and if you have been subdued means you are inferior.

Nationalism will be at stake or under transformation when immigration occurs. It depends on the size of immigration. If it is of small scale, the dominant culture will be prominent. If it is massive, a new identity will be formed. Imagine a British Indian supporting India at Lords against England jeopardizing British nationalism. It is doubtful that how much nationalism a first generation immigrant

has or a poorly integrated immigrant has for the adopted country. Emigration can be considered as a manifestation of lack or decline in nationalism. Strong nationalists will not emigrate despite any hardship he faces in his home land. Those who emigrate make friends of convenience by settling down in a rich country, leaving behind their nationalism, when they are deprived of their needs in the native country.

During the time of freedom struggle, the nationalism was at its peak, with acts like avoiding foreign goods, leaving highly paid government jobs and civil disobedience. There was a strong nationalist feeling during freedom struggle, people were proud of being an Indian. Now the well to do Indians with fancy foreign products and consider being an immigrant and a citizen in a rich country became a status symbol. Even the high ranked political leaders seek foreign medical care despite the advanced medical care India has, thereby hampering Indian medical fraternity's morale and chances of medical tourism in India.

British made single bureaucracy, army, communication network and educational system in India. Annie Besant helped in fostering Indian nationalism. She found British educational system denationalized Indians and deprived them of the knowledge of their heritage, history and culture. About nationalism and education, Children should not be taught to see primarily through the small identities like caste, religion or class but to see a broad identity as an Indian national and a good human being and to make a dynamic Indian identity relevant to the contemporary world. Writers and poets like Tagore, and national as well as regional news papers have harbored Indian nationalism. The notion of global citizen notion will not work as most of the European Union countries are now complaining of illegal immigration, cultural and national identity distortion and burden on social welfare funds. From poor EU countries, there has been an influx of immigrants and workers to richer countries. There should be a semi permeable wall between these countries of the union to properly filter and to foster positive nationalism. Many cultures are being closing in on themselves now, cultures mix, new cultures evolve fast because of globalization. World is becoming a single economic unit now because of globalization and posing a threat to old fashioned national identity and nationalism. Indian nationalism is strengthened by the natural geographical boundaries like Himalayas in the north, Indian Ocean to the south, Bay of Bengal in the east and Arabian seas in the west. These geographical boundaries are clearly delineated. There is no big mountain range to divide India.

Indian subcontinent was the centre of Indus valley civilization and birth place of major religions like Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Buddhism. India is home to most of the foreign prominent religions like Islam, Judaism and Christianity. There is a unity within this composite diversity and is popularly called unity in diversity of India. The ancient land of Hindus is not geographically, politically and culturally complete without the scattered four main sacred pilgrim centres situated in the different corners of the country like Puri, Rameswaram, Dwaraka and Badrinath. The epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and common language Sanskrit portray India as one unit. Indian Muslims' Indianized versions of pilgrim centres and monuments scattered throughout India give them a unique Indian identity. Ancient India had same deities, science, astrology and medicine for the entire subcontinent. In short, historically, politically, culturally and geographically India has had a strong nationalism since ancient times. It had ups and downs. It is true that modern Indian state should be thankful to British rule for its current unity in different spheres. British have not altered Indian identity by changing Indians' religion, language, culture or through miscegenation. Modern Republic of India's status as a secular nation harbours constructive nationalism despite the sub identities that give variety to India's multiculturalism.

## References

1. R.Suntharaligam; Indian Nationalism- An Historical Analysis, Vikash Publication House, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, 1983.
- 3.Sukhbir Choudhary; Growth Of Nationalism, Trimurti Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1973.
- 4.A.R. Desai; *Social Background Of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1949.
5. Anil Seal; *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1968.
- 6.Sumit Sarkar; *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, New Delhi, 1973.
7. BipanChandra, Amales Tripathi, Barun De, Freedom Struggle, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1911( Eleventh Reprint).
8. Sarojint Naidu said: 'It is well for us to remember that the success of the whole (nationalist) movement lies centred in what is known as the woman question. It is not you but we who are the true Nation builders", at a lecture delivered at the Indian Social Conference. Calcutta, December 1906. See Sarojini Naidu, 1925, Speeches and Writings, Madras, Natesan (quoted by Gail Pearson, 'Nationalism

Universalisation and the Extended Female Space in Bombay City" , p. 18 1, footnote 28). See also Manmohan Kaur, *Women in India's Freedom Struggle*, Delhi, Sterling Publishers, pp. 175-176.

9. Mazumdar's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1962. Britain's India Policy 1905-1910, University of Oxford.

10. Annie Besant; *How India Wrought for Freedom: The story of the National Congress told from official Record*, Adyar, 1915.

11. B.L. Grover; *A Documentary Study of British Policy Towards Indian Nationalism, 1885-1909*, Delhi, 1967.

12. B.T McCully; *English Education and the Origin of Indian Nationalism*, New York, 1940.