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## DISCOURSE ON NATIONALISM DURING INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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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. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay argues about the reasons that were responsible for the rise of nationalism in India. Christopher Jaffrelot writes about the monopolization of the Hindu nationalist movement on the front pages of Indian newspaper in 1990s when Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) came strongly Indian political arena. Radhakumud Mookerji 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 Ravindra Nath 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.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Nationalism, Spiritual Nationalism, Indian National Movement, Activism.*

### 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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, 1-17). 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 a 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, 113-114).

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. 139-184).

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 Fhirozsah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoriji, Madan Mohan Malviya, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Tilak, Savarkar, Aurobindo, and Gandhi. At first, the concept of nationalism was propagated by these leaders in India during Indian national movement.

### **What is Nationalism?**

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. 64). 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. 23-31). 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. 24-25). Religion, culture, language, ethnicity etc. are the main sources of nationalism in Asian and African countries.

### **EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM**

It is very difficult to give exact date for the emergence of nationalism but some scholars have tried to define the time of the emergence of nationalism. According to G. de Bertier Sauvigny the term 'nationalism' was used at first in 1798 whereas, Peter Alter claims that the term 'nationalism' appeared in 1774 (Ozkirimli, 2005. 16). But, the concept of nationalism emerged in European countries after Vienna Congress in 1815. The countries which were participating in this Congress, followed the ideology of nationalism because in the absence of nationalism, Napoleon conquered many European countries (Dash, 1958. 64). In 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism emerged because of mobilising political support and there were many reasons for its emergence. National liberation movements across the globe, two World Wars and period of Cold War, globalization in the world etc. were the reasons for the emergence of nationalism in the world.

Nationalism emerged not only in communist countries such as Russia and China but also in Asian and African countries (Spencer and Wollman, 2005. 1). In Third World countries, the concept of nationalism was used to get freedom from the colonial powers. In this way, idea of nationalism has been used in a different sense in European and third world countries according to their socio-political and economic basis. Marxist scholars have seen nationalism and national movement as a struggle against colonial and feudal powers (Upreti, 2005. 534-545). For example, during colonial rule, India had 562 princely states that were ruled by Indian rulers under British paramountcy. Colonial policy helped in the emergence of nationalism in India. The emergence of Indian nationalism was the result of inevitable political framework of colonialism and cultural framework of multi-national situation. Indian society is full of diversity, therefore, culture became important part of Indian nationalism different parts of post-independent Indian (Nanda, 2006. 24-44).

The concept of nationalism emerged in India after the establishment of British rule. Before, Warren Hastings, colonial rulers focused only on trade but during his tenure, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal' was established by Sir William Jones in 1784. This organization helped to develop orientalism in India. Due to this, many ancient religious literatures were translated in English. Hastings's was the first governor-general during whom, colonial government intervened in Indian social institutions. The Charter Act of 1813, allowed Christian missionaries to come in India and through this act, British government allocated one lakh rupees for the development of education in India. British government introduced English education. English educated Indian travelled in different parts of the world and understood modern ideas of freedom and equality. These English educated Indians started reform movements within the society. Partha Chatterjee is of the view that Indian nationalism was an output of western educated leadership. Ashis Nandy is also of the view that Indian nationalism emerged because of western imperialism. C.A. Bayly (1998) is of the view that Indian nationalism built on pre-existing sense of territoriality (Chatterjee, Nandy and Bayly quoted in, Bandyopadhyay, 2009. 139-184). According to Bandyopadhyay, the awareness about nationalism was based on the antipathy towards British rule, feeling of patriotism and sense of pride in Ancient Indian tradition. Valentine Chirol is of the view that the politicization of Indian society on the basis of linguistic regions, castes and religious communities were responsible for the rise of Indian nationalism rather than modern categories of class or nation (ibid, 185). The emergence of modern Indian nationalism was basically against the challenges, created by foreign rulers. British policies helped in the emergence of Indian nationalism. British government and their direct or indirect interventions

in Indian society created intellectual and moral conditions for the rise of nationalism. Nationalist movement in India was result of conflict between colonial interest and Indian people. Colonial government effected almost every section of Indian society. Till 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian had become united and it had developed as a nation, therefore, the emergence of nationalism evolved easily in Indians (Chandra, 2009. 193-214).

The emergence of Indian nationalism can be categorised within three broader categories. The first category of writings explain about the origin of Indian nationalism on the basis of native institutions. The second classifications of writings explain that Indian nationalism emerged as a result of the contact of Great Britain. And, the third category of writings comprises of British influence but these writings regard British influence as harmful, baneful and unfavourable for India. In first category, scholars are of the view that Indian nationalism was developed by the Aryans. Indian scholars like V.V.S. Aiyar and K.M. Pannikar are of the view that Aryans established states in Ancient India. These scholars argue about the political unity of India during Mauryan and Gupta dynasty. In this way these scholars have focused on Hindu states before British colonial government. In the writings of first category, it appears that India was not a stranger to democratic institutions. These writings focus on the unification of ancient India on the basis of religion and culture. The second group of writings, emphasis on the development of Indian nationalism by the influence of British rule. The scholars of second category are of the view that Indian political ideas are the reflection of those concepts that had grown up in Britain and became part of Indian tradition. Scholars like S.W. Ali and Albion Banerji are of the view that the nationalism under, INC was the product of British rule. Tagore argues that 'it is to the rule and domination of England with its strictly political attitude that the development of a belief in our eventual destiny should be ascribed' (McCully, 1935. 295-314). These writings limelight about the emergence of Indian nationalism because of British policies such as, education policy, economic policy, political policy and social policy etc. The third category of writings comprise scholars like Pramatha Nath Bose, H.P. Ghose, S.S. Dey and M.R. Parakh. These scholars find the reasons behind the emergence of Indian nationalism because of British policies but they are different of second group of scholars in this sense that they find British policies oppressive for Indians.

### **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 broad-minded. In this way, Vivekananda tried to relate Hinduism and spirituality with Indian nationalism (Gokhale, 1964. 35-42).

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, 51-75). Vinayak Damodar Savarkar 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. 85-96). During Swadesi movement of 1905, leaders like Aurobindo joined the extremist wing of the INC. His political philosophy was based on *Bande Mataram* and had a spiritual imperative for the motherland (Singh, 1990/1991, 122-126).

Bal Gangadhar Tilak 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. 1521-1524)

Ravindra Nath 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, 19) 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 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 (Ibid. 11-155).

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, 1968. 211-212). 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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. 12-17). 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. 63-67).

## 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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