

Nationalism in Indian Literature

Nitish Bhooshetty

Ph.D. Scholar

Dept. of English

Monad University, Hapur. UP

Dr. Ajit Kumar

Guide

Dept. Of English

Monad University, Hapur. UP

Nationalism is a complex phenomenon that has developed as a result of the interaction of a many great distinct conditions. The more industrialised and technologically evolved civilizations of Europe, on the one hand, and the less developed cultures of Asia and Africa, on the other hand, were both captivated by the notion of nationalism. Around the period of the 18th century and continuing until the beginning of the 20th century, nationalism started to spread across civilizations that shared very few similarities with one another. This expansion took place somewhere about during this time period. As a direct result of this, it would seem that, in addition to specific explanations that are only pertinent to the context, there must also be a general explanation for its genesis that is all-encompassing and takes into account all of its features. This general explanation would seem to be required in addition to specific explanations that are only relevant to the situation. In addition to any specific explanations that are solely applicable in this particular instance, this would be included. To put it another way, what we are talking about here is an idea that has some nationalist overtones to it. This explanation, which is either a theory or a collection of ideas, has to be able to account for the nationalist mentality in general for it to be considered satisfactory. You will get an understanding of some of the core concepts that are associated with nationalism by the time we have finished going over this class material.

Whenever we talk about the eighteenth and twentieth centuries in regard to nationalism, we always make a reference to those years. A considerable number of tiny villages on a local level began to develop into (relatively) larger settlements that had a more stable demographic make-up throughout this time period in the history of the world. To frame it another way, over the course of time, a large number of smaller communities gradually merged into a smaller number of larger ones, resulting in the overall number of communities remaining unchanged. The notion of "largeness" in terms of numbers is being gradually phased out in favour of the concept of "largeness" in terms of size. The new links and solidarities that had recently been developed in each of the communities helped differentiate them from one another as distinct entities. There was a beginning to the construction of solidarities that were, for the most part, impersonal but which yet have a great deal of power. Unfamiliar cities and their inhabitants began to conceive of themselves as

constituents of a brand-new, huge, and hitherto unseen civilization, which came to be known as "the Nation." The whole creative process has to be rethought from the ground up in order to successfully use this strategy. The concept of "imagination" was accorded a higher importance than any other resource when it came to the establishment of new communities. In the communities that had just very recently been established, there was a lack of familiarity, reciprocity, and sharing of resources. Familiarity served as the foundation for the vast majority of historical communities, regardless of whether those communities were speech communities, village communities, or other types of local groupings. This was true whether the groups in question were speech communities, village communities, or other types of local groupings. The formation of communities was dependent on the establishment of this basis. On the other hand, the beginnings of the recently formed national communities were shrouded in secrecy and carried out in the shadows. These communities were established relatively recently. The ties that united the emerging civilizations were most likely founded on a particular kind of shared imagination, as opposed to the day-to-day experiences that were common to all of them. Benedict Anderson, a well-known thinker on the subject of nationalism, refers to nations as "imagined communities" for the same reason.

Both the state and the country of origin are specified. In spite of the difficulties in providing a definition, which were discussed in the section that came before this one, we might try to provide a temporary explanation of the two terms—nation and nation-state—in order to achieve clarity. This is in spite of the fact that the difficulties in providing a definition were covered in the section that came before this one. This is in spite of the fact that the challenges involved in establishing a definition were discussed in the part that was presented before to the one that we are now discussing. It is possible that the first thing that needs to be done in order to build a country is to cast doubt on and discredit the concept of naturalness. This seems to be the most likely course of action to take. There is no such thing as a natural, pre-existing human group that can be referred to as a country. There has never been, and there never will be, such a thing. This is due to the fact that nations being created artificially. This suggests that it is a human civilization that has evolved over the course of history; as a result, it is classified as being a member of the category that is known as "historical." This current state of affairs is the end result of a number of different occurrences that took place in the past. Before the beginning of the modern era, or before the rise of nationalism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the word "nation" was utilised in a variety of settings. This was the case prior to the beginning of the modern era. Even after the advent of modern times, this continued to be the situation. This continued to be the case long after the beginning of the modern era. In order to be more precise, it was used to refer to either a biological category known as a race or a social group known as a clan. Both of these categories are social groups. Alternately, it is possible that it is applicable to both of these things at the same time. The term "clan" refers to a social group that is larger than a family and is held together by ties of common ancestry. Clans are often referred to as "tribes." The only thing that any of these usages have in common with the way that we use the term "nation" in modern times is that they all refer to a human

collectivity that shares certain characteristics in common. This is the only thing that any of these usages have in common with the way that we use the term "nation" in modern times. The only thing that any of these definitions have in common with the way that we use the word "nation" in modern times is this single interpretation.

Swami Vivekanand said in 1896: "A nation is being made out of India's different races. I sometimes think they are no less various than the different peoples of Europe." The 19th century Indian leaders constantly made references to "new nation", new India, "new national spirit", "development of nationhood" etc. It can therefore be said that 'invention of tradition' as a standard nationalist device was not resorted to by the 19th century Indian nationalists. They focused on the novelty rather than the antiquity of the Indian nation. It was however later in the 20th century that some leaders considered Indian nation to be perennial and always present in Indian history. They also glorified India's past and traditions and projected them on India's present. Apart from this feature, Indian nationalism was plural, non-coercive and civil. It was plural in the sense that the Indian nationalist leaders recognized the great Indian diversity but refused to consider it as a weakness or an obstacle that would have to go away in the journey towards nationhood.

In other words, they consciously promoted the idea of the Indian nation as being based on cultural plurality rather than cultural monism. Perhaps the best statement endorsing India's plurality and linking it with nationalism came from Mahatma Gandhi who wrote in his weekly journal Harijan in 1940: "India is a big country, a big nation, composed of different cultures which are tending to blend with one another, each complementing the rest. If I must wait for the completion of this process, I must wait. It may not be completed in my day. I shall love to die in the faith that it must come in the fullness of time." As is clear from Gandhi's statement, the Indian nationalist leaders fully recognized that nation making for India was a long process and far from accomplished. And that India's diversity was no obstacle in India's nationhood.

Nationalism and pluralism could be combined together. When India became independent and acquired a constitution in 1950, the Constitution makers refused to recognize any single language as the national language. Rather, they enlisted 14 important Indian languages and designated all of them as official languages. The number of India's official languages has now increased to 22. Indian nation has also been remarkably non-coercive. It is true that all nationalisms are essentially homogenizing forces and they try to create a large pool of national culture in which all local and minority cultures are expected to merge. This really is the story of most nations of the world. Indian nation by comparison was remarkable non-coercive. It was based on the idea of 'consensus' but this consensus was not to be enforced from the top. Both during the period of the anti-imperialist struggle, and during the independence period, national unity was promoted through non-coercive ways and methods. To sum up this section, there are certain features of Indian nationalism that conform to general pattern of nationalism as illustrated in the theories. But it also has its

own specific features which may not be covered by the theories. Therefore, it is essential that the general theories and principles of nationalism should retain enough flexibility to be able to accommodate different and diverse nationalist experiences in different parts of the world. nation-state.

In thoughtful of nationalism the idea of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) on nationalism was connected with our sentiments and emotions of the Indian masses. His concept of nationalism was a social transformative in content and orientation. He wanted to bring to the forefront the message of the 'Vedas' and (Patil, 2017) 'Gita' for providing spiritual energy and moral enthusiasm to the nation. According to him, a recovery of the healthy and vital traditions of the old culture of India was essential. A true nationalist desire to build on the old foundation. Reforms based on an utter disrespect for the old norms did not appeal to him as constructive work (Kulkarni, 2020). Tilak said that "we do not want to anglicise our institutions and to denationalise them in the name of social and political reforms" (Tilak's letters Mahratta,1919).

According to Tilak, nationalism was no visible and concrete entity. Still, it was a kind of sentiment and idea, and in generating this idea the historical memories of the great figure of a country play a significant part. It was thus also a psychological conception. He rightly felt that the roots of Indian nationalism must lie not in the mere intellectual appeals to the theories of the western liberal writers but the sentiments and emotions of the Indian masses. He felt that "the memories of the Ganapati Utsav (festival) and the Shivaji festival would serve to reinvigorate the nationalistic feelings of the common people" (Roy &Singh, 2017).

Swaraj is the key concept of Tilak's philosophy. Tilak is often remembered for his famous saying: "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it" (Gauba, 2016). Because of his realistic approach, Tilak regarded Swarajya was not only a right but a Dharma (Tilak, 1920). "He also gave a moral and spiritual meaning of Swarajya. Politically, Swarajya meant 'Home Rule'. Morally, it meant the attainment of the perfection of Self-control, which is essential for performing "one's duty" (Swadharma). Tilak wanted both political and spiritual freedom" (Varma, 1958). Tilak believed that Swaraj is the way for the fulfilment of national life and Swarajya as the foundations of the future prosperity of India. His Swaraj was not confining with self-government or self-rule within the British Empire. Swaraj signifies responsibility of the executive to the elected representative of people; given ultimate power is in the hands of people and that state exists for their well-being and happiness. Many scholars intended to say that Tilak's Swarajya is meant to complete independence.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), popularly known as 'Gurudev,' was born in the cultural and literary atmosphere prevailing in the family left a profound impact on him and significantly contributed to the shaping of his poetic and artistic genius. Like the notion of true freedom, Tagore found the idea of nationalism equally deceptive and counter-productive to the nationalism of true freedom by individualism all over the

world. He says that- "During the evolution of Nation, the moral culture of brotherhood was limited by geographical boundaries because at that time those boundaries were true. Now they have become imaginary lines of tradition divested of the qualities of real obstacle. So, the time has come when man's moral nature must deal with this great fact with all seriousness or perish" (Tagore's Nationalism, 1917).

Tagore's nationalism was no based on the denunciation of British rule; instead, it laid emphasis on the development of positive virtues of manliness and self-help. To him, nationalism meant identifying one-self with the tradition and heritage of the country. He disapproved the existence of an independent group with separate interests within a society and insisted on their merger with the national mainstream. He said, "The section which is unable or unwilling to adapt itself to the entire scheme, but struggle to keep up a separate existence, will have to drop out and be lost sooner or later. And the component which realising its dedication to the ultimate ideal acknowledges its own individual unimportance will lose only its pettiness and find permanence for its greatness in that of the whole" (Tagore's Nationalism, 1917).

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) has a unique and prominent place within the annals of world history. The individual's presence serves as a quintessential representation of the notion of sacrifice, since he has freely undertaken acts of selflessness for the sake of others. The pinnacle of excellence is represented by a person who uplifts others and assumes the burden of the shared human experience. The noteworthy occurrence within the historical records of mankind on Earth is not just characterised by tangible achievements or possessions, but rather by the ongoing progression of the human psyche over time as it strives to unveil veracity. According to Radhakrishnan (1939), those who actively participate in the exploration of the soul's journey achieve a lasting place in the chronicles of world history. The importance of Gandhi does not just stem from his courageous endeavours in the struggle for India's autonomy, but rather from his resolute pursuit of soul-force and his unflinching conviction in the transformational potential of the soul (Gupta, 2006). Gandhi exhibited fervent nationalist views due to his deep affection for his homeland. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that he also exhibited characteristics of humanism, since he placed a high value on the welfare of the international populace. Therefore, it may be argued that Gandhi might be considered a true advocate of internationalism.

The ideology of nationalism, as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, In the scholarly work of Bhikhu Parekh (1995), it is argued that Gandhi's conceptualization of India differed markedly from the collectivist, homogenous, belligerent, and ethnocentric nationalism seen in certain Western and Central European nations. Parekh argues that Gandhi aimed to foster a compassionate, inclusive, spiritually-oriented, and liberal Indian state, which presented a distinct contrast to the nationalist ideologies prevailing in Europe as noted above.

The modern Indian nationalists were also deeply attached to the freedom struggle of the country. While speaking of Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), he was a pioneer and regarded a great nationalist of India. Nehru was different from other critical modern nationalist leaders of the land. He observed, "Nationalism is essentially a group memory of past achievements, traditions and experiences, and Nationalism is stronger today than it has ever been... Whenever a crisis has arisen, Nationalism has emerged again and dominated the scene, and people have sought comfort and strength in their old traditions, one of the remarkable developments of the present age has been the rediscovery of the past and the nation" (Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, 1946 ed., Daura, 2004).

Nehru believed Nationalism binds the masses together, by creating a degree of unity, vigour, and vitality. He had indeed rejected the narrow idea of Nationalism. Besides, Nehru's Nationalism was the result of psychological unification due to the impact of tradition, culture and inspired by its historical foundations. Nehru argued that- "Nationalism would be harmful if it even made the people conscious of their own superiority. It would be most undesirable if the spirit of Nationalism pushed up any people towards aggressive expansionism."

Nehru himself says of the Indian Nationalism as liberal and tolerant: "Nationalism is essentially an anti-feeling and it feeds and fattens on hatred and anger against other national groups..." The slogan of "My nation right or wrong" represents a distorted view of Nationalism. National prejudice often comes in the way of our judgment when we forget to discriminate between right and wrong. As he warned "about a narrow form of nationalism on 14th December 1932, writing to his daughter Indira from prison, he remarked: "Nationalism is good in its place, but it is an unreliable friend and an unsafe historian. It blinds us to many happenings, and sometimes distorts the truth, especially when it concerns our own history. So, we have to be wary, when considering the recent history of India, lest we cast all the blame for our misfortunes on the British" (Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*, 1934; Guha, 2013; Gauba, 2016).

Genuine Nationalism requires that all nations should follow the path of justice and morality, and all actions should strive to make due contribution to the progress of humanity. If different countries come together and try to learn constructively from each other's legacy, each of them would be a gainer, and all of them would be contributing to building a humanist world order (Gauba, 2016). Nehru translated into action. His Nationalism was a firm commitment to the idea of complete independence of India.

Bibliography

- Abbas, K. A. *Tomorrow is ours: A Novel of the India of Today*. Delhi: New Light Publisher, 194
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. London: Penguin, 1935.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of*

Nationalism. London: Verso, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, UK: Verso, 1983

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, *His Writings and Speeches*. Ganesh & Co. Madras. 1922

Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1986.

Chattopadhyaya, Bankimchandra. *Anandamath*. New Delhi: Orient Paperback, 1992

Fanon, Franz. "National Culture." Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 153-57.

Gandhi, Mahatma. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Mehrotra, AK. Ed. *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*. Ranikhet Cantt: Permanent Black, 2010

Nandy, Ashis. *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*. New York: Oxford UP, 1989.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 24-28.

Tagore, Rabindranath. "Nationalism in India." *Nationalism*. 1917 ed. New York: Macmillan, 1917

