

Nationalism in india

Business



Nationalism refers to a political ideology that deals with the identification of a group of people with their nation. The origin of nationalism is described by two major perspectives; primordialist and modernist. The primordialist perspective defines nationalism as a reflection of perceived and ancient evolutionary tendency of human-beings to organize into definite and distinct groups based on where they were born. On the other hand, the modernist perspective describes nationalism as a current phenomenon that needs the structural conditions of the modern society to function.

On many occasions, nationalism is often confused with patriotism. Patriotism refers to one's love for the country but it also gives room to accept the country's faults. On the other hand, nationalism puts the love for the nation above everything else. Even when the country is at fault, nationalist will always defend it and this could lead to chaos. Nationalism is rooted in racism and xenophobia and it could lead to war. It is often disguised as patriotism.

Additionally, it trades on mass psychology to try and make bad things seem acceptable. In the extremes, nationalisms take some unexceptionable desires and mix them with the unacceptable ones. For instance, most people value and respect their country's history in terms of the fight for independence because it gives them some sense of identity. Therefore, nationalists take advantage of this love to mislead the people that the introduction of other cultures or groups would put their identity at risk. They propose that the best way to protect the identity defined by geography, ethnicity, religion and same language is to build a wall that separates them with foreigners.

This is why Einstein referred to nationalism as “ an infantile disease, the measles of humanity.” This paper seeks to expound on Nationalism in India with focus on the independence movement and the contributions of Gandhi. Additionally, Gandhi’s view on nationalism as well as critiques of his views will be addressed. Historical Background India was colonized by Great Britain since the 1700’s. For a long time, the nationalistic movements in India, such as the Indian National Congress, had tried to fight for self-rule in vain.

Mohandas K. Gandhi was a great proponent in the fight to free India. He was instrumental in creating the Mahatma movement or the Great Soul which forced change and an end to the British imperialism through passive resistance or non-violence. Civil disobedience used to fight British imperialism included hunger strikes and salt March. Gandhi also attempted to abolish the Hindi caste system which separated political and religious classes from the outcasts and laborers with little hope at social mobility. Great Britain was weakened by the Second World War and finally conceded to the demands of India in 1948.

However, despite Gandhi’s influence, India fell into disorder. The Muslims wanted a separate state while the Hindu wanted a total Hindu state. Later, Gandhi was assassinated and Pakistan was formed. Therefore, the will and strength of the people of India might have achieved India’s independence but also tore it apart. However, Gandhi’s response to inner schism was threefold.

He changed the scope, basis and nature of the freedom movement. With him, the Indian National Congress transformed to a people’s party. It was no

longer a party for the middle and upper classes. He also universalized Indian politics, emphasizing the world view in the historical struggle of India as the fight for the oppressed and exploited against the exploiters and oppressors. This gave the fight a worldly connotation where all the oppressed in other parts of the world, outside India, felt associated with India's struggles.

He presented himself as an individual fighting for a better world. Indeed he emphasized on a reformed British Commonwealth more than the freedom of India until late in his career. In his view, the national movement was universal rather than national and parallel to Marxist movement. He also introduced the spiritualizing aspect in Indian politics. This was manifested through his nonviolence and truth approach as the basis for order and social political dynamics. He brought in some goodness in politics as opposed to power politics.

He believed that socio-economic order and a political system that is keen on the traditional virtues; non-violence, truth, non-possession, self control, and non-covetousness. Although Gandhi was instrumental in India's nationalism, his general outlook in 1914 towards the British was more of a loyal prince than a national leader. For instance, he supported the British in the First World War even when the Ghadar Party felt that this was an opportunity to liberate itself from colonial rule. However, Martin Green argues that Gandhi used the opportunity to prove his loyalty to the British rule by proving Indians in England for military duty. Most of Gandhi's friends opposed the idea.

Olive Schreiner lamented that she was heart-broken to hear that Gandhi had offered Indians to serve in the English Army. Therefore, Gandhi did not implement his ideas of non-violence as a nationalist. Moreover, when he returned to India in 1915, he tried to recruit Indians to fight in the British War. His position echoed Maharajas' and this was instrumental in the support of the British through propaganda and troops for war. Green states that Gandhi had offered to fight in Mesopotamia and France because he believed that he had to sacrifice for the empire. It was unconscionable for Gandhi to demand the poor Indian masses to commit to the non-violence while he himself had been involved in war.

It is a clear indication that he had one the Indians and another for the colonial overlords. Other critics argue that Gandhi's turnaround in the Chauri Chaura indicated his distrust and fear of the Indian masses. He was afraid of the masses' spontaneous energy and downtrodden more than the British injustice rule. Furthermore, there were compliant from Subhash Chandra and Motilal Nehru that Gandhi ignored the views of the members of the party when they contradicted with his. DiscussionThe growth of Nationalism in India began in the nineteenth century.

Some of the activities that laid the basis for India's nationalism include the fall of the old economic and social system in India, political unification, introduction of modern trade and industry as well as the rise of new social classes. The religious and social reform movements coupled with popular anti-British revolts were also key factors in the growth of nationalism. The British government had introduced a land tenure system that caused so much suffering to the farmers. The industrialisms were also very saddened

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by the British government's economic policy that removed import duties on textiles in 1882. The Indians realized that the only way to develop their country by themselves was by ending the British rule.

A series of famines took toll on their lives. The civil service was mostly occupied by the Englishmen. The Indians found it difficult to be selected in the I. A. S because the examination process was held in England and very few Indian's could afford to fly to England to participate in the process. After the revolt, racial superiority intensified and Indians were very much angered.

For instance, there were specific social clubs and railway coaches that were meant only for the Englishmen. No Indian was allowed to enter such places. The Ilbert Bill was later introduced to stop racial discrimination. It proposed for the withdrawal of the privileges enjoyed by the Europeans. However, it was protested by the Europeans and later withdrawn.

Other bills introduced to fight racism included the vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act. In the 20th century, the call for internationalism and socialism influenced the struggle for Independence in India. The Sepoy Rebellion increased political awareness among the Indian masses. They realize that they were being oppressed by the British. The growing consciousness increased mostly among the educated Indians who lived in the major cities of the country.

They included lawyers, journalists, teachers, and the elite. Most of them had acquired university education from the institutions founded by the British in 1857 in Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta. Studying various political theorists of capitalism and Western democracy such as Stuart Mill, most of them realized

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that they were being denied the responsibilities and full rights to live in the country. In 1885, a political form was introduced in the dissatisfaction with the British rule. With support from sympathetic Englishmen, the Indian National Congress was formed.

In its first meeting, the group called for the involvement of the ordinary citizens in the provincial administration. A resolution was also passed that Indians had to have an equal opportunity for employment in the civil service. In the beginning, the organization took a moderate approach to the resolutions. For the first 20 years, it served as a platform for debate about the British policy towards the India. Moreover, it provided a forum to fight and push for social and economic changes in Indiaa.

The backbone of the new found Indian identity was the allegation by Dadabhai Naoroji, a three-time president of the congress, that Great Britain was exploiting Indian's wealth by unfair means of trade regulations. He also took issue with the fact that British retrained the development of the Indian industry while the tax from the locals was used to pay the salaries and pensions of the British. Additionally, the Hindu social reform movement established over 50 years earlier called for an end to the injustices of gender and caste discrimination. They fought for the laws to allow remarriage of widows. One reformer by the name Bal Gangradhar was not happy with the slow pace at which the nationalist movement was tackling social issues and began to use religious symbolism to spark patriotic favor.

The nationalists faced great oppression from India's viceroy, George Nathaniel Curzon who worked very hard to weaken the movement. As a

result, the Hindu elite, most of whom were landlords, protested against the oppression through the press and public meetings. Some called for a boycott against goods from Britain, including textiles. World War I created a new political and economic situation. Many resources were used in the war that was financed by increasing taxes and loans from the citizens.

Prices of basic commodities increased leading to hardship in the country, especially for the common man. As a result, villagers were asked to join the army and forceful recruitments were conducted. The villagers' agony increased when the crops failed and most of them were left with no food coupled with influenza epidemic. Over the 13 million people lost their lives. Most people thought that things would be better the world war but they did not. In 1915, Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa where he had helped to end racisms with his satyagraha method of mass agitation.

This approach empathized on the need to find the truth and stick by it. This method empathized that if the truth was the cause of the struggle against the injustices, there was no need to use force to fight the oppressor. The none-violence method could win the war without any aggression or vengeance. He insisted that everyone, including the oppressor had to be persuaded to see and accept the truth rather than being forced to make a certain decision. He believed that this method would help to unite the Indians.

Therefore, Gandhi went to various parts of the country to try and convince the oppressed to use nonviolence methods to fight against their struggles. In 1917, he urged the people of Kheda district who had been affected by crop

failure and could not pay their taxes to demand a stop on revenue collection. He also mobilized cotton mill workers to fight for their rights in 1918. Although satyagraha was widely spread, it only existed in the towns and cities. Therefore, Gandhi decided to launch it in the rural areas.

However, he knew that for it to succeed, he had to bring the Muslim and Hindus together. He came up with the non-cooperation movement to support the Khilafat issue. In his book Hind Swaraj, Gandhi asserts that the British rule was formed in India because of the cooperation from the Indian. Therefore he argues that the rule would collapse if Indians withdraw their cooperation. He suggested that the movement should progress in stages.

The initial stage was to surrender all the government titles and to boycott civil services, police, army, schools foreign goods and legislative councils. In case the government retaliated with repression, he proposed the launching of an intensive civil disobedience campaign. Despite the intensive campaigns, Shaukat Ali and Gandhi were reluctant to boycott the November 1920 civic campaigns for fear of popular violence. The non-cooperation was formally adopted in December 1920 by the Congress. It began in 1921 but each group seemed to have its own reasons for non-cooperation. The movement resulted to a fall in the foreign trade.

However it later slowed down Conclusion As it has been demonstrated, nationalism is often confused with patriotism. Extreme nationalism can result to conflicts especially because of the earful efforts to protect one's identity. The nationalist movement by Gandhi was determined to use non-violence efforts to address the struggles of the Indians. However, critics argue that

Gandhi had a different rule for the Indian and the British because at one time he supported war. Furthermore, although the movement was successful in fighting against the colonial rule, it also resulted to the slip of Pakistan from India.