



A Review of Dr. Ambedkar's Perspective on Nationalism in the Context of Contemporary India

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Abstract :- Maintaining the unity and integrity is the most important thing for overall development a country. A country divided into pieces will always be unstable, in which anti-national forces get an opportunity to destabilise the country further. Such a large country like India, which holds seventh place among the largest countries and second place in terms of population in the world, national unity is even more important. Because, of the huge social, economic, cultural, political and economic diversity; and differences in social, economic, and political aspirations. Although since independence India is a secular and democratic country, but if we see the context of nationalism, the conflict of the majority versus minority has always a matter debate. The decline of political values in recent years has hindered the real nationalism of India. This article attempts to underscore the importance of Dr. Ambedkar's thinking on nationalism, changing nature of nationalism in India, and explores the fact that how Dr. Ambedkar views is relevant in present context.

Keywords : Nationalism, Dr. Ambedkar, Contemporary India.

Introduction :- Nationalism is the idea that your nation, often identified by a shared ethnicity or set of values, is better than all other nations. Nationalism can be—and oftentimes is—expressed as aggression toward other nations. Nationalism is built around a shared language, religion, culture, or set of social values. A nation will emphasize shared symbols, folklore, and mythology. Nationalism can impact foreign and domestic political policies and typically has economic implications. [1] Indian nationalism developed as a concept during the Indian independence movement which campaigned for independence from British rule. Indian nationalism is an instance of territorial nationalism, which is inclusive of all of the people of India, despite their diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. It continues to strongly influence the politics of India and reflects an opposition to the sectarian strands of Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism. [2]

Indian nationalism is based on the social, economic, political and cultural aspirations here beyond the controversies about saying 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' or Jai Hind. It emerges and developed as the response to the prevailing circumstances of different periods. In last few years' nationalism become popular political agenda in India and surprisingly at mass level people have been polarised radically. Due to radicalization of people in the name of nation in one hand have united the people regardless of their socio-cultural and ethnic identity

and at the same time have created fear and anxiety among minorities. Similarly rise of Hindu nationalism has been seen as supermatism by the scholars of marginal communities.

The Basic Concept of Nationalism - Nationalism means loving one's own country .Now; this love means different things for different people. Though all the people of a country eg. India is bounded by a single identity , Indian , by single culture, by single tradition, they are also different by different yardstick like language, food, religion, festivals etc .But inspite of the apparent distinction, a common thread runs through the veins of all . Thus though the culture appears to be different in different regions, the common heritage, the common ethos, the common sentiments, the common purpose make all of us love this ancient country .

Although the term “nationalism” has a variety of meanings, it centrally encompasses two phenomena (Nielsen, 1998) ^[3]: First, the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their identity as members of that nation and second, the actions that the members of a nation take in seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty. The first raises questions about the concept of a nation or national identity, about what it is to belong to a nation, and about how much one ought to care about one's nation. Nations and national identity may be defined in terms of common origin, ethnicity, or cultural ties, and while an individual's membership in the nation is often regarded as involuntary, it is sometimes regarded as voluntary. The degree of care for one's nation that nationalists require is often, but not always, taken to be very high: according to such views, the claims of one's nation take precedence over rival contenders for authority and loyalty. The later one, raises questions about whether sovereignty requires the acquisition of full statehood with complete authority over domestic and international affairs, or whether something less than statehood suffices. Although sovereignty is often taken to mean full statehood (Gellner 1983) ^[4] possible exceptions have been recognized (Miller 1992) ^[5] some authors even defend an anarchist version of patriotism-moderate nationalism foreshadowed by Bakunin (Sparrow 2007) ^[6], ^[7]

Development of Nationalism in India- To understand the Indian nationalism, it is necessary to know the gradual development of nationalistic ideas in India in the different periods of time, because the social, economic, and political aspirations, which have emerged in various contexts across time, have served as the fundamental foundation for the formation of nationalist beliefs in India. India's concept of nationhood is based not merely on territorial extent of its sovereignty. Nationalistic sentiments and expression encompass that India's ancient history ^[8] as the birthplace of the Indus Valley civilisation, as well as four major world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Indian nationalists see India stretching along these lines across the Indian subcontinent. The Mauryas, Guptas, and Mughal emperors have all made significant efforts in uniting the geographical space along with the people's at large scale. The nationalist ideological revolutions around the world are thought to have originated in Europe during the renaissance, whose impact was felt throughout the world due to imperialism. In fact, modern nationalist ideas in India arose out of the expansion of the ideological progress of Europe, especially when a section of Indian thinkers began spreading the ideas of nationalism to get independence from British rule. A rising political consciousness among the native Indian social elite (including lawyers, doctors, university graduates, government officials and similar groups) spawned an Indian identity. [9]Just as India's freedom movement was divided into two parties, radical and liberal, the Indian nationalist idea developed against British imperialism appears to be divided into parts. After independence, India became a socialistic, secular, and

democratic republic and the makers of independent India laid the foundations of nationalism keeping in mind the geographical diversity of such a large country, and the shared values of co-existence and togetherness.

Nationalism in the Context of Contemporary India- In order to understand nationalism in contemporary India, it would be pertinent to take a serious look at some important questions: a) Are Indian Nationalism and Secularism separate concepts or complementary to each other? b) Does nationalism mean putting one's national spirit above humanity? Does Indian nationalism imply liberal Hinduism and Muslim appeasement? d) Does "Indian Nationalism" mean "Hindu Nationalism"? Nationalism is a kind of human sentiment based on shared or common values of belief. This is a feeling of togetherness for the common cause that is national pride. A person having a different personal identity, for example, a Hindu or Muslim, may be a nationalist regardless of their personal identity. A Hindu should respect the beliefs of a Muslim, and a Muslim should respect the beliefs of a Hindu. Secularism means equal importance for every person, place, culture, community, and beliefs, regardless of whether they come from a Hindu or Muslim family. Secularism does not mean allowing non-Hindus to speak anything about Hindu beliefs. Secularism does not mean expecting that Hindus should be respectful and liberal towards Islamic rigidity and the criticism of Hindu belief. This is one-sided secularism, as claimed by Hindu nationalists. The idea that Muslims are a minority in India and should be given a respectful atmosphere and special considerations in expressing their beliefs has provided space for the rise of Hindu Nationalism and Jingoism(Radical Nationalism in India) in India. It cannot be denied that ongoing fundamentalist politics has also played a vital role in the radicalisation of nationalism. But the perception of people is that, under the Indian idea of secularism, Hindu sentiments have not been respected and considered as the Muslims have worked as a basis for polarising Hindus at national level. Although all religious minorities in India are vulnerable to targeted violence, the increased targeted rhetoric of Muslim male is often constructed as a primary threat. Not only has he been othered to the extent that he does not belong within his own country, but he is also framed both as an internal and external threat to the nation (Anand 2011).^[10] This framework has been exacerbated through the increasingly politicized and securitized perceived threat of love jihad. Love jihad is gaining increased international attention from academics (for example see Rao 2011;Strohl 2019;Tyagi and Sen 2020). The basic idea behind this strategy has been the patriarchal trope of seeing women's bodies as a colonizable territory in need of saving (Banerjee 2003). Scholars such as Anand (2011), Khatun (2018, and Gupta (2009) underline how the concept of love jihad helps in the construction of the Hindutva imagination of a mythical past, and perception of the majority Hindus as a historically marginalized victim at the hands of a minority group that is threatening Hindu demographic dominance. Although the use of the term love jihad is relatively new, the concept is not. ^[11] He warned that if the Hindus did not unite like other religious communities in India, they would eventually become the minority (Mukherjee 1909). Hindu women, therefore, need to be saved from the prying eyes of Muslim men (Anand 2011). This popular depiction of the vulnerable Hindu women has continued in the 21st century and even revitalized through popular media depictions (Piedalue et al. 2021)^[12]

In India, the rise of Jingoism in some aspects has made nationalism above humanity. Being a nationalist does not mean keeping everything below the national spirit. Our belief that we cannot

compromise with the national interest is not true nationalism because, in some ways, it affects the status of our nation negatively. Because, in the name of Jingoism, the humiliations of people belonging to minorities and marginalised classes cannot be nationalistic acts. In India, in the name of secularism, appeasement of Muslims has been done for a long time, while Hindus have been taught to be liberal. Hindu nationalism has been at the centre of the discourse on secularism and nationalism in contemporary India. Right-wing ideology sees Hindu nationalism as the real nationalism in India. In their view, being Hindu does not mean belonging to a religious group but having a cultural identity. From a cultural point of view, every person living within the geographical area of India is a Hindu and is the cultural identity. The left wing and progressive ideology see Hindu nationalism different from Bhartiya nationalism, while in the view of Ambedkarists, Hindu nationalism is basically Brahmnik Nationalism, in which the weaker sections of society are seen not as privileged as upper class.

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's View on Indian nationalism- In the mainstream intelligentsia, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is revered as the Chairman of the *Drafting Committee*, who spearheaded the drafting of the Indian Constitution, as well as the champion of Dalit assertion and political mobility. However, the selective exclusion of Dr. Ambedkar from the subject of '*nationalism*' can be considered a strategy of the ruling elite to maintain their hegemony in knowledge production and socialisation. Dr. Ambedkar was severely condemned for his scholarly critique of the mainstream nationalism led by the nationalist forces of the 20th century.^[13] Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's perception of Indian nationalism started with different objectives, which amounted to the welfare of the marginal section of the society. He wanted equality and civic rights for those persons who were bereft of them for thousands of years. Without the upliftment of the lower strata of the society, a nation can't get momentum for its overall development and can't have strength in real sense. He had full faith within the greatness and traditional culture of his country and therefore the dignity of his countrymen. Nationalism in him started as a protest, both external domination, and internal oppression. He held the British Empire liable for the negligence of the welfare of Indian people. He argued that status granted to people was "midway between that of the surf and therefore the slave".^[14] Dr. Ambedkar described nationality as "consciousness of kind, awareness of the existence of that tie of kinship," as this is how people come close to each other and develop a sense of fraternity. Whenever I think of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar's thoughts and his vision, his work for social democracy comes to mind. For example, in his speech at the last meeting of the Constituent Assembly, he stated unequivocally that the caste system and democracy cannot coexist.^[15] Dr. Ambedkar was a visionary person and was aware of the evils of traditional Hindu society. He wanted to develop a classless and casteless egalitarian society in India in which every person could enjoy equality, liberty, and fraternity. Ambedkar wanted that there should be no discrimination in society. Social, economic, political, and educational inequalities are barriers to integrating people in a geographical region. Dr. Ambedkar had a deep understanding of Hindu fundamentalism. This is the reason that when he was given the responsibility for the making of the constitution, in the Indian Constitution, he made a significant effort to restore the unity in diversity of India.

Conclusion:- In the context of India, both nationalism and secularism are matters of utmost importance; they should not be taken as separate but complementary to each other. It is important for us to understand that

secularism does not mean respecting our religious sentiments and making fun of others. Secularism means mutual equanimity and goodwill. Nationalism should not be centred on the individual or any communal identity of the individual. The feelings of nationalism should not be so strong and fierce that they threaten humanity. That is to say, under the guise of nationalism, an individual or a group of people cannot harass another group, nor can they violate their human rights. Obtaining a consensus from the common people of Hindu nationalism as the real cultural nationalism of India is creating controversy. In fact, nationalism is not an imposed idea but a spontaneous feeling that has lived forever in people since their birth. India is a country of unity in diversity. People of different castes, religions, languages, and cultures live here. This difference is also present on a regional, economic, political, and social basis. In such a situation, the forces that break the country are always in the middle of figuring out how to weaken the unity and integrity of the country. In the above circumstances, the idea related to nationalism given by Dr. Ambedkar is very relevant because he wanted a country in which there should be no discrimination against people on the basis of any identity. If society remains divided on the basis of caste, religion, and other identities, then there can never be harmony, and it is very difficult to unite the people of the nation in a society that does not have harmony.

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