



POL SC HELP
FYUGP Series

Approaches to Indian nationalism

**(Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist,
Subaltern)**

PART 1

BA HONS. POLITICAL SCIENCE 1ST SEMESTER-2022-23



DSC 3: Colonialism and Nationalism in India

Unit 1. Colonialism and Nationalism:

- Main perspectives on colonialism: Liberalism, Marxism, Postcolonialism
- Approaches to the study of nationalism in India: Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist, and Subaltern

Unit 2. Colonial Rule in India and its impact:

- Constitutional developments and the colonial state
- Colonial ideology of civilizing mission: Utilitarians and Missionaries
- Impact on agriculture, land relations, industry and ecology

Unit 3. Reform and Resistance:

- The 1857 war of Independence
- Major social and religious movements
- Education and the rise of the new middle class

Unit 4. Nationalist Politics and Expansion of its Social Base

- Phases of the Nationalist Movement: Liberal constitutionalist, Swadeshi and the Radicals, Formation of the Muslim League

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Nation & Nationalism



Nation: Meaning & Definitions

- Large groups of people **claiming** common bonds like Descent(**ethnicity**). language, religion, culture and historical identity inhabiting a particular country or territory.
- Benedict Anderson: who wrote 'Imagined Community(1983)' defined
→ Nation: a socially-constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of a group
- Thus, Anderson declares nation as imagined community. →
- Anthony D. Smith: who wrote 'Nationalism(1994)' defines nation as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'".
- "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture".(Joseph Stalin)



Nationalism

- **Nationalism:** identification with one's own nation (national consciousness) and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations
- **Ernest Gellner:** who wrote 'Nations and Nationalism(1983)' : 'Nationalism is political principle that holds that national and political units should be congruent.'
- 'Nationalism is primarily a political principle which holds that the political unit and the national unit should be congruent.(Ernest Gellner)
- Nationalism is commonly used 'to denote a condition of mind among members of a nationality, perhaps already possessed of a national state, a condition of mind in which loyalty to the ideal or to the fact of one's national state is superior to all other loyalties (Hayes)
- nationalism as a state of mind... Striving to correspond to a political fact(Hans Kohn)
- Nationalism is a phenomenon which emerged in the eighteenth century in western Europe and-then spread during the 19th and 20th centuries to other parts of the world.



Approaches to the study of nationalism in India: Nationalist, Imperialist, Marxist, and Subaltern



Imperialist approach- 1/2

- The colonialist ~~view~~ rejected the idea of India as a nation. It highlighted the diversity and disunity of Indian society.
- In this view India was merely an territorial assemblage of numerous people of different caste, tribe, religion, culture, and language. These desperate communities were united only by the colonial rule
- It believed that idea of Indian nation was an antithesis to all that the word "national" implies'. In effect, India was inhabited by a great variety of nations.
- It asserted that it was impossible to forge a nation in India because it has never had the characteristics of a nation nor it could ever have it in future
- Thus, in this approach, the term 'India' was no more than a geographic creation by the British for administrative purposes.
- This approach downgraded Indian National Movement as an agitation by some selfish native elites who competed for institutional power & resources created through the colonial rule.



Imperialist approach- 2/2

- It didn't accept pan-Indian-ness of Indian national movement and refuse to call it a mass movement
- The Cambridge school perspective, similar to the imperialist approach, asserted that there was no real contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people and the central contradiction lay among the Indians themselves on the basis of caste, community and religion
- This perspective viewed leaders of national movement as chief power brokers linked to a vertical chain of client patron network.
- It also highlighted the communal aspect of the national movement.
- Proponents: James Mill, Valentine Chirol, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Elliot, John Dowson, W.W. Hunter, Vincent Smith, a John Strachey and John Seeley



Pros & Cons of the Imperial Approach

Pros

- ~~Hyst~~erography based on empirical research
- Attempt to be ~~scien~~tific
- Produced history of modern India based on ground survey, ethnographic observation
- Used modern ~~ideas~~ and thoughts
- Identification of deep diversity ✓
- Highlighting the communal aspect

Cons

- Discredited both Indian nation and Indian people
- Undermined anti-colonial sentiments among Indian people ✓
- Discredited the leadership of Indian National Movement
- Institutional, legal, and ~~materialistic~~ approach- undermined role of idea ✗
- Eurocentric, Ethnocentric, and patronizing Approach
- Suffered from Orientalism →



Nationalist approach-1/2

- In contrast to the institutional, legal, and materialistic/instrumentalist approach of the colonialist historians, the nationalist historians adopted an idea-centric approach to Indian nationalism
- Nationalist approach completely rejected the colonialist idea that India could never be formed into a nation
- **Two streams of nationalist approach:**
 - According to first, the nationalist ideas and national consciousness emerged under the influence of the West
 - While the 2nd view was that nationalist ideas were present in Indian since the ancient times
 - **Radha Kumud Mookerji**, in his Fundamental Unity of India (1914) and many other works, most famously put forward the idea that India had been great and unified since ancient times
 - **Har Bilas Sarda**, in his Hindu Superiority (1906), declared that 'the ancient Hindus were the greatest nation that has yet flourished in the earth
 - **Lajpat Rai** (1865-1928) asserted in his Young India (1916) that 'fundamentally India has been a nation for the last 2,000 years'
 - **Savarkar** in his 'Hindutva(1923), asserted that India is a Hindu nation in all respect
 - **K.P. Jayaswal**, in his Hindu Polity (1924), stated that India possessed everything which modern Britain could claim: big empires, enduring and successful republics, representative elective institutions, strong parliaments, a constitutional monarchy, and supremacy of Law above the executive authority.



Nationalist approach-2/2

- Nationalist Historians viewed national movement as a result of the spread and realization of the idea or spirit of nationalism.
- To them the national movement was a pan-Indian movement encompassing all classes and groups led by idealist and selfless leaders
- They highlighted the prime role of great leaders of national movement in creating national consciousness among masses; to them, these leaders were driven by the ideas of nationalism, patriotism, and self-less service
 - Bipin Chandra Pal- Image of Bharat Mata
 - Tilak- 'Swaraj is my birth right'
 - Savarkar- 'Hindutva'-cultural nationalism
- **Proponents:** R.G. Pradhan, B. Prasad, R.C. Majumdar and Lajpat Rai



Pros and cons of nationalist Approach

In favour

- generated proud in our past traditions, civilization, culture
- Was Anti-Hegemonic
- Was distinctively 'swadeshi'
- Highlighted the role of idea
- Raised national consciousness
- Linked historical Indian nation to the present one

Criticism

- Highlighted Themes, symbols mostly from Hindu religion and culture
- Not based on objective empirical studies, used historical events selectively
- Contradictory- same time supported Western ideas and also rejected them
- Reactionary
- Undermined contradiction & antagonism within Indian society
- Undermined the role of masses in national movement



THANKS FOR WATCHING!

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