Practice of Patriotism, Ethnocentrism, Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in India: An Interrogation

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Abstract

The central concern of this paper is to examine intersectionalities between the ideals of cosmopolitanism, patriotism, ethnocentrism and nationalism in general, and their changing facets and interfaces in India. It argues that being a multiethnic and plural society, the civilisational ethos of India is conventionally founded on cosmopolitanism. The practice of patriotism and its accommodative principle of unity in diversity have provided the building blocks to this cosmopolitanism. During India's independence struggle these ideals encountered the forces of modernism, ethnocentrism, communalism and ethno-nationalism. In contemporary India the forces of economic neoliberalism, developmental imbalances and persisting social and economic inequalities, post modernism, hyper modernism, populism, and cultural politics have become part of social reality. Notwithstanding the prevalence of the ideals of cosmopolitanism and civilisational interactive processes, these encounters have brought cumulative fluidity in the social, economic and political orientations in contemporary society, and have created further space for the influence of ethnocentrism and cultural politics as a means to remain rooted in society.

Keywords

Cosmopolitanism; Patriotism; Ethnicity; Ethnocentrism; Communalism; Nationalism; India

Introduction

Conventionally, societies in India have been founded on the spirit of patriotism and cosmopolitanism, reinforced through age-old rich cultural traditions of accommodation, ethno-cultural pluralism, reciprocity, secularism and spiritualism. However, India has also been experiencing the gradual formation of ethnic assertions, ethnocentrisms and exclusivist forms of nationalism since the 1990s. Since Independence, India has not only seen the proliferation of civic nationalism, ethnocentrism, communalism, and exclusivist nationalism, but has also borne witness to the division of the country along religious lines, through communal hatred, brutal killings and uprooting of millions of families across the borders of the newly-created nations, first of Pakistan and later Bangladesh.

In recent years ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism have acquired a new significance and meaning in the wake of a resurgence of the spirit of ethno-nationalism and cultural politics on the one hand and the furtherance of the forces of economic neoliberalism, new info-communication technologies, post modernity and hypermodernity on the other. These developments have brought into being profound waves of economic, political and cultural transition. There are unprecedented correlations and collisions between forces of ethnocentrism and cosmopolitanism, civic and cultural nationalism, communalism and secularism, traditionality and modernity, ethnic solidarity and contextual fluidarity.

Against this backdrop, this article elaborates on the dynamics of cosmopolitanism, patriotism, ethnocentrism, communalism, nationalism as they have evolved and been practised in India, and the recent challenges that have emerged. The paper is presented in six interrelated sections. Section I deals with the ideals of cosmopolitanism and patriotism, Section II with ethnocentrism and nationalism. Sections III, IV and V discuss, respectively, practices of cosmopolitanism in India, the resurgence of communalism, ethnocentrism and nationalism, and facets of ethnic and civic nationalism in India. Section VI frames the conclusion.

I. Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism

Cosmopolitanism has acquired historical and contemporary relevance and deepened political and social meaning in the globalised world. The Western philosopher Cynic, Diogenes, was the first to give explicit expression to cosmopolitanism in the 4th century BCE when he described himself as a 'citizen of the world' [*kosmopolitês*]. Over the centuries cosmopolitanism has gained expanded scope through varieties of socio-political processes and events such as during the Enlightenment, along with increased travel, phenomenal innovations and discoveries in human societies across the globe. Under the influence of the American Revolution and the French Revolution, it was with the formation of UN that cosmopolitanism received its strongest impulse. The post-War universal declaration of 'human' rights gave a new social and political direction to it. Over the centuries, however, a variety of strands of cosmopolitanism have formed. Many have conceptualised it in terms of a shared and moral community committed to serve the 'universal community', to help human beings, to promote justice and to guarantee human rights, while others define the universal community in terms of shared political, cultural, economic arrangements. In general cosmopolitanism advocates 'for some community among all human beings, regardless of social and political affiliation' (Kleingeld & Brown 2019, section 2). However, all cultures, religions and civilisations have their own worldview of cosmopolitanism, and over the centuries the concept has acquired new dimensions and been intwined with dominant economic, political and social forces seeking to create common economic and political formations for the rest of the humanity.

From the middle of the late 17th century, for many non-Western nations, cosmopolitanism emerged as a one-way flow. The expansion of modernisation, industrialisation and westernisation, colonisation and capitalism paved the way for the expansion of Western philosophies, thoughts, values, action in the rest

of the world. Western political hegemony and domination, colonisation-induced economic and human trade, and the resultant exodus of people across the globe, forced cultural assimilation. This created space for the cross-national cultural and economic integration of colonised societies into the Western colonising system. In his 'Great Transformation', Karl Polanyi (1944), highlighted the emergence of market-driven economic globalisation, as capitalist cosmopolitanism, through the laissez-faire economy. He related its collapse through economic depression in late 1920s to the resurgence of the Keynesian welfare economy from the 1930s. With the emergence of the post-War 'bipolar world', with the First World (represented by the United States and its capitalist allies) dominating and the Second world (represented by the communist bloc) and the Third World of non-aligned nations, humanity experienced multiple facets of cosmopolitanism in economic, political, technological, philosophical and social terms. With the overwhelming technological and economic and military dominance of the First World after the collapse of the USSR and the Berlin Wall, the world took a full circle towards the unipolarity. The contemporary world finds the collapse of the 'bipolar world' and the emergence of the unipolar, along with the resurgence of a common economic order centred on economic cosmopolitanism (Fukuyama 1992; Friedman 2005).

Such cosmopolitanism gained new expression in the neo-liberal economic world that has emerged as part of the expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the knowledge/ information economy. These phenomena have made humanity globally interdependent whereby the planet is no longer designated by just a physical location but also as 'a unified social space which can be culturally and symbolically perceived' (Melucci 1996, p. 8). McLuhan coined the term 'global village' in the 1960s to emphasise that all parts of the world are being brought together by electronic communication (McLuhan & Powers 1992).

Over the decades, there has been unprecedented exchange, mobility, adaptation, transference, transformation and transcendence of objects, image, resources, ideas and of people across the space (Castells 1997). These have facilitated the expansion of cosmopolitanism as essential to the functioning of neo-liberal economic globalisation. In recent decades, especially from 1990s onwards, cosmopolitanism has gained new coinage especially in the wake of the ICT revolution, which has incorporated people into large-scale knowledge networks through computers, World Wide Web networking, Skype, emails, blogs, twitters, face-book, SMS, MMS and the like. As Castells predicted, these have ushered a 'networking form of organization across the globe with flexibility and instability of work, and individuation of labor through the constitution of a space of flows and timeless time' (Castells 1997, p. 1). A unitary framework of experience emerges across the globe, yet at the same time produces new forms of fragmentation and dispersal (Giddens 1990, pp. 4-5). (For further elaboration see SinghaRoy 2022) New common identities of global concern emerge, for instance against gender oppression, environmental degradation, and for human rights, animal rights, social and climate justice. These have also taken form in the varieties of social movements globally like those of the 'save the planet', global social development forum, gender (LGBTQ) justice forums, creating new spaces for cosmopolitanism.

II. Ethnocentrism and Nationalism

Ethnicity is an organising principle that describes a collectivity based on common origin (Weber cf. Runciman 1978) linked to religious beliefs, history, language, territory, descent, race, shared culture and such other inherited principles. In a multicultural society there may be articulation of subjective feeling of cultural neglect, collective insecurity, social marginalisation, economic exploitation or threat of domination among some ethnic groups, whether real or apprehended. There may be an aspiration to preserve cultural distinctiveness, along with economic and political autonomy, against the interference of other group(s) in their affairs. When linked to an identified territory, ethnocentrism can lead to the growth

of ethnonationalism, and to the assertion of a right to statehood. As Oommen (1994) outlines, 'When an ethnic group identifies itself with a territory, adopts the same as their homeland and transforms their 'outness' into the 'ins' they became a nation and when a nation secures political jurisdiction in its homeland, it becomes a state' (Oommen 1994, p. 264). Oommen argues nations form before the formation of a sovereign nation-state, though this is much disputed.

Communalism has its root in ethnocentrism. It suggests exclusive love, loyalty and commitment to one's own ethnic community, and can generate a deep sense of separateness and gradually hatred and intolerance against other communities. Communalism is thus community-specific within a larger society, while the basis of this community may be religion, language or race. As underlined by Castells, communalism may take the form of 'exclusion of the excluded, by the excluded' (Castells 1997). The universalist and apolitical values of love and commitment to a country, expressed in patriotism, have very limited scope of expression in ethnocentrism and communalism as these are circumscribed by the consolidation of communities. In the Asian context in general and in India in particular the dominant basis of communalism has historically been religion since the middle of 19th century, and this has influenced enormously the development of nationalism. Nationalism produces an overarching collective political identity that overlaps many of the preexisting ethnic or community identities. Over the centuries many components of patriotism, ethnocentrism and communalism have been drawn into the modernisation project of nationalism. Hence, importantly ethnocentrism, communalism and nationalism could expand simultaneously over the historical development of society.

Nationalism elucidates itself as an ideology and a spirit through the construction of a common identity and set of symbols that acquires a degree of sacredness in the mind and heart of the people of the nation. By enacting this ideology, identity and symbols, nationalism creates deep sense of unity, pride and desire even to make supreme sacrifices to protect and preserve the nation. By expressing and generating an in-group identification, nationalism generated both unity and division. For its 'nation', it can be cooperative, integrative, inclusive, sympathetic, moral, spiritual and sacrificial; for 'other' nations it can be divisive, disintegrative, exclusivist, hate promoting, intolerant and self-seeking.

To J.S. Mill 1861(1958 rpt) the nation is a section of mankind that is united among themselves and where people co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people and share a common desire to be self-governing (Mill 1861/1958, p. 16). To Renan (1882), a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle founded on 'collective amnesia', a powerful form of solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices made and to come (Renan (1882/ 1992). To E. H. Carr (1964), a nation is circumscribed by common characteristics (like language) that clearly distinguish one nation from other nation, creating a certain degree of common feeling and closeness of contact among members leading to the idea of a common government (1964, p.7). To Anderson (1983) a nation is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members … yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. It is imagined as limited because even the largest nation has limits, boundaries beyond which lie other nations'. To him ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to be willing to fight for the nation, and to die for such limited imagining (Anderson 1983, p. 57).

Under imperialism the Western world competitively colonised the non-industrialised world using ethnocentrism and imperial nationalism so as to legitimise their actions. As non-Western countries were invaded and their sovereignty encroached, and became politically, economically and culturally colonised, anti-colonial nationalism emerged as an ideology of resistance against the colonising forces. Nationalism as such has been dispersed across the globe and has become central to the project of modernisation and to the development of the modern nation (Adria 2010, p. 7).

To Gellner (1983), nationalism in its modern form originated in the Western world in the 17th century, and has also moved to other parts of the globe subsequently. The process of achieving the ideal of nationalism entails the general imposition of a high culture on society where previously low cultures prevailed. It has also been seen as the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with manually substitutable atomised individuals, held together above all by a shared national culture, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups and folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves (Gellner 1983, p. 57). Significantly in Gellner's formulation, nation state and nationalism are congruent. However, to Eric Hobsbawm (1990) these formations take place in social and historical sequences. He argues that across the world nationalism is constructed essentially from above, by state elites. In the initial phase it was purely cultural, literary and folkloric without having any particular political implications. Gradually through participation and political campaigning by nationalist pioneers and militants, 'the national idea' emerged and acquired mass support from the middle classes, workers, peasants and others, leading to national movements seeking the formation of a national state. Significantly nationalism is then invented and mobilised by elites as the ideology of the nation state (Hobsbawm 1990).

Over the years, nationalism has taken a diverse course both in terms of content and its operations. As noted, nationalism creates categories of 'we' and the 'others'. Though initially 'others' were designated to be the alien rulers and invaders, gradually they are also created from within, based on varieties of ethnic, linguistic, religious or regional differences. These conditions for defining 'we' and 'the other' can turn the 'good' forms of nationalism into 'bad' nationalism (Spencer & Wollman 1998, pp. 255-57). Indeed, over the centuries, nationalism has emerged to be a dark force of love and hate. Though the general emphasis has been on the creation of the civic character of nationalism in the democratic world, for instance via the creation of civic citizenship, legal-political community, equality, fraternity and justice for all members of a common civic culture, all nationalisms have a regressive and exclusivist aspect, and as such are found to be double faced. They move 'both forward and backward, healthy and morbid…progress and regress from the start' (Nairn 1977, pp. 347-348, Ignatieff 1993, cf Smith 1995, p. 99).

In many places in the contemporary world these binaries have appeared to be real. In recent years there has emerged a powerful tendency to privilege the cultural and exclusivist or communal nationalism as a political ideology, over the civic form of nationalism. This can, for instance, create 'enemies from within', inventing layers of otherness by designating the others from within as anti-national and from outside as the enemies of the nation.

III. Cosmopolitanism in India

As has been discussed, the syncretic tradition of Indian culture provided the space for cosmopolitanism in India. This emerged as early as in the Vedic age (1500 BCE and 600 BCE. Philosophically Indian Hinduism has upheld the tradition that has conceived the whole world to be part of a single family, the **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (**'*vasudha*', the earth; '*iva*', is; and '*kutumbakam*', family). The concept originates in the Vedic scripture *Maha Upanishad* (Chapter 6, Verse 72) which states '*ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghuchetasam udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*'. This translates as: 'only small men discriminate saying one is a relative, the other is a stranger. For those who live magnanimously the entire world constitutes but a family'. This is considered an integral part of the Hindu philosophy, and is a very powerful statement and appeal for cosmopolitanism.

Besides being an ancient civilisation and home to four world religions, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, as well as innumerable tribal (indigenous) religions, India has also encountered varieties of invaders and visitors, has been a liberal host of Islam and Christianity, Zoroastrian and many other religions. This religious syncretism creates important foundations for cosmopolitanism. Indian's national

poet Rabindranath Tagore draws on historical accounts of the arrival of various cultural and religious groups and their assimilation in India, writing in his classic poem *Bharat Tirtha* (Indian Pilgrimage):

'Oh! Mother, let my mind awake slowly on this sacred shore of the sea,
Where great souls of the world have come together to pay reverence.
Here with outstretched hands we bow down to the Divine in human form.
..Adore here your reverential Mother Earth
Where great souls have come together on the seashore to pay reverence'.

With regard to the arrival of outsiders in India he writes:

'Nobody knows whose invitation invoked so many souls
Who have gathered here like a turbulent current of river
That has come and dissolved itself in the Divine Ocean.
In this sacred place the Aryans, non-Aryans, Dravidians, Afghans and Moghals
Have come and detached their individuality in One Supreme Body. .....
Nobody will go empty handed from this seashore
Where great souls come together to pay reverence.

He also invites everyone to come to this country with a purpose, writing:

'Come, Oh! Aryans, come non-Aryans, come Hindus and Muslims.
Come, come, Oh! Englishmen, come Christians,
come Brahmins, purify your heart;
hold the hands of downtrodden and out-castes.
Remove all ills and disrespect.
Come quickly for the coronation of Mother,
Where the "Mangal Ghat" has to be filled with sacred water
Which become consecrated by the touch of the great souls
Who have come together on the seashore to pay reverence'. (Prophecies of [Sahaja Yoga 2007](#))

In Tagore's view, Indian civilisation was 'syncretic' in nature. It is founded on unity in diversity, where shared heritage enhances the significance of the uniqueness of all social and religious groups, enabling the plural and composite foundation of Indian society. In direct opposition to this was the aggressiveness of the western civilisation, which tried to forcibly homogenise different cultures — a feature Tagore vehemently opposed ([Mitra 2017](#)). Tagore was a universalist and a humanist and was intrigued by the inherited assimilative, cosmopolitan, compassionate, liberal and essentially secular philosophy of India. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation of India was also equally a universalist and cosmopolitan in his outlook. These essential facets of their imagining of India are reflected in the post-Independence articulation of Indian nationalism.

In India cosmopolitanism has not always remain an ideal construction from above, but also the upward movement of this ideal from below, founded on the ideal of patriotism, and the interactive sociocultural processes of the little and the great traditions. Importantly these processes and ideals encountered challenges with the advent of Western colonisation, leading to the prolonged struggle against colonisation.

IV. Communalism, Ethnocentrism and Nationalism in India

Men and women, besides being members of family, are also associated with varieties of local and larger social groups like those of the kin, clan, neighbourhood, ethnicity, religion, motherland, the country, state, market and many such others. Among all these groups, one's association with one's mother land

(the birthplace - the *matribhumi*) is distinctively different from those of the others. Such association can generate a deep-seated feeling of moral, emotional, existential and spiritual attachment to the land, nature, people, history and culture of the motherland. This can be grounded in the ontology of accommodation, fellow-feeling and commitment for all countrymen, expressing an egalitarianism, an absence of hostility to others and inclusivity of identity. In the subjective articulation, the geographic boundary of motherland is very often naturalised. It covers all people irrespective of their religion, colour, language, caste, class, occupation and creed living in that territory. In Indian local vocabulary, motherland is widely described as 'desh', 'desham' 'nadu', 'bhumi', and the people who are the inhabitants are described as the 'deshbasi', 'deshermanus', 'bhumiputra' and so on.

The people of India often belong to many traditions and maintain a communicative cultural network that moves both upward and downward. Facets of identification are linked by the 'little traditions', such as belief patterns, institutions, traditional knowledge, proverbs, riddles, anecdotes, folklores and legends, and their interaction with the 'great' elite traditions of written literature, based on the rationality, art and music of the elite literati. Elements of 'little tradition', such as indigenous customs, deities and rites, circulate upward to the level of great tradition through the process of *universalisation*; some elements of the great traditions circulate downwards to become organic part of the little tradition and lose much of the original forms in the process of their *parochialisation* (Marriott 1955, pp. 196-197, see Singh 1988, pp. 13-14). The social structure of Indian civilisation also grows through orthogenetic and heterogenetic evolution through encounters with other cultures or civilisations, including with colonisers. Sociologists like Milton Singer point out that India is a product of common cultural consciousness that is shared by most Indians. There is a primary civilisation-like cultural continuity with the past, even while accepting modernising ideologies, resulting for instance in the traditionalising of apparently modern innovations (see Singh 1988, pp. 13-14). However, these processes are not devoid of the inter and intra-group ethnic dynamics, that operate both through local contexts and the wider cultural and political processes.

Though India has a civilisational legacy, nationalism in its present form has evolved within the framework of the modernisation project of the West, and expanded with the growth of capitalism and with the country's fiercely anti-imperial stand (Aikant 2006, p. 170). In the process it has acquired diverse facets of nationalist identification. Bankim Chandra's ideal of nationalism, which invoked Hinduism and worshipping of Goddess *Durga* as motherland, has deeply influenced the cultural nationalists, and was not accepted openly by the liberals, religious minority leaders or the communists. For Bankim Chandra, the concern for national unity was linked to the growth of Indian consciousness, which was Hindu consciousness. For him, motherland was the Mother Goddess, the Devi Durga. His patriotic song *Vandemataram* that was written in 1870 (in his novel *Anandamath* in 1881) provided impetus for the independence movement; the novel underlined the bond of patriotism. It framed the cultural identity of the Indians against the colonial power and ignited millions of minds with the spirit of patriotism against the British.

The unity that Bankim visualised was more intra-ethnic than inter-ethnic. Bankim used the categories - the 'Hindus' and 'Indian' interchangeably. To him there are many cultures and religions in India, and these coexist without substantially altering the fundamental identity of India. Though Islam and Christianity have affected the destiny of India, the country remains, according to Bankim, 'quintessentially Hindu' (Sen 2008, p. 119). Aurobindo (1972) argued, Bankim was a harbinger of national unity: 'Bankim created a language, a literature and a nation', and his work had a deep emotional influence among the anti-colonial revolutionaries.

In India there has also been strong claim, especially by the Right-wing Hindu nationalist political thinkers, to redefine the background of Indian nationalism in terms of inherited Hindu themes. Savarkar (1969) for instance, located the roots of Indian nationalism on the claim of an inherited common race, land, history, language, culture, and common 'others'. Savarkar elaborates an ethnic nationalist model for India,

with 'Hindustan' founded on 'one nation and one race - of a common fatherland and therefore of a common blood'. To him, the Hindus are one because they have a common Sanskriti (civilisation) centred on Hindu culture and Sanskrit has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture as 'the history of this race'. (1969). There is an autocratic and militaristic aspect to this assertion of Hindu nationalism. To Savarkar the development of Western science, technology, industry and knowledge systems in India is to be used for achieving material prosperity, and for making bombs and weapons, in order to 'militarise Hindudom', and 'Hinduise all politics' (Savarkar 1969, p. 46).

Nationalism in India however has not always been centred on asserting Hindu exclusivity, but instead as part of a universal struggle of humanity, for a larger cause. For Gandhi, nationalism is a part of universal struggle and sacrifice of humanity for justice and equality. He was against armed nationalism and hatred against anybody in the name of nationalism. In his own words: 'My love for nationalism or 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, 1947, p. 171).

Though nationalism expanded as a liberating force of modernity, it has as noted also brought social division, fragmentation and hatred for fellow human beings. Rabindranath Tagore (1950) was disturbed by the increasing fragmentation of world and the growing lust for economic and political power in the name of nationalism. To him: 'A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is organised for a mechanical purpose. It is an end in itself. It is for self-preservation. It is merely the other side of power, not of human ideals … The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation…' (Tagore 1950, pp. 5-18). He again says: Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets; ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism …. It is the aspect of a whole people as an organised power. Nationalism is a great menace (Tagore 1950, pp. 26, 66). He was worried about the tyranny of power and encaging of liberty by the shallow motive of power. Gandhi shared many of these concerns, but was not anti-nationalist, asserting 'it is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Indian nationalism wants to organise itself or to find full self-expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large' (Gandhi 1925, p.211).

The fundamental question at Independence was as to whether or not there would be demarcations between state and religion and whether Indian nationalism would be founded on a majoritarian Hindu state or would be founded on religious pluralism (SinghaRoy 2018, p. 174). Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Indian nation wrote in 1947: 'Free India will be no Hindu raj, it will be Indian raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community, but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion…. They would be elected for their record of service and merits. Religion is a personal matter, which should have no place in politics. (Gandhi 1947, pp. 277-278). He further writes: 'I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion that is to be wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another' (p. 257). He continued: 'The state has nothing to do with it [religion]. The state should look after the secular welfare, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal affair' (p. 278). Gandhi advocated not for religious division or for uniformity, but for coexistence of multi-religious and cultural entities in free India. His emphasis was for an India that would be free from divisions.

Gandhi (1933) was against the Western assumption that 'India has become a nation under the British rule'. To him, Indian nationalism is founded on the accommodation of diversity and plurality, an idea as old as Indian civilisation. However, despite being largely Hindu, India it has become a home for many religions. Gandhi was for religious pluralism and the fundamental truths of all great religions of the world. To him,

nationalism meant self-rule for the whole community and not only for the elite wherein soul force, not brute force, would rule. Expressing this, Gandhi advocated for three pillars of *swaraj:* Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability, and the uplift of India's villages (Gandhi 1933).

India was built on a plural cultural, religious and linguistic foundation, and Indian nationalism has always stood for a plural cultural framework for inter-connectedness among people as nationalised subjects (SinghaRoy 2018). Thus, even with the prevalence of ritualistic religious orthodoxy, the heterodox systems have coexisted in India. As such, it is a mistaken belief that unity of a nation is incumbent upon homogeneity (Aikant 2006, p. 175). Nehru emphasised the heterogeneity of Indian culture and civilisation and urged the public to uphold heterogeneity within the Indian constitutional framework. However, there is always an uneasy tension between ethno-cultural nationalism and Nehru's vision of secular nationalism.

India has appeared in Pandit Nehru's imagination as a plural country of various sorts. He writes that the 'heart of Hindustan as it has so long been considered, the seat and centre of both ancient and medieval civilisation, [is] the melting pot of so many races and cultures' (Nehru 1946, p. 49). He however finds that though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which, he argued, had held India together in the past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen it. To him, 'some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilisation. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside, a standardisation of externals or even of beliefs. It was something deeper and, within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom that was practiced and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged' (Nehru 1946, pp. 49-50, 54; for details see SinghaRoy 2018).

For Nehru (1946) in a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built except on the basis of secularity. A secular state according to Nehru 'does not obviously mean a state where religion is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience including freedom for those who have no religion, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our state…' (Nehru 1946, p. 327). He further elaborates that secularism 'does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life', adding that 'any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India' (Nehru 1946, pp. 330-331). To the question as to how to uphold such practice of secularism, he underlined that 'we have not only to live up to the ideals proclaimed in our Constitution, but make them a part of our thinking and living and thus build up a really integrated nation' (Nehru 1946, p. 346; for details, see SinghaRoy 2018).

V. Ethnic and Civic Nationalism in India

Significantly, India has been experiencing growing tensions between its tradition of civic nationalism and growing ethnic nationalism. The ideal of a unified national identity, based on religious and cultural diversities requires some clarity on the relation between religion and nation state. The answer to diversity lies with the inculcation and assertion of citizenship rights. Rather than increasing influence for the dominant religion, citizenship as the embodiment of special legal rights and entitlements, duties and obligations of the people in themselves, is shaped through the engagement of people with the state. Though citizenship in India owes its origin to the British rule, Indian's social conditions along with its ideas, beliefs, values and customs have shaped the meaning of citizenship in the country. The identity of an individual is largely articulated through his or her location in the traditional collectivities of caste, region, religion, tribe and other ethnic groups. Despite the introduction of modern institutional arrangements like parliamentary democracy, modern bureaucracy and citizenship, India remains embedded in traditional cultures (Beteille 1999). The constitution of India has provided the space of individual fundamental rights through Article 19-22 of the constitution. While assigning primacy to the claims of the individual as citizen, the constitution did make some special and transitory provisions for certain severely-disadvantaged sections of

society. Thus, the constitution of India also provides the space for collective rights through Article 15 and 26. However operationally there have been the encroachments of collective identities in the domain of individual identities. In fact, collective identities based on caste and community have been given a new lease of life (Beteille 1999, p. 2589). In contemporary India, for instance, political parties will often publicly express their religious affiliation and promise benefits from the state for their respective communities (Singh 2016, pp. 5-6)

Despite the construction of post-colonial citizenship, ethnicity and ethnocentrism have remained a reality in the Indian subcontinent. Nationalism is still evolving in India, and it is swinging between the poles of civic and secular, cultural and political, constitutional and primordial expressions and aspirations. It has acquired many dynamics and has travelled in many directions and has incurred many costs.

Indeed, nationalism has proved to be a double-edged sword for India. While at one point it was a uniting force against the colonial forces during the independence struggle, it later divided people in the name of religion, language, region, caste and ethnicity. It has become a political tool of unity and divisiveness that has defined the 'we' and 'others' in primordial terms, both from within and from outside. India has borne witness not only to the formation of nationalism through the anti-colonial struggle, but also the changing course of the nationalism through this struggle. With the resurgence of communalism and ethnocentrism, India has experienced the proliferation of multiple nationalities as political realities, and the propagation of a two-nation theory on religious lines. India won independence in 1947 at the price of division, with a secular India on the one side and an Islamic Pakistan with its two components East and West Pakistan on the other. However, after 25 years of the partition of the country on the religious lines, Bangladesh was liberated from Islamic Pakistan on linguistic (and regional) lines. With this, the Indian subcontinent has borne witness to mass exoduses of people across borders, with unprecedented human tragedy driven by communalism and the ethnocentrism.

Many point out that in the 1950s and 1960s, nationalism was a feature of anti-colonial struggles in the Third World, but by the 1970s it had become a matter of ethnic politics, with co-nationals killing each other, making 'nationalism as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly clam of civilised life' (Chatterjee 1993, p. 4). For Chatterjee (1994) while contesting the colonial power, nationalism was essentially a cultural 'normalisation' project based on universalist justificatory resources without making distinctions of language, religion, caste, or class a matter of indifference. The post-colonial modern liberal-democratic state also showed indifference to these concrete differences as the basis for acquiring its legitimacy to rule. This produced numerous fragmented resistances of the sub-altern group to the normalising project to show the 'limit of the universality of the modern regime of power' (Chatterjee 1993, p. 13).

Though the societies of India stand at the threshold of a new economic, technological and political era, ethno-communal identities are reconfigured and reproduced in everyday life through varieties of practices, and are sustained to serve the social, economic and political needs of several forces. At the grass roots level, ethno-communal identity, such as Adivasi identity, also can work as a counter-hegemonic force to redress social imbalances. Against this backdrop, citizenship, ethnicity, ethno-nationality, civic nationality, patriotism and cosmopolism now encounter diverse forces both from above and from below.

VI. Conclusion

India possesses civilisational cultural traditions founded on cosmopolitanism, patriotism and varieties of folk and literary tradition. However, India has undergone phenomenal changes in the process of encountering Islamic invasion, western colonisation, modernisation from outside and the resurgence of nationalistic aspirations, articulation of ethnocentrisms and internal ethno-nationalisms. India's collective memory is also

vividly painted with the proliferation of brutal communal violence and the painful partition of the country on ethno-religious lines at the time of Independence in 1947.

This history and legacy have often created uneasy tensions between the civilisational traditions of cosmopolitanism and secularism on the one hand and the resurgence of ethnocentrism and ethno-nationalism on the other. Contemporary India is positioned to experience fast, extensive and far-reaching transformations in its economic, technological, social and political domains. It has moved away from the planned post-colonial economic order, and from the 1990s has transitioned to a neoliberal capitalist market economy, which has now created a greatly enriched ruling elite. These transformations are widely circumscribed by the interrelated forces of postmodernism and hyper modernism, the resurgence of populism and the arrival of new forms of cultural politics. Importantly, economic neoliberalism tends to convert society into a marketplace in each and every domain of its activity. Consumerism has now penetrated every aspect of social existence, making every citizen subject to global market forces, with common economic appetites and a common media projection of reality.

Dominant consumer culture is accompanied by forms of post-modernism that assert the failure of the generalising trends of modernity and stress fragmentation in social, and cultural terms. Hyper-modernism, with the extensive penetration of ICTs aided by new and social media, has accentuated these tendencies, adding the increasing significance of instantaneity, urgency, instant gratification, fragmenting, and unstable identities. Within these interlinked processes there has been the resurgence of populism, especially from the Right wing, that claims to be moral and authentic and truly representative of the people. Populism encourages an anti-elite pre-established liberal agenda and large-scale mass mobilisation in the name of the culture, ethnicity and historicity of social existence, creating new symbols of unity. In this it uses all means of communication and media to reach out to the masses to construct new identities in terms of ethno-communalism and primordiality (SinghaRoy 2020, pp. 209-221).

This paves the way for a new cultural politics that emphatically sees people as cultural entities. As such it endeavours to unite people in terms of traditional cultural practices against modernity; it emphasises the revival of traditional cultural practices and seeks to reconstruct the present in terms of cultural unity. This politics widely uses traditional cultural symbols, norms, values, and practices to reconstruct new political identities and to mobilise people. It cultivates the religious sensibilities of people and most importantly mobilises its world view and legitimacy to control and capture power. In the wake of the persistent poverty, unemployment, inequality and marginality of vast sections in society, the continued educational, technological, economic and social developmental imbalances, rampant corruption in public places, criminalisation of politics, nepotism and the failure of the secular and liberal politics to eradicate these issues, all this serves to accentuate the pull of ethno-nationalist politics. Society in India today has become fertile ground to nurture these alternative world views founded on ethno-cultural politics.

Although India is making phenomenal economic and scientific advancement, there are glaring developmental anomalies in several areas. Citing forthcoming census projections, Statista (2021) underlines that as per the 2021 Census projection, 16.5 per cent of population of India is still illiterate, with female illiteracy rate at 34 per cent. Unemployment is rampant especially in the rural areas, and the unemployment rate among the educated (graduates and above) is at 19.4 per cent (Statista 2021). The land-population ratio has sharply declined from 0.50 hectare per person in 1981 to 0.09 hectare in 2015, and rural to urban migration for employment has increased exponentially. According to the 2011 Census , internal migrants constituted 37 per cent of the country's population; 20.8 per cent people lived below poverty line in 2020 (as per the criterion of the Tendulkar Committee) and in 2021 more than 25 per cent of the population was multidimensionally poor (following the Multidimensional Poverty index of NITI Aayog 2021). India ranks 101st of the 116 countries on the Global Hunger Index, scoring 27.5, indicating the prevalence of a serious level of hunger (Global Hunger Index 2021). Along with faster economic growth, inequality has grown

phenomenally with the top 10 per cent of Indians holding 77 per cent of the total national wealth (Oxfam 2022). (For further details, see SinghaRoy 2022). Economic inequality has been accompanied by the criminalisation of politics. According to poll rights body, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), and National Election Watch (NEW), 306 sitting MPs out of 776 seats of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, i.e about 40% of sitting MPs have criminal cases registered against them, out of which 194 or 25% have declared serious criminal cases, such as charges of murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping and crimes against women (*The Hindu*, September 12, 2023).

Besides the developmental anomalies, there has also emerged a fluidity in social existence through the processes of socio cultural dis-embeddedness, fragmentation and instability. With the phenomenal migration and movement of people within the country and the overflow of images, ideas and information as circulated through social and digital media, few social discourses gain stability among the vulnerable masses and mobile people. As people become more vulnerable within the world of developmental anomalies and socio-political fluidity, many people take recourse in primordiality, rejuvenating caste, religious, communal and ethnic identifications. These offer meaning for their collective existence in society, for rootedness in the society, for recasting old solidarities in new context and also for gaining legitimacy for their ethno-centric and primordial collective political action in public spaces.

As the non-primordial identities of peasants, farmers, workers or professionals appear to become more fluid, multiple and unstable, primordial identities are privileged as seemingly stable and solidifying collectivities. This has created a space for the resurgence of populisms speaking against the traditional elites, highlighting the deprivation of the masses, their choices and rights, and rearranging the distribution of benefits along ethnic lines. Importantly, primordial identities are also reconfigured and mobilised by many privileged classes of society, as they develop new cross-class alliances among political parties, civil society and social movement organisations. There has also been co-option of the primordial identities for political purposes, paving the way for the resurgence of ethnocentrisms and communalism in society in general and politics in particular.

In the globalised world, patriotism, ethno-nationalism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism have not remained isolated social processes. These have taken shape within varieties of social movements and an enlarged space for democratic questioning, critiquing and dialogue. They have also created the basis for regressive social movements that seek to curb the democratic space. The coexistence of these two variants has created further contradictions between the processes of tradition and modernity, secularity and primordiality, and between civic and ethnic constructions in society.

Post-colonial India endeavoured to resolve these contradictions within its constitutional identity as a 'sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic', dedicated to 'equality, fraternity, justice for all independent of caste, creed and ethnic background' (Government of India 1952). Going beyond the ethnic divisions in society, Gandhi stood for cosmopolitanism and humanity as the basis for national state legitimacy. India has fought many struggles for nationalism, and for the cause of humanity, yet it still has struggles ahead to fight against ethno-nationalism and ethno-communalism.

Acknowledgements

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