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Indian Nationalism

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Abstract

This captivating exploration delves deep into the intricate and diverse evolution of Indian nationalism, spanning from the captivating pre-independence era to the transformative post-independence period. It delves into the fascinating ebbs and flows of nationalist uprisings that laid the groundwork for India's emancipation in 1947, followed by the arduous trials of erecting a vibrant democracy and an inclusive society. Delving into the intricate tapestry of Indian nationalism, we embark on a captivating journey that unravels the intricate interplay between liberal, radical, and religious-nationalist ideologies. This exploration sheds light on the multifaceted nature of Indian nationalism, revealing its captivating complexity. The meticulous examination accentuates the profound influence of bygone eras, rich cultural tapestries, and deeply ingrained ideological undercurrents that have intricately moulded the very fabric of India's identity and political panorama.

Keywords: Indian nationalism, pre-independence period, liberal nationalism, radical nationalism, religious-nationalism, post-independence period

Introduction

The captivating tapestry of Indian history, unfurling since the year 1885, can be seen as a mesmerising embodiment of a grand and resolute political concept: nationalism. Nevertheless, after the triumphant triumph of nationalist movements in catapulting India towards its long-awaited Independence in the year 1947, a shimmering beacon of democracy emerged as a formidable contender, offering an alternative political paradigm to delve into the captivating annals of Indian history. Henceforth, the very conglomerates of nations that triumphantly secured independence for the glorious land of India presently sow seeds of turmoil and pose a formidable challenge to the world's most expansive bastion of democracy. This captivating study will unveil the intricate reasons behind this phenomenon, placing its primary focus on the awe-inspiring national movement that paved the illustrious path towards Indian independence during the remarkable period spanning from 1885 to 1947. Next, we shall embark on a fascinating exploration of the Indian democratic experiment that has unfolded since gaining independence. Our focus will be on the intricate interplay between this democratic endeavour and the vibrant tapestry of Indian nationalistic movements that have shaped the nation's trajectory. Prepare to delve into a captivating journey of analysis and reflection. At long last, we shall embark upon a comprehensive evaluation of the current condition of our esteemed democratic institutions.

Pre-Independence Period

During the era preceding independence, one can unmistakably identify three remarkable surges of nationalism that ultimately paved the way for liberation. These waves, akin to the rhythmic tides of the ocean, possessed their own unique essence. The initial wave, like a gentle breeze of enlightenment, was marked by liberal ideals. The second wave, akin to a tempestuous storm, was steered by audacious radicals. Lastly, the third wave, akin to a tranquil river flowing with determination, was distinguished by the power of passive resistance. Every single one of these fervent nationalist uprisings played an instrumental role in nurturing and bolstering the burgeoning sense of Indian national identity.

First Wave: Liberal Nationalists, 1885-1905

British colonialism's impact sparks debate among Indian historians. British rule impacted history, creating a powerful autocratic realm (Rajan, 1969: 94-5) [25]. The British needed locals fluent in English and familiar with their customs to run the state smoothly.

British pioneers created educational institutions to develop a society with Indian heritage and English influence (Khilnani, 2002: 22-3) ^[11]. In British education, focused on grooming leaders, the administration faced consequences. The key event was a nationalist uprising for independence. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formed to rebel against British rule (Khilnani, 2002: 25; Rajan: 1969: 92) ^[11, 25]. Congress aimed to reform constitution by working with British authority, not defying them. (Smith, 1968: 608) ^[28] They dismissed revolution, believing India's efforts for self-governance would lead to independence. (Source: Ibid, p. 609) They didn't demand autonomy but hoped for British subject privileges to be given to cooperative Indians, believing it would lead to independence (Khilnani, 2002: 25) ^[11]. If not, a more determined group of nationalists emerged to pursue Indian national liberation.

Radical Emergence: 1905-19

Partition of Bengal in 1905 led to a bold nationalist agenda. After partition, the East became Muslim-dominated, reducing Hindu influence. Nationalists viewed partition as a divide and conquer tactic. The goal was to divide India along religious lines, causing conflict. The result led to a stronger plan.

The programme focused on nationalism. Indian patriots knew the British regime's plan to hinder India's industrialization by exporting raw materials and importing British goods. Indian independence seemed urgent (McLane, 1970: 86) ^[20]. Efforts to promote self-reliance in the economy emerged. Swadeshi movement supported local products. Originally, it meant boycotting British goods. In India, a movement emerged. People fought British rule. They threw British goods into bonfires. They embraced swadeshi, wearing patriotic clothes. Swadeshi shops and industries promoted self-reliance and economic freedom. They contributed to India's liberation struggle with a resilient tapestry. Swadeshi movement emerged in the future. Resisting British rule, it grew stronger. The movement ignited Indian people's fire for independence. The Swadeshi movement represented hope against colonialism (Sartori, 2003: 271) ^[27]. Led by prominent figures like "Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, the Swadeshi nationalists" aimed to reject all British influence. (Wolpert, 2000: 276-7) ^[32] They established the 'National Academies' with an Indian syllabus, prioritising Indian languages and indigenous principles. G.K. Gokhale called Swadeshi an Indian movement. It covers various topics, resonating with every Indian's life and leaving a lasting impact on their consciousness.

Nationalism rose after 1905. Radicals undermined British rule in India (Wolpert, 2000: 267) ^[32]. Young scholars in the emerging movement turned aggressive due to noble aspirations. Liberation societies formed in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab, and other parts of India. These societies opposed British rule and confronted supporters of British rule. McLane (1970: 61) ^[20] says their actions were bold and influential. Bengal division in 1905 fueled Indian nationalism. The movement aimed to overthrow British rule with bold strategies and changes.

Nationalism caused tensions in Congress. After 1905, a divide formed between radicals and moderates. Pherozshah Mehta and G. K. Gokhale were Indian leaders. The bold

Congress faction, led by Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, advocated radicalism. The 1907 Surat session of Congress was tense. Lala Lajpat Rai was elected president by the radicals (Wolpert, 2000: 281) ^[32]. Mehta and Gokhale opposed him. Argument divided India's nationalist organisation. Congress divided for 9 years. Moderates held their position in Congress due to the captivating radical movement interregnum. By 1908, bold leaders were absent. Tilak, a change advocate, got caught by the law. Imprisoned 6 years for sedition. This followed a deadly explosion in Bengal. During Tilak's imprisonment, other leaders vanished or withdrew. "Bipin Pal went to London and Lajpat Rai went to the United States. Without key visionaries, the bold crusade lost momentum, and the moderates controlled Congress until 1914.

War caused political change in India. Britons fought Ottomans/Muslim Caliph. Indian Muslims stopped supporting the British (ibid: 286). Under Jinnah's guidance, Indian Muslims joined Congress in 1916 via the Lucknow Pact. They united to influence the British Government for more Indian autonomy. They argued for elected majorities on provincial councils and wanted to increase the size of the Imperial Legislative Council (source, p. 294). The conflict inspired India. A million Indians sailed during the war. These adventurers explored lands and cultures, embracing diverse experiences. They returned home with expanded hearts and minds, gaining valuable new perspectives. They observed the contrasting lives of French and English peasants compared to Indians and desired equal social status (ibid: 297). Only perfection will suffice.

During the war, Congress united in 1917 (Kulke and Rothermund, 2001: 400) ^[16]. The war spurred Indian nationalist movements. The Home Rule and Lucknow Pact united Indians against British rule. The result led to a new political landscape (Inamdar, 1983: 227) ^[10]. However, these advancements didn't bring peace to India. After the war, the British focused on India. They responded with repressive measures known as the 1919 Rowlatt Acts, oppressing the subcontinent. This legislation granted the British Administration authority to control sedition by restricting the press, detaining activists without trial, and arresting suspected rebels without a warrant. Acts passed in 1919 despite Indian opposition. Nationalists called for a work stoppage. This move led to a visionary leader in the pursuit of Indian independence (Wolpert, 2000: 298) ^[32].

Third Wave: Gandhian Nationalism, 1920-40

The Rowlatt Acts led to resistance against British rule, which helped Gandhi rise to prominence. They studied Law in London and Bombay, and worked as a barrister in South Africa. He fought apartheid in South Africa with non-violent resistance. In 1915, he returned to India and introduced a new approach to fight oppression. He spread his philosophy of resistance to inspire many. Gandhi opposed Rowlatt Acts with civil disobedience. In April 1919, he declared a nationwide day off work, starting the Satyagraha movement. (See Dessai, 1998: 94) ^[6].

People defied the Rowlatt Act, inspired by Gandhi. British military responded firmly to protests, no compromise. On April 13, 1919, an event occurred. General Dyer led his soldiers firmly on a tyrannical day. Unarmed demonstrators were shot. The General's goal was to disperse the crowd and lower the nationalists' morale by causing casualties, as per the report. He fired his weapon to disperse the crowd,

wanting to make a strong impact and justify his actions. More troops = more casualties. It became a moral force in Punjab through military strategy. No doubt about the lack of harshness (McLane, 1970: 69-70) ^[20]. The General's actions contradicted his goals. The "Great Indian Massacre" was a tragic event where a thousand lives were lost (Lapping, 1985: 38). This incident made Indians shift from British allies to independence champions. Gandhi led a major uprising for nationalism.

Gandhi used determination and Satyagraha, a philosophy of nonviolent resistance. He inspired civil disobedience, igniting change. The Salt Satyagraha of 1930 was a protest against the tax system led by Gandhi and his followers. They made salt from seawater. Gandhi led a Satyagraha in 1942. He emphasised the 'Quit India Movement', a campaign for India's freedom through civil disobedience. The user's text is short. Here's the shortened text. Campaigns caused change over time. Indian spirit grew stronger daily, like an unquenchable flame. India gained independence from British rule in 1947.

Gandhi's conflicts persist. Gandhi led movements in India for liberation from British rule. Gandhi praised Hindu-Muslim unity. He strongly opposed communal strife and violence as means of conflict resolution (Wolpert, 2000: 309) ^[32]. Gandhi fought against communal politics. He used respect for all faiths and included various religious symbols in his prayers and ceremonies. His approach to Indian politics, rooted in folk culture, lacked a modern interpretation of secularism and was impractical in a diverse society with active mobilisation based on distinct identities (Malik and Vajpeyi, 1989: 309) ^[18]. Gandhi faced criticism for turning the Indian liberation movement into a religious effort. Gandhi's leadership inspired many, especially those connected to Hindu customs and traditions. This approach divided India's communal society. However, his support for the Khilafat movement until 1924 was crucial in expanding its religious appeal. The Muslim community wanted their own sovereign realm where Islam could flourish. In August 1947, the nation gained independence from British rule. Subsequently, a moment of profound significance unfolded as the land underwent a profound partition, separating from its neighbouring nation, India. In 1956, the Islamic state emerged on the world stage. The Islamic state proudly displayed its banner, inspiring its followers. Gandhi opposed vivisection of his motherland and challenged Jinnah's two nations theory. Despite his dedication, he was sidelined in 1947. Sadly, he was assassinated on January 30, 1948, causing embarrassment for the Congress. Gandhi advocated for fair distribution of assets between India and Pakistan. One reason for the accusations by Hindu fundamentalists was his pro-Muslim stance. Indian autonomy cannot be solely attributed to Gandhi's civil disobedience. Many factors contributed to Britain's decision to leave India. Subhas Chandra Bose led a brave insurgency against the British. Bose led the INA, a strong force of Indian soldiers captured by the Japanese, inspiring resistance. The evidence convinced the British Administration that trusting Indian soldiers was uncertain. After World War II, Britain had to reflect on its rule in India. Ghosh wrote about this in 1969. Staying in India after the War cost more than leaving. It convinced Britain to grant India independence (Smith, 1968: 608) ^[28].

Indian nationalism flourished with enlightened elite support. Their mission? To transform politics with British authority.

This nationalism was conservative, valuing tradition and opposing revolution. After the partition of Bengal in 1905, a strong nationalist movement emerged with a revolutionary agenda. Led by new lower-middle class patriots, this group took a confrontational approach to challenge the existing regime. They used various tactics, including boycotting British products and using force as a political tool. Gandhi became a powerful nationalist leader, winning over the masses and leading a crucial movement. Despite public support, Gandhi remained committed to traditional and peaceful methods in his fight against British rule. Independence was achieved on August 15, 1947. This achievement brought new challenges for India.

Post-Independence Period

Once unshackled from the clutches of the mighty British Empire, the valiant nationalists embarked upon the noble mission of erecting the magnificent edifice of the Indian State, firmly rooted in the principles of democracy, with the lofty aspiration of bestowing equitable justice upon every soul that graced the sacred land of India. The trials and tribulations commenced at the crack of dawn, as a considerable faction of India's Muslim populace embarked on a journey to forge the sovereign realm of Pakistan. In a realm far beyond the borders of Pakistan, a land yearned to forge a harmonious tapestry of faith and governance, weaving together the threads of religion and politics. Meanwhile, in the enchanting realm of India, a land adorned with a kaleidoscope of cultures and beliefs, the need arose to cultivate a vibrant political landscape that would cater to its diverse populace. The profound impact of this division altered the very fabric of Indian demographics in a most remarkable manner, causing a seismic shift that uprooted a staggering 12.5 million individuals, with estimations suggesting a heart-wrenching loss of life reaching up to a million souls (Metcalf and Metcalf, 2006: 221-2) ^[21]. The profound impact of these religio-national predicaments on the inception and consolidation of the nascent Indian State, helmed by the visionary leaders Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, shall take centre stage in the subsequent sections of this captivating article.

Secular Nationalism in the Nehru Era, 1947-64

India's diversity makes it challenging to categorise nationalism. After British rule ended, different factions fought for power without a democratic system. The new democracy is hindered by nationalist factions with ambitions to control all of India. A.K. Ramanujan's poetry vividly portrays national movements. He captures India's diversity by sharing an anecdote about trousers. When asked about trousers, he cleverly said, "Ah, trousers, the enigmatic garment." As they descend, they become many. (As quoted by Khilnani in 2002, p. 6) ^[11]. Khilnani suggests Indian nationalism was diverse, like a dhoti with many folds. (Khilnani, p. 6) After colonialism, nationalist pioneers had different visions for India's future. The visionaries of this era were Patel and Nehru. However, these two leaders had different visions for India's future. Sardar Patel (1875-1950) was India's first deputy prime minister, responsible for Home Affairs. Patel preferred a traditional and commanding approach to shape India. According to him, the state would be like a beautiful tapestry, reflecting India's society with its hierarchy, idiosyncrasies, and religious diversity (ibid.: 33). Nehru aimed to rebuild India's society with new ideas and

principles. He strongly championed secularism, showing unwavering dedication to enlightenment ideals. Nehru adopted this worldview during his British education. He studied in England at Harrow and Cambridge, where he flourished. He discovered Fabian socialism, which sparked his imagination. Nehru pursued cosmopolitan and secular ideals due to various factors.

Nehru transformed the Indian state left by the British Empire. To feed the Empire's hunger, the British created an efficient system to exploit India. Nehru aimed to redistribute resources to create public goods for the masses. Khilnani says the Indian state grew and wanted to be a part of everyday life. It claimed to fulfil all desires, offering benefits like jobs, ration cards, education, security, and cultural recognition (Khilnani, 2002: 41) ^[11]. Nehru transformed the state into a sophisticated apparatus for creating and sharing public treasures.

Nehru, a great leader, promoted peace and unity in India by resolving ethnic tensions. Before India's independence, many nationalists worried about the country breaking apart. These concerns hindered their aspirations for independence. Nationalists sought political maturity over immediate liberation from British rule. Indian nationalists were surprised when Pakistan declared independence from British rule and separated from India. After Pakistan's move, secessionist inclinations emerged in India, seeking linguistic revolution. Nehru transformed despite initial hesitations. He realised that giving linguistic groups autonomy is more important than withholding power. In 1956, he restructured the federal system based on linguistic states. This decision changed India's history and politics. Nehru aimed to establish a balanced governance system between the centre and provinces. He skillfully addressed the Tamil nationalist movement, quelling the clamour for secession. He strengthened India's unity and prevented division or discord (ibid: 285-288).

Nehru aimed to end the caste system. He achieved this by creating rights for everyone and implementing policies to address the inequalities faced by the lowest caste, known as Dalits (Sutherland, 2012: 93) ^[29]. Dushkin named it the scheduled caste policy. Seats would be allocated to mirror population distribution in Union and State legislatures. Additionally, another provision was cleverly added to expand this initiative to other government levels. In government service, many reservations are given to individuals, exceeding the population proportion. Reservations lead to direct recruitment and promotions. Wait, there's more! In addition to reservations, there are many other concessions available for those who embrace them. Reservations are offered to aspiring scholars for admission into esteemed educational institutions. Financial aid is given through many programmes, especially in education. This policy aimed to address long-standing inequities imposed on the untouchables. Unfortunately, this policy had unforeseen consequences. It failed to eliminate the caste system. In elections, politicians promised to increase reserved positions. They promised to provide opportunities to new categories of the 'backward class.' Caste groups sought 'backward' label for reservation benefits (Khilnani, 2002: 37) ^[11].

Identity Politics and Nationalism under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, 1966-89

Some believed India and Congress were only connected by

Nehru. They predicted trouble in 1964 when he died. Nehru's leadership transformed India's identity. Nehru's departure led to uncertainty about his successor. After Nehru, provincial Congress leaders formed the 'Syndicate' collective leadership. This alliance smoothly transferred power to the new Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri. According to Hardgrave (1970: 256) ^[8], this collaboration made history. In 1966, the Syndicate faced an unexpected void. Like skilled puppeteers, they deftly manoeuvred the strings of power for a seamless transition. They saw Indira Gandhi as the rightful heir to the throne (Brecher, 1967) ^[4]. Except for a three-year break during the Janata coalition from 1977 to 1980, she ruled India for the next two decades. Mrs. Gandhi defied the Syndicate's control and brought significant changes to the party, politics, and the state. She magically changed the happy gathering with her wand. Since the 1930s, the Syndicate has been the backbone of the Congress machine, combining central command and provincial autonomy. This duo is crucial to the party's success, as explained by Khilnani (2002: 43) ^[11]. Indira Gandhi protected the model that reduced conflict between the central leadership and provinces. The party faced setbacks "in the 1967 elections, which worsened the discord between central authority and provincial entities within the party. The 1969 presidential elections caused a crisis in the Congress Party after four months of inner-party discord (Hardgrave, 1970: 256) ^[8]. The schism broke up the party's favouritism and electoral strongholds. Mrs. Gandhi was urged to connect with the poor people of India. She started the Garibi Hatao movement, giving hope to the poor. She called for early elections in 1971 (Khilnani, 2002: 44) ^[11]. Her populist strategy succeeded in the elections, bringing a new era of democratic politics in India."

Without its complex organisation, the Congress Party relied more on populist politics to energise the masses, who now understood the importance of participating in elections. This transformed democratic politics by politicising traditional establishments like caste and religion, as their followers eagerly voted to pursue their own aspirations (Kothari, 1970: 938) ^[15]. This trend led to the politicisation of social groups, using their identities for political gain. These factions included various groups, from religious to urban and rural residents, from caste divisions to linguistic diversity, and from class stratifications to ethnic origins (Khilnani, 2002: 50) ^[11]. In politics, a dance of reciprocity and exchange occurs between parties and social groups.

Mrs. Gandhi's approach led to political turmoil. After her 1971 victory, dissidents challenged her policies. The opposition has changed its stance and moved from party ranks to the streets. The government was powerless against nationwide demonstrations and strikes. Mrs. Gandhi, influenced by her "son Sanjay, advised President Ahmed to declare a state of emergency. During the 1975 crisis, her governance transformed the state and deviated from Nehru's democratic ideals." Fundamental rights and legal safeguards were temporarily suspended, impacting both Indian and foreign residents. Many opposition politicians, some Congress Party members, and other suspected troublemakers were arrested for activities against the State. The count of apprehended individuals is uncertain. Over 10,000 people were imprisoned in August. September's tally may exceed expectations. Press censorship was introduced and had a negative impact on information dissemination (Park, 1975: 996) ^[24].

Rajiv Gandhi extended concessions to moderate Sikhs during his reign (1985-89) for harmony and understanding. The negotiations reduced hostility, but the tranquilly was short-lived. The main obstacle was political opportunism. Rajiv Gandhi faced a major obstacle - his own vulnerability. In 1986, he faced pressure from his party to stop making concessions to marginalised communities (Kohli, 1997: 337) ^[12]. Rajiv Gandhi used ethnicity to gain political advantage. Unbeknownst to him, this move would cause future conflict (Manor, 1996: 470) ^[19]. His cunning ethnic policies worsened ethnic discord in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. His ruthless actions in Kashmir had severe consequences for India, causing destruction and fueling tensions between Muslims and Hindus. During the Sri Lankan ethnic strife, he strongly supported the Tamil Tigers, focusing on short-term gains. The closure of Tamil Tigers' camps in India sparked Tamil animosity towards India. The Indian military fought the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka to uphold a peace accord. Politics claimed Rajiv Gandhi's life. His fickle actions led to his downfall. The Tamil insurgents, trained in Indian camps, carried out the assassination (Roberts, 2010: 25-29) ^[26]. Gandhi's political journey ended tragically with his assassination. Before that, the 'Bofors scandal' created turmoil and raised concerns about military spending. Corruption accusations eroded trust in Congress, paving way for Hindu right. The power shift hinted at militant fervour's resurgence after a brief calm.

Conclusion

The story of Indian nationalism spans over a century, with many changes along the way. Indian history is woven with waves of nationalism. Indian nationalism has been shaped by various ideologies, leaders, and movements from the emergence of waves to the post-independence era. Before independence, the patriotic crusade transformed through different stages and tactics. Liberal nationalists aimed for constitutional reforms with British authorities. This led to more audacious approaches, with economic nationalism and confrontations against the British regime. It reached its peak with Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology of peaceful resistance. 1947 was a significant year for our nation - independence was achieved. However, this achievement faced many obstacles. The partition of India led to migrations and clashes that still impact the region today. After independence, efforts were made to create a democratic and secular state. Nehru emphasised secularism, modernization, and nation-building. Tensions persisted between secular and religious-nationalist aspirations in India. In the 1980s and 1990s, the BJP rose as a strong Hindu nationalist party. This movement questioned the secular framework. This era saw the demolition of the Babri Masjid, sparking communal tensions and reshaping political dynamics. The BJP's triumphs highlight the appeal of religious and cultural nationalism. India's politics blend religion, culture, and economy. The clash of contrasting nationalism visions shapes policy, conversations, and elections. Indian nationalism embraces diverse identities, aspirations, and ideologies within a vibrant and inclusive democracy.

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