



Indian Model of Nationalism

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This article is based on "Un-civic Nationalism" that was published in The Indian Express on 12/10/2019. It distinguishes between the Indian Model of Nationalism and the European Model of Nationalism.

In recent years, nationalism in India has witnessed a gradual shift from multiculturalism, inclusive and fraternal model to the European idea of nationalism which has a more ethnic distinctiveness bias. This notion of nationalism sits at the polar opposite end to what was envisaged by the founding fathers of the Indian constitution.

What is the European model of Nationalism?

- This idea of nationalism was born during the French Revolution.
- European nationalism is fueled primarily by a keen sense of ethnic distinctiveness and the desire to preserve it.
- It is the basis of the formation of many nation-states in 17th century Europe.
- It was generated by creating a feeling of "ours" by finding an external enemy within its territory to be despised as the "other."
- It can be narrowly taken as majoritarianism.
- All over the world today, this kind of nationalism is making a comeback.
 - Rising Xenophobia in western nations.
 - Rising Islamic fundamentalism in West Asia.

What is the Indian model of Nationalism?

- Unlike Europe, nationalism in India has been the fallout of anti-colonialism.
- Also, discarding the dominance of the rigid Hindu brahmanical system that was prevalent in India, Indian nationalism envisages establishing inter-faith tolerance and pluralism.

- This society-centric pluralistic idea of nationalism can be depicted from Mahatma Gandhi's notion of independent India that is, "Free India will not be a Hindu Raj; it will be an Indian Raj, based not on the majority of any religious sect or community".
- Moreover, it can be depicted in:
 - The Khilafat Movement in India, that was a key manifestation of India's brand of secularism.
 - Khilafat was a platform and a nationalist strategy for much more than a Muslim cause, as it brought to consciousness how the welfare of the peasantry and tolerance was essential to any future ideal of the nation.
 - India's brand of secularism:
 - **Indian philosophy of secularism is related to "Sarva Dharma Sambhava"** (which means that the destination of the paths followed by all religions is the same, though the paths themselves may be different) which means equal respect to all religions.
 - Thus, India's secularism is called "tossed salad model", that emphasizes the multicultural nature of Indian society.
- Also, the elaborate deliberations of the Constituent Assembly gave India the basis of its **civic nationalism** that prevailed for many decades.
 - **Civic nationalism** is a form of nationalism that emphasizes political allegiance based on a vision of a community of equal citizens, allowing for significant levels of ethnic and cultural diversity.
 - In the West, the US is a case where the idea of civic nationalism is pursued.
 - This is one of the greatest strengths of the United States that it doesn't consider itself as a nation based on religion, but a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values enshrined in the Constitution.

Why the European model of Nationalism is not suitable for India?

- The European Model of Nationalism threatens the foundational values of our multi-cultural society.
- Nationalism based on a singular social homogenising principle affecting all other diverse cultures is unacceptable and unsuitable for India's multicultural and pluralistic society.
- The European model of nationalism led to the rise of Nazism in Europe, which resulted in World War II. That's why Einstein remarked "Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind".
- In the name of national integration and fighting enemies, both outside and within, this idea of nationalism undermines minority rights, procedures of democracy and tries to suppress dissent as "anti-national".

India is a multicultural, multi-religious, secular and socially cohesive society. Therefore, the European idea of nationalism is ill-suited and alien to India. The most pragmatic way forward for us would be to follow “constitutional patriotism”, which was laid out keeping in mind India’s cultural ethos and ideas by our founding fathers, as opposed to patriotism based on “blood and soil”.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the differences between Indian and the European model of Nationalism. Is Indian idea of nationalism slowly drifting towards the European model of Nationalism. Comment.