
Role of Nationalist Historiography in India And its features

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Abstract

Being a history major one of my interest naturally concerned the Indian past. I had initially planned a historiography topic on some aspects of Indian modern period and nationalist historiography of began with the writings of the scholar administration of the late 18th and 19th Centuries. They found history a Instrument to legitimize the Colonial (British Imperialism) rule. The historiography of Indian (colonial period) nationalism has for a long time and dominated by colonialist elite and Bourgeois nationalist elitism. No Ideological developments come into being to challenge the mighty british Imperialism for a long time to come in India. This historiography was also done with the presupposition that the Indian Culture was a historical and hence unique. This resulted in the process discovering of the Indian past by the Colonial historians and which said the foundation for a modern historiography in India. When we talk of Colonial historiography the first talk is to remove a possible source of confusion (a) the histories of the countries colonized during here period of Colonial rule, and (b) to the Ideas and approaches Commonly associated with historians who were or are characterized by a Colonialist Ideology. The Indian shady and Colonial approaches as an Ideology in Indian nationalist historiography let us try and get a clear Idea of the nationalist historian we are talking about.

Introduction

Indian history goes back to many Centuries before the Christian era. For a long time India was not even one Country but was made up of many kingdoms. There were times when Vast portions of this Sub- Continent come under the rule of one empire. The Country was invaded many times by foreigners ; some of them settled down here, become Indians and ruled as kings and emperors; some of them, on the other hand, plundered and looted the country and went back with the riches. There were time of stagnation and misery but when we speak of India's freedom struggle, nationalism we refer to the most recent period of Indian history, when Britain was ruling over India and the Indians were fighting to overthrow that foreign domination and become free. Modern Indian historiography began with the writings of the scholar administrations of the English East India Company in the late 18th and 19th Centuries.

No Ideological, Intellectual development come into being to challenge the mighty British Imperialism for a long time to come in India. With spread of new education, press, means of communication, Economic exploitation of India's resources, political awakening began to usher in different region of the Conutry Besides a process of founding the political organizations started at the regional and local levels during the mid of 19th Century. All these factors paved way for the Emergency of a national organization which was deemed essential by the newly educated classes. This organization is popularly known as the Indian

National Congress founded in 1885 by 72 members from different parts of India¹ on other hand various Causes can be enumerated to answer these questions which are responsible for the origin, growth and development of the nationalist historiography, some of them are as follows.

1. Political
2. Socio- Religious Movements
3. Economic Exploitation
4. Western Contact
5. Indian Press and Literature
6. Political Organisations

Political

Many political reasons are responsible for the Indian nationalist historiography. The Causes like Repressive policy of Lord Lytton come first. He was the governor - General of India from 1876 to 1880. Besides the lowering of the age of admission to the Indian civil service and the imposition of restriction upon the liberty of the press, the Arms Act of 1878, The Vernacular press act was never liked by the British rulers. It was always an object of suspicion and doubt. The Vernacular press Act of 1878 and curbed the Increasing Violence of the native press. Indians protested, held meeting to condemn the measure and appealed to the British Parliament to repeal it.

1. Besant, Annie, How India wrought for freedom (Madras, 1915) P.P. 210-50

Socio - Religious movements -

The Socio - Religious movements of the 19th Century fermented the national awakening and nationalist historiography. These movements they aroused the people for national regeneration on the basis of the Socio - Religious Reform movement leaders also created an indelible Impression upon the young minds of India. The nationalist historiography upon the Freedom and national awakening began to be Considered necessary even for the achievement of social and Religious reforms.

Economic Exploitation -

As a result of British Rule, India was transformed by the end of the 19th Century into a classic Colony. It was a major market for British manufactures, a big source of raw materials and food - stuffs and an Important field for the Investment of British Capital. A major consequence poverty among its people most of whom lived below the poverty line and died in lakhs when droughts or floods hit the land. The Exploitation of its peasants, India's agriculture and Industries and workers by the Zamindars. Land lords, princes, money lenders, merchants capitalist and the foreign Government and its officials and spread of poverty, disease and semi - starvation. This was the result of the drain of Indian wealth to Britain.

Western Contact

Western Contact resulted in the spread of English education research of Indology, racial antagonism etc. The spread of English education furnished India with one of the best Instruments for fostering nationalist historiography among the Indians. The Western literature, philosophy and history inculcated in the Indians the love of civic liberty and nationalist historiography emancipation. The political theory of the west, as sponsored by Locke and spencer and eminent works of Mill, Macaulay, the minds of the Educated Indians. The England - returned Indians could no longer afford to feel happy in the slavish atmosphere prevalent in the Country. They felt dismayed and disappointed. They began to think to do something for their motherland.

Indian Press and Literature

The Indian press and literature acted as a stimulant in arousing national consciousness in the Country. It awakened the educated class instilled in them patriotism and Consciousness of nationality. The Political Influence exerted by papers like the Indian Mirror, the hindu, patriot, the Amrit Bazar patrika, the Comrade, the kesari, etc. Was in no way less significant. The popular literature also played a notable role. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Math served as a text book of revolutionary nationalism in Bengal.

Political Organisation

The most outstanding effect of the Introduction of Western Culture in India was the growth of nationalism patriotism, political rights etc, The Ideas of nationality and patriotism on an all. India basis and political consciousness, leading to struggle for freedom or an wage towards political advancement of the people cannot be traced before the British period.

Landholder's society, British Indian association, The Bombay Association, Madras Native Association, Indian Ledge, Indian Association, National Conference, The Bombay presidency Association, Poona Sarvajanik sabha, Mahajan sabha, The London India society, The Indian National congress.

Thus a number of factors were responsible for the nationalist historiography. Some of them were growth of western education, development of vernacular languages, destruction of the old order of society, socio religious movements, Economics exploitation etc. Politically the whole of India was united under one rule. This spirit of political unity was the foundation stone of the national awakening. For first time India was politically united and administratively Intergrated. They had a common purpose, a common craving to free themselves from the Yoke of the white Imperialists.

Outstanding features of the nationalist historiography

There are some outstanding features of the nationalist historiography of India. A major aspect is the values and modern Ideas on which the movement itself was based and the broad socio-Economic and Political vision of its leadership. The leadership popularized democratic Ideas and Institutions in India. The Nationalist fought for the Introduction of a representative government on the basis of popular electios and demand that elections be based on a democratic bases and in the form of a parliament. It not only permitted but

encouraged free expression of opinion within the party and the movement. Some of the most Important decisions in its history were taken after heated debates and on the basis of open voting. From the beginning, the nationalist fought against attacks by the state on the freedoms of the press, expression and association and made the struggle for these freedoms an Integral part of the National movement. The freedom struggle was also a struggle for Economic development. In time an Economic Ideology developed which was to dominate the views of Independent India, The National movement accepted, with near unanimity, the need to develop India on the basis of Industrialization which in turn was to be Independent of foreign capital and was to rely on the Indigenous capital goods sector. From Initial stages, the movement adopted a propoor orientation which was strengthened with the advent of Gandhi and the rise of the lefists who struggled to make the movement adopt a socialist outlook. The movement also Increasingly moved towards a programe of redical agrarian an reform. The National movement was, from its early days, fully committed to secularism. Its leadership fought hard to inculcate secular values among the people and opposed the growth of communalism. The INC was newer inward looking over the year they avolved a policy of opposition to Imperialism on a world - wild scale and solidarity with anti - Colonial movements in others parts of the world.

Nationalist Histroiaograpy

The nationalism thinking become a voice of the educated Indians who started opposing the writings of British officials for disgracing the Indian Culture and religious in the western world. The Indian nationalists such as Gopal Krishan Gokhale, Suredra nath Bangerjee², A.C. majumdar³, Dadabhai Naroji ⁴, Bal Gangabhar tilak ⁵, Bipin Chanra pal ⁶, LalaLaj pat Rai ⁷, and

2. Banerjea, Surendra Nath, "A Nation in Making" (Calcutta, 1925)
3. Majumdar, A.C. Indian National Evolution (Madras, 1915)
4. Naroji , Dadabhai , "Povery and un-British Rule in India" (London 1903)
5. Tilak, B.G. "Making a Nation" (Poona, 1922)
6. Pal, Bipin Chandra , writngs and speeches.: (Madras 19190)
7. Rai Lajpat, "Young India" P.P. 40-61
8. such as R.C. Majumadar ⁸, R.G. Pradhan⁹, Girja Kumar Mukerji¹⁰ etc.

Many Indian nationalist like Naroji, Banerjee, R.C. Dutt¹¹, M.G. Ranade¹², Have tried to explain the western impact of British Rule, however, they have not presented the plight of Indian economy in a Marxist frame work but in a nationalist perpective. The Indian revolutionaries of second phase such as Bhagat Singh, Chander Sekhar Azad, Rajguru, Sukhdev were greatly desperate when Gandhiji with drew Non- Cooperation movement after Chauri Chaura Incident ¹³. The leaders like Lapat Rai, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose also denounced Gandhiji for with drawing the movement when it was on the climax. In order to pacify the feelings of the Indian Nationalists, Gandhi ji had to say that the movement had not been abandoned but suspended ; we may have to adjust our sails to the

varying wind, we may have to alter our Course to avoid the schools and the breakers ahead..... But these can be no question of changing our destination or our good ship which we have chartered for the Voyage ¹⁴.

It would be pertinent to mention hence that the nationalist historiography of pre-and post-Independent India has more broader perspective. In pre-Independent period, the views of Nehru , Patel, Subhash bose Maulana Azad etc. are significant as far as the revolutionary movement is concerned. Gandhi ji did deliver a lot of speeches on the revolutionary movement, their leadership and programmes. He found them violent but praised their velour and patriotism¹⁵.

1. Majumdar, R.C. "History of Freedom movement in India vol"
(Calcutta 1962-1863)
2. Pradhan, R.G., India struggle for swaraj (Madras 1930)
3. Mukarji, G,K, "History of Indian National Congress"
4. Dutt, R.C. Economic history of India (London, 1952)
5. Rande, M.G. Essays on India Economy (Bombay, 1912)
6. Grewal J.S. (ed.) Bhagat Singh and his legend (Patial 2008)
7. Sen, Op. Cit P. 179
8. Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi , vol XXIII, O. 456

Dr. Tara Chand, a famous historian of Nationalist historiography school, wrote history of the freedom Movement in India in four volumes. He has not acted as an historian but wrote the history of the freedom struggle as a boyalist scholar to the Indian Govt. which engaged him in a big project to write the history of the freedom struggle when Dr. R.C. Majumdar left the project. It shows that he has Ignored the discussion on this Important aspect of Modern¹⁶.

Conclusion

Indian Nationalism is as much a diverse blend of Nationalistic sentiments as its people are ethnically and religiously diverse. Thus the most Influential undercurrents are more than just Indian in nature. The most Controversial and emotionally charged fibre in the fabric of Indian nationalism historiography is religious forms a major, and in many cases the Central elements of India life. Ethnic communities are diverse in terms of linguistic, social traditions and history across India. Nationalist historiography means the historically writings produced or reproduced by the Indian historians highlight the Indian history from a national point of views. The National points of view represents the National Culture and tradition. Every nation has its own Culture and tradition spread it. It can be possible through its Literature. History is a part and parcel of literature , therefore what history is written by a nation that represents its Culture and traditions.

9. Dr. Tara Chand, however wrote his volumes with Nationalist approach but his leanings and loyalty to Nehru was well known. He was very close to Nehru and both

of them discussed many Issues during the draft of these volumes. See Tara Chand, op city.

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