

UNIVERSITY OF MISKOLC

THE TWO WAYS OF HINDU NATIONALISM

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GANDHI**

- PhD thesis abstract -

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The thesis is about the process of India becoming a Nation. The essential question of this thesis is how a union with only regional limits could form a nation, where we find states with different historical backgrounds and political systems with groups of different languages, religions, cultures and social states. For this reason perhaps it seems like a paradox that throughout the thesis we deal with the history, existence, importance and main concepts of the national movements of a country with colonial status.

Hindu nationalism is clearly the result of modern politics. Although the root of nationalism, the search for the common identity already appears in common talk within religious content in the 8th century, the national concept became one of the focuses of the common talk and the politics when the political interest arose in the last decades of the 19th century.

Although Hindu nationalism is one of the key concepts of political science of India, its content is difficult to discover due to the characteristics of India's history, religion culture and emotional contents. Beside the characteristics mentioned before contrary to the European ideology the foundation of Hindu nationalism is neither regional nor cultural, but according to our assumption - at least in the beginning - is religious.

Based on the train of thoughts suggested above the study of the religious concepts used by Hindu nationalism could bring us closer to the understanding of the formation of nationalism of India. Not only that the usage of religious metaphors meant a common well known interpretation for the national movements' political ambitions, but bringing the religious concepts into the politics and the flexible understanding of these uncertain political metaphors with several logical meanings also helped to bring the ideas of a multicultural, multilingual India with varying beliefs onto common ground.

In the beginning the formers of the political discursions used and spread some of the key ideas of the nationalism of India with religious content, thus made them suitable to be accepted by the larger population, which created some political connection and discussion between the wider rural population and the political decision makers mainly belonging to higher castes. The ideology of nationalism formed from the first politically fragmented ideology, were cleared through the works and other manifestations of culture makers like the outstanding poet Rabindranath Tagore and leaders of the national movements like the significant Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Through their interpretations the ideology of nationalism became unambiguous in the concept of the independent India and later in the political articulation and realization.

In the first part of the doctoral dissertation I would like to introduce the history of India from the outset to the beginning of the British colonization. The introduction of the multicolour religious, cultural and lingual backgrounds of the inhabitants of the Indian peninsula is an example of the unprecedented history of the united India, which brings the focus to the difficulty and necessity of the unification.

In the second part we follow the appearance and later formation of the national ideology through certain organizations and from certain people's point of view. The political discussions, which were first dominated by the English, gradually became under the influence on Indian culture formers, with the result that, the wish for independence was announced. At the beginning the idea of modern Hindu identity appeared hidden in religious movements, later with the presence of political organizations the ambitions of independence were announced more definitely. At the end of the 19th century the most significant breakthrough were represented by the moderate extremists, which shows that the themes of nationalism were by this time free from religious aspects and had become a political demand. The chapter closes with the end of the Second World War when the demand for an independent India appeared even more significantly within greater parts of the population.

In the third part I compare the two best known figures of modern India; this part is about the personalities and views of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and the politician Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The chapter is comparative, and from this comparison two important differences become significant, one is the difference between their ideology and mentality, and the other, as a consequence, is their behaviour in connection with nationalism. The introduction of their opinions about independence and the analysis of their works about nationalism is an example of the generation gap between them and the difference between their social positions, generally speaking it shows how through political discussions and through many arguments the idea of nationalism was formed and as a consequence of that the demand for independence was born.

As a summary of the doctoral dissertation it can be said, that the main characteristic of the development of India's nationalism is that it had no historical background and plus other conditions typical of European nationalism were missing too. India's nations had no common cultural heritage and also there was a lack of common administration so typical of a national state.

As a result of religious reform movements the idea of unification finally took shape in political dialogues too, and its novelty came not from its contents but from the possibility of flexible understanding. The other important characteristic of Hindu nationalism is the use of

religious contents for political aims. It is clear from the comparison of Tagore's and Gandhi's political message, that Gandhi consciously used religious ideas, while the poet's political ideas are more related to English liberalism. At the birth of national movements it was typical of thinkers and leaders, Tagore too, that their ideology was almost completely free from religious ideas and cults, and was clearly more political. Obviously the usage of Hindu religious symbolism closed out or at least alienated all other religious minorities, thus making it impossible for them to take part in the nationalistic movements, therefore giving it an elusively Hindu character.

The importance of Gandhi's role lays in his ability to use and in some case to reform the ideology that he inherited from the national movements. As many of these movements attained the usage of the ideology of Hinduism, but these movements often wished to return to the orthodox Hinduism, and their leaders appeared to be devoted to minimal social changes. Gandhi has changed this practise and aimed to achieve a modern objective, the national independence with a thousand year old ideology. Considering social influence Gandhi achieved the greatest result among the politicians of his time, his success was definitely due to the fact that Gandhi reached to the roots of Hinduism and used it not only in his speeches and views but in his outside appearance as well. Today we would say that his appearance which showed his genuinely religious appeal helped him to build bridges between the politicians and the greater masses.

The work of Tagore has contributed to the modern Indian symbolism. After India became independent the country chose one of his songs (*Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka*) as their national anthem, and Bangladesh also find a Tagore poem (*Amar Sonar Bangla*) worthy of being their national anthem.

Finally it can be said that the scientific analysis of Indian nationalism could not only bring important statements in literature or in political science, but could also be relevant in connection with other aspects like administration and international relations too. Especially because the questions in connection with Indian nationalism are still controversial issues, and are still forming concerning India's integrity, religion and language, the rights of minorities and also the central administration and the relationship between smaller regional administrative units.