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The Revival of Nationalism: An Indian Critique

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Introduction

Nationalism is being invoked in the present world at times to protect the sovereignty of existing nation-states, and, at other times to claim a national identity to seek new nation-states. The scenes that followed the Yugoslav crisis in recent years bear witness to the power that nationalism can still have on ordinary citizens. They showed us how nationalism can set the people of a community against each other. People saw the friends and neighbours with whom until then they had shared their lives in relative peace being murdered or driven out of their land helplessly.

At a time when geographical and cultural boundaries are becoming fuzzier through the diasporas and globalisation of trade in the late 20th and early 21st century, and the dependence of developed nations on consumer market, as well as the labour force of less developed countries for mutual benefit, one would have thought that nationalism would have been deemed an irrelevant and detrimental constituent for a coherent political community, and that the concept of nation and its abstract nationalism would have been dismissed as an outdated doctrine and relegated to history. However, the return of nationalism with such vehemence in recent years has been shocking. This raises the question: why is there an upsurge in nationalism which almost destroyed the western world with two world wars with its capacity to generate hatred and ill-will among people? Why is there an attempt to revive nationalism even within nations who respect liberal values? In spite of most nations harbouring multiethnic, multicultural communities, why are such strong arguments put forward vigorously and persistently for

reviving nationalism in order to ensure togetherness within a political community? This gives out a very confusing picture of the sense of direction in which the political world is heading.

Is nationalism a way forward for contemporary political communities? Can it be envisaged as an ideology which can secure much needed political coherence within present nation-states? To understand the concept of nation and weigh the arguments for and against nationalism as a doctrine one has to look back to the origins of nation, and nationalism, as we perceive them today. What is a 'nation'? What is 'national identity'? What is 'nationalism'? Why was nationalism thought to be necessary for a coherent political community in the first place? Can nationalism be seen as a unifying force for bringing together multiethnic, multicultural communities within one structure? Can it be ethically defended as a political doctrine for a contemporary political community? Can the ideology of nationalism be universalised? If not, are there any other conceptions of political organization than the nation-state?

How did nations as we perceive them today take their shape?

Every political arrangement is an evolutionary event in the calendar of human society. Each has a trajectory through which it runs its own course. The political history of modern nations and nationalism can also be seen as one of those defining events in politics. Though the concept of nation and national consciousness itself can be traced back to medieval times, nationalism, as we perceive it today in the political context, (as it

has widely been accepted) has presented itself historically since the beginning of the 18th century.¹ Since the concepts of nation and its derivative nationalism in their present form have been seen as a historically evolved phenomenon, it becomes imperative that the concept of nationalism is analysed in the historical context. It is through history that one can trace the emergence of nationalism as a force which allegedly brought the communities together. Hence, I shall locate the question of the ethical/philosophical dimension of nationalism in its historical context.

The application of the sentiment of nationalism for political ends has often been traced back to the 18th century and associated with the rise of rationalism in the post-enlightenment era which changed the view of how the common man conceived his 'dignity and purpose in life'. It saw political power, invested in the select few in the earlier political structure of the middle ages, be it in dynastical or ecclesiastical heads, giving way to the pressure of populist movements. The emergent political community was dictated by the people, and hence, had to accommodate the will of individuals in delivering the 'good life' of their vision and perception. The new political structure, ideally, had to accommodate newly discovered individual self-respect and worth. Ensuing political ideologically, had to make sure that liberty and equality of every member was ensured so that members could live their lives according to their own wishes and desires, and realize their vision of life to the best of their ability in the process. It had to work towards the happiness of all its members with equal importance.² Developing a new style of political community was expected to concentrate on bringing about socio-economic

fairness with political harmony. It was seen as necessary that a new system should ensure the welfare of its members as a primary requirement.

To deliver equality and dignity to its members it was essential that the emergent structure brought about a sense of togetherness between the people as equal members of a newly formed community. This was not an easy task at that particular time in history. The industrial revolution had brought about social and economic changes. The agrarian society's social network was giving way to industrialized working communities who had moved away from their original social set up. This rendered the old social structures incapable of accommodating the changes within their existing folds. They crumbled under the pressure. But, for a nation to work as a political community it was necessary that dispersed groups had to come under one banner and develop a new kind of relationship between members. The group had to work towards the welfare of members whom they did not actually know and with whom they did not interact socially. Thus, it was necessary that people were given a rational account of why their loyalty to other members was essential and how it could be secured. The guidelines for the legitimacy of membership had to be drawn to ensure that all the members who belonged to the group could share the all-important social goods. Sharing would only work, it was thought, if there were a natural affinity between members. In the absence of any face-to-face contact between members, members who shared common values, and ideology for their fulfilment of life, it was thought, would form a group with a sense of fraternity as a matter of course. They would be able to establish relationships between themselves and also see where their efforts were invested. A pre-political community became a

prominent criterion for a coherent state. 'Nationalism', says Elie Kedourie in his book *Nationalism*, 'pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states.'³

There was another significant historical drama in progress in the 18th century. The trading countries like India and Africa were soon reduced to colony status with imperial rule imposed on them from across the sea. Colonization brought a new kind of awareness of superiority to the colonizers who were technologically advanced. They viewed undeveloped colonies as civilizationally inferior to their own culture. There was a need to draw new distinctions between the colonizer and the colonized, between the civilized and the uncivilized, between cultured westerners and culturally backward 'others'. National identity became a defining factor for containing political power by demarcating people into categories. At such a time, it was not only necessary for the colonial power to create boundaries and contain power within its own land and keep 'others' out, but it was also necessary to hold power without territorially occupying the area. The concept of nation, nationalism and national identity worked as an ingenious instrument for fulfilling the agenda. It helped to integrate power through sporting the 'superior origin and culture' of the colonizer as against the 'uncivilized' colonized. The significance of a common social community prior to a political structure became more and more significant for a national identity.

Thus, it is argued, nation-state, nationalism and national identity became the important pillars of the 18-19th century political structures of the west. As a political ideology, nationalism based its tenets on the rights of individuals for free, equal and dignified life within a political community. To deliver such a life it was necessary that nationalism accepted the principle of providing a harmonious life where equal distribution of social goods, non-coercion by the state and respect to every member of the community prevailed. Individuals could aspire for such harmonious community life, nationalists believed, only where there was some kind of pre-political connection between members; there was some coherence for the formation of the group in the first place. They very strongly believed that political harmony can ensue only within a coherent community where members had a strong sense of belonging, an innate sense of commitment to the welfare of other members arising out of such relationship, prior to belonging to a political community.

Many different forms of political structures have emerged in the west since ecclesiastical and monarchical rules gave way to that of populist governments. However, the argument for the membership of a political community has mainly revolved round two major points at issue, that is whether political communities need be involuntary organisations for securing social and political harmony, or whether political harmony can be envisaged within a political community where membership of political community is acquired voluntarily. For German Romantics the answer lay in forming a political community within a pre-political community. They advocated a family model, because they argued, in a community where membership was pre-given, there was an inherent disposition for

sharing and looking after one's own community members as is manifest within the family network. Whereas, civic voluntarism, the second line of argument, highlighted the attribute of human reasoning, and argued that a civic community where the will of the people to share political space brings people together, ensures the much-needed fraternity. They envisaged political communities as groups whose members voluntarily pledge their allegiance directly towards the state for the sake of shared interest in the welfare of fellow citizens. The boundary here would not obviously be a pre-political one, as it was for the other model, but a geographically drawn one and membership would be based on respecting individual rights and obligations.

The argument for ethnic nationalism has largely been discounted as an inappropriate way of determining citizenship in the modern world. Liberal political philosophy, the most favoured political doctrine, adheres to the principle that it is the duty of every civic nation to deliver liberty, respect and equality to every member regardless of their pre-political group connections. They support civic nationalism as a fair system because they believe that liberal tenets like equality, liberty, and individualism are best delivered within such an arrangement. However, in spite of their commitment to equality and freedom for all members, some liberal philosophers still argue that nationalism in some form can and should be accommodated in liberal politics because some kind of cultural homogeneity, they still believe, is essential for a coherent political community. Solidarity such 'shared culture group' projects, they argue, is vital for the sustenance of the state which civic nationalism alone is unable to deliver. They equate cultural identity with national identity and argue that national identity is essential for furthering political harmony.

Such support for cultural nationalism in liberal politics, to which most western nations adhere, faces tension in contemporary political communities. Can cultural nationalism be accommodated within the liberal state? The paradox for liberal philosophers who argue for cultural nationalism is: can the state support cultural nationalism, and deliver equality and freedom to all its citizens in a state which legitimately harbours minority cultures in its political boundaries at the same time? If they believe that common culture is essential for political coherence, then it is the responsibility of the polity to ensure that a common culture exists within its boundaries at all times, regardless of the widespread migrations of modern times. Such a condition can only be achieved if minority cultures arriving into the political fold assimilate with the existent culture. This argument obviously favours majority cultures and minority groups are deprived of access to their own cultures.

Doesn't such an arrangement translate into inequality for its citizens? If they believe culture is vital for leading a meaningful life, how can they deny that right to members of minority cultures? Doesn't it mean treading on the rights of minorities to an entitlement to their own culture so that they can lead the life they aspire according to the guidance of their own culture? If, on the other hand, minority cultures are to be offered equality and status in recognition of their right to their cultures as the liberal principles would demand, how can sustaining cultural identity be possible? It would mean letting go of the principle that a homogeneous culture is necessary for social coherence.

Moreover, one can raise doubts about the validity of the arguments in favour of nationalism: is cultural nationalism a coherent ideology appropriate for contemporary

political communities? Is there enough evidence to prove that it ensures political stability and hence is an ideology which can be universalised? Can cultural nationalism be explained as a logical binding force which ensures internal coherence? Is nationalism an inherent sentiment and hence functional or is it instrumental for political coherence? Are there any coherent arguments to prove otherwise? Can the ethics of looking after the welfare of one's own over and above others be morally justified? Can resorting to cultural nationalism be a forward-looking vision for changing social scene of today's multiethnic, multicultural world? Or, can it be seen as a political arrangement that served western nations of the 18-20th centuries and, as such, a dogma which needs to be relegated to history and introduce a new way of thinking in order to accommodate significant social changes? Is there an alternative way of envisaging a coherent political principle which can accommodate modernist political communities where cultural affiliation is seen as an aspect, though a very important one, of individual identity and isolate it from political citizenship?

These are the issues I hope to examine critically in this thesis. I shall deal with them mainly in two sections. In the first two chapters of the first section, I shall outline the development of different forms of political communities in western discourse. I shall expand on the two main strands of arguments, that is, i.) nations as non-voluntary organizations and ii.) nations as voluntary political communities that have dominated western political thought since the 18th century, for deciding the membership of a political state. I shall highlight the logic involved in arranging the political structure in the ways which they propose. I shall allude to the arguments offered in support of ethnic

nationalism by Herder and Fichte, two prominent German Romantics who strongly believed in a political community set on the family model for coherence. However, I shall observe that treating political membership as non-voluntarily acquired endowment does not leave much room for the expression of individualism. It does not deliver freedom and dignity to all members within contemporary political communities which are multiethnic and multicultural in their structure. I shall turn to the arguments of the civic nationalist Renan who, in contrast to ethnic nationalism, argues that membership in civic nations should be sought voluntarily. It is the will of the people which determines the membership not their ethnic origin. Liberal political philosophy upholds the principle of civic membership unequivocally and supports the concept of political membership based on voluntary choice.

However, I shall contend that, though civic nationalism advocates voluntary membership, and thus, advocates for a different approach in locating the eligibility of membership of a political community away from ethnic nationalists, some liberal nationalists, like Kymlicka, Miller, and Taylor, for example, still revert to the belief that shared identity is contingent on elements shared involuntarily within the existent culture. Thus, even when voluntary membership dictates western polity the attraction of shared cultural identity prevails in western political discourse. This opens the question whether their explanation for placing culture at the heart of political community is logically acceptable and ethically justifiable for modern political structure. Does it uphold the liberal principles of individual autonomy and equal access to freedom and dignity? Is their assumption about the function of culture rightly placed? I shall, with examples, advance the view that their

stress on common culture is debatable and that the position of liberal nationalists is unliberal, narrow minded in its approach, and ethically hard to sustain.

This raises some questions: if liberal nationalism cannot be seen as an ethically justifiable doctrine, how and why has it come to occupy the centre ground in the Anglo-American political discourse? Has shared culture always been at the centre of political communities historically? I shall observe, in the third chapter, that social and historical accounts of political communities through the ages suggest that there is no inherent connection between the sentiment of nationalism and a harmonious political community. The involvement of the sentiment of nationalism in political context can only be traced back to the 18th century. Sociologists suggest a direct connection between the momentous changes which took place in economic, social, and political arenas around this time in the history of western nations due to the industrial revolution and the involvement of nationalism in the political context. In this chapter, I shall discuss the theories put forward by them to explain the connection. Views have been varied, from seeing the involvement of shared culture as an accidental instrument (it was a convenient component which happened to be available for restructuring disturbed communities) to using culture as a convenient strategy to accommodate political power within post-industrial, post-colonial history and hence nurturing it as a powerful weapon to control members and non-members in the post-industrial world.

I shall look at the argument of sociologists who reject the supposed naturalistic account of nationalism, particularly those of Gellner and Anderson who explain the rise of

nationalism as a historical phenomenon. They both establish a connection between industrial revolution, the ensuing changes in socio-economic conditions, and the development of nationalism as a political ideology. Gellner thinks that nations are constructs, inventions taking their shape to accommodate economic changes brought on by the industrial revolution. However, though his argument that nationalism is not a naturally evolved phenomenon but a political strategy is convincing, it is arguable whether it can be seen as the product of invention. Doing so undermines human nature which is inherently individualistic and independent. Though it can be influenced by society through nurture, it cannot be controlled to the level Gellner's theory supposes. I shall put forward the argument of Anderson which explains the origin of nations, on the contrary, by the claim that they are sociological developments, that is 'creations' and not inventions as Gellner observes. Anderson's argument recognises the contribution of self-conscious individuals who form the political group. I shall evaluate his argument that nations are 'imagined communities' and that they took their origin in the west against the background of historical events, which necessitated the evolution of new political structures, and the nation-states took their shape. Once the concept of the nation-state developed, he further says, it was used by the nationalist intelligentsia to establish coherent political community wherever political harmony was disturbed by the economic, and social changes. This was particularly true, he assumes, of new states which were formed as a result of de-colonization.

The explanations of Anderson and Gellner provide a plausible account of nations as political communities which evolved as a solution to suit a particular situation arising out

of changes in the economic and political scenery of the era. Such narrations of nations as historical creations, saying that there is nothing inherent about the membership for political coherence, generate a major problem for promoting nationalism as a political ideology. How can a political structure imagined by a certain group, developed at a particular time in history suit political communities with different existent conditions and at a different time in history? This has been criticised strongly by many contemporary political thinkers particularly within non-western political discourse. Different writers have picked on different aspects to highlight the inadequacy of nationalism as a political theory. If nationalism is seen as an accidental development historically and sociologically, is there any advantage in arguing for shared culture as the basis for ensuring coherence within contemporary political communities where the social and political scene has moved away from the 19th century Europe where it took its origin? Even if one were to assume that coherence is necessary for any harmonious political community, is nationalism the right doctrine for achieving such a condition within a post-colonial, globalized economic climate with widespread population movements? Can the revival of nationalism in political context be justified? Can identities be arranged for people? Is nationalism the only ideology which will ensure harmony within a political community ubiquitously?

In the second section of the thesis, I shall contend that nationalism, as a political ideology, may have served a very vital role through social evolution in harmonising disjointed communities under one umbrella at one stage in history, but, it is not a congenial force to be invoked to produce coherent political communities under modern

social, economic and political conditions. It cannot be viewed as a solution for arranging modern political communities because the very social, economic and political conditions under which its ideology developed have changed beyond the point of no return. The social structure of most political communities today is multicultural. The western concept of nationalism is an inadequate doctrine for political arranging such multicultural communities. One might agree, at this stage, that accommodating multicultural communities within shared political structure needs a fresher look away from western conceptions of nationalism. I shall particularly allude to the critique provided by some prominent Indian political theorists on various aspects of the ideology of nationalism, because I believe that the modern world is exposed to the problems arising out of a complex mixture of cultures which countries like India have faced for centuries. People in India have historically lived under conditions where they have constantly been negotiating between various cultures. It is possible, one may feel, that the political thoughts emanating from such a community may have the potential to offer a valuable constructive contribution to resolving some of the tensions faced by multicultural nation-states of today.

The discourses on nationalism in India, however, have been multi-stranded. As we sift through history, we see many arguments, ranging from justifying nationalism to rejecting it altogether as a political doctrine. There were many thinkers like Gokhale and Tilak who saw western conceptions of nationalism as a benevolent ideology which could hold the fragmented Indian community together and provide the social conditions necessary for establishing a liberal state in order to provide a society where equality, individuality

and freedom prevailed. Shri Aurobindo Ghosh envisioned nationalism as a step up the ladder of social evolution which could ultimately lead to an international community living in harmony with nation-states co-operating with each other in good faith. Gandhi and Tagore, two other prominent writers who heavily influenced the political scene of pre-independent India provided a very robust argument against nationalism as a political ideology. They argued that nationalism in its western vision was not an ethically defensible ideology for arranging multicultural communities. It did not have the scope within its ideology, they believed, to provide the liberal tenets of equality and liberty to express one's individuality. Tagore totally rejected nationalism as an evil force which divided the community rather than united it, whereas Gandhi saw an application of nationalism without its limiting aspect. At the other end of the spectrum, as it were, one can locate the thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar, another prominent leader, who also believed that narrow and limited conception of nationalism leads to greater inequality rather than ironing out the differences. Liberal nationalism, he believed, sustained inequality within its structure and hence he did not see any scope for nationalism particularly the one envisaged by Gandhi. He argued that the state with its institutional network has to lead society to a higher level of civilization which could deliver equality and freedom to every individual in real terms.

I have focused my thesis on the writings of Gandhi and Tagore because I believe that they especially negate the arguments of a particular strand of liberal nationalists like Miller, Kymlicka and Taylor who argue for shared cultural community for political coherence. They elaborate very clearly that nationalism in its western vision is

detrimental to social and political harmony particularly in multicultural communities. They argue that it misunderstands the dynamics involved in the creation of coherent political group. They argue convincingly that there is nothing imperative about shared cultural community for political coherence. They put forward a convincing account of the development of nationalism which assumes shared culture as a vital factor for coherent political community in the western discourse. They then show how the predominance of shared culture in their discourse is related to the prevalent economic and political conditions of the era. They have analysed and elaborated the western ideology of nationalism as economically originated and power related which developed at a certain time in history and hence could never be envisaged as a solution to seeking equality and freedom of every citizen which liberalism aims to under present conditions ubiquitously.

Nevertheless, I shall argue that though nationalism as a doctrine appears to be inconsistent and that national identity as perceived by the western concept is irrelevant to social and political conditions at another time in history, political harmony is easier to be envisaged if there is coherence within a political community. There is more to sharing political life than commitment to the laws of the land and political allegiance to the community. For developing a shared sense of political community, one needs to feel a sense of belonging, a sense of togetherness in more than political sense. One needs to feel a stake in the welfare of the community and in the construction of institutions like education, social welfare and so on. However, I think that to assume that shared culture is pivotal for such development is debatable. I concur with the vision of community which Gandhi and Tagore project and argue that socially coherent communities contribute to

harmonious political communities and hence, one has to recognise that socially coherent communities are necessary for seeking harmonious political community.

In the first chapter of this section, I shall advance the antinationalist arguments of political theorist Parekh and propose that the major problem with the theory of nationalism is that, as a theory, it is grounded in misconceived assumptions. There is no conclusive proof to argue that shared cultural identity and national identity are interdependent, and that common culture provides a vital link between the peoples in a civic community to create a sense of togetherness. It is erroneous to assume that in the absence of common ethnicity or other commonalities, like religion and language and so on common culture provides a vital connection between members and holds the community together ubiquitously. Assuming so not only leads to xenophobia and extremism but also makes it harder to deal with the problems which are encountered in a contemporary nation-state where most nations are multicultural in their structure.

The nationalists' assumption that identities can be arranged to create a shared culture and that creating such cultures necessarily leads to a political group where equality evidently manifests itself can also be queried. I shall follow, in the next chapter, the writings of Bhabha to support this argument. Bhabha puts forward a convincing analysis to defend his theory, with the example of India, that political identities cannot be fixed and imposed on peoples by the state or by the elite. Even when it is attempted, created homogeneity does not iron out 'difference' but it only generates hegemony within the community. It emphasises 'us' and 'them' more prominently. This leads to such disenchantment

between the dominant and the minority groups that people reject the inbuilt power-hierarchy within the ideology. Instead of erasing inequality, it holds the potential to give rise to resistance against the authority of the dominant group. Hence, supporting the ideology of nationalism for multicultural nation-states could prove perilous.

Moreover, nationalism cannot be seen as a universally acceptable ideology away from western nations because not every community places its sense of belonging in shared culture. I shall illustrate this with the argument of Chatterjee that though India uses the term 'nationalism' within its political context it does not necessarily refer to national solidarity in shared culture. For Indians, togetherness is manifest in belonging to the shared community. Spivak, another prominent critic of nationalism, does not see nationalism as a theory but as a strategy adopted to gain independence from the coloniser. Nationalism in the colonies did not follow the prototype provided by the west where common culture was seen to be at the heart of a coherent political community because one cannot locate shared culture at the heart of Indian society. She argues that even when assumed shared culture was evoked, it was only used by the bourgeoisie to harness the support of the proletariat in the process of gaining power from the colonisers not because it held the potential to create genuine unity between citizens.

Disapproval of nationalism as a political theory is not a recent phenomenon in Indian history. The objections to adopting nationalism as a political ideology for non-western states have been prolific and emphatic within Indian political discourse even before the two world wars were fought to uphold nationalism. Hence, I observe, the critique of

nationalism, as provided by contemporary Indian political thinkers, is not wholly new to political thought. The roots to their arguments can be traced back to some very prominent late 19th and early 20th century philosophers from the subcontinent. I shall, in the following two chapters, relate back to the writings of two very influential political thinkers of the early 20th century from the Indian subcontinent who have influenced political thinking with adverse views of nationalism as an ideology. Their arguments against the western conception of nationalism appear to query the very assumptions of liberal nationalists of the 1980s and point out the fundamental problems with the ideology itself. I shall explore the views held by Tagore, who saw nationalism as a menace, a demon which divides communities and leads to political chaos and hence unsuitable for multiethnic, multicultural political communities. I shall stress his explanation that nationalism took its shape to erect otherness rather than create a sense of togetherness and hence, it cannot be ideologically viewed as a suitable political arrangement to follow.

Though his strong reservation about nationalism as an ideology was shared by many, some political thinkers of the day acknowledged the attraction of nationalism for herding the community together. This served many political thinkers with a practical approach to political structures for accommodating nationalism. They did not see any problem with the concept of nationalism itself. Nevertheless, they take a strong objection to nationalism as envisioned by the west. I shall look into the argument of a very prominent politico/philosophical thinker, Gandhi, to enlarge on such thinking. He observes that nationalism in the western concept does not offer liberal values like freedom, equality

and individualism in any real sense. Gandhi offers his alternative vision of political communities that would provide cherished liberal values in their true sense within multi-ethnic, multicultural contemporary communities. I shall follow his argument that nationalism, in its western conception, has no place in a modern polity. Nationalism was engendered to safeguard the economic prosperity of the industrialized, colonial west and hence it can only drive towards drawing boundaries to restrain the number of members for greater benefit rather than ethically ensuring the welfare of its members. Gandhi brings in a different vision of political community from the west by shifting the material aspect of citizenship to social community with stress on ethical/spiritual emphasis. He holds the view that securing the material welfare of its members need not be the ultimate goal of a political community. He emphasises social community as the centre of individuals' lives and stresses that individualism can only be realised within interdependent community life. However, interdependency is not restricted to cultural group only. That aspect of human society has to be taken into consideration by the political structure, for coherence and equality. The role of the state should only be to facilitate cooperation between citizens so that they can lead a socially organised coherent life which accommodates every member's needs, and where everyone contributes to the best of shared community life. I shall argue that his alternative for a political structure would suit states with multinational groups better than the western conception of nationalism to bring about a shared sense of identity.

I shall conclude my thesis with the observation that nationalism, which, as we see it today, historically originated with the spread of rationalism and industrial revolution of

the 18th and 9th centuries, does not comprehensively justify as a logically and ethically defensible political ideology. Liberal nationalism, as a political ideology, does not accommodate the changing face of contemporary social groups. It does not deliver equality, freedom, and individualism to all its citizens even-handedly. Political harmony, no doubt, is located in togetherness. However, shared culture is not the answer for securing that togetherness in the present-day political community. It can only be located within the community, regardless of who the members are. It makes sense to locate it round a shared sentiment of interdependence, be it voluntary or non-voluntary. The political relationship is a kind of relationship where we are together because we share a community. We care and share because we are together. It is human to be attached to people with whom we share our life. Commonality such as one finds within any given community is not naturally found but sought and nourished. Communication does not necessarily exist within any kind of community but it is established and nurtured. Shared culture was one such dimension which was used for anchoring unity. However, the social/political scene has moved on and hence adhering to old structure can only bring about social disarray. A new avenue of forging the bond between members needs to be explored because awakening cultural nationalism can only lead to parochialism and mistrust within the community.

Shared culture does not necessarily ensure harmony within the community but the realisation and appreciation of interdependency enhances mutual respect and trust. Recognition that every member is free and is entitled to equality and justice, and recognizing and respecting every member for being a part of the wider political scene

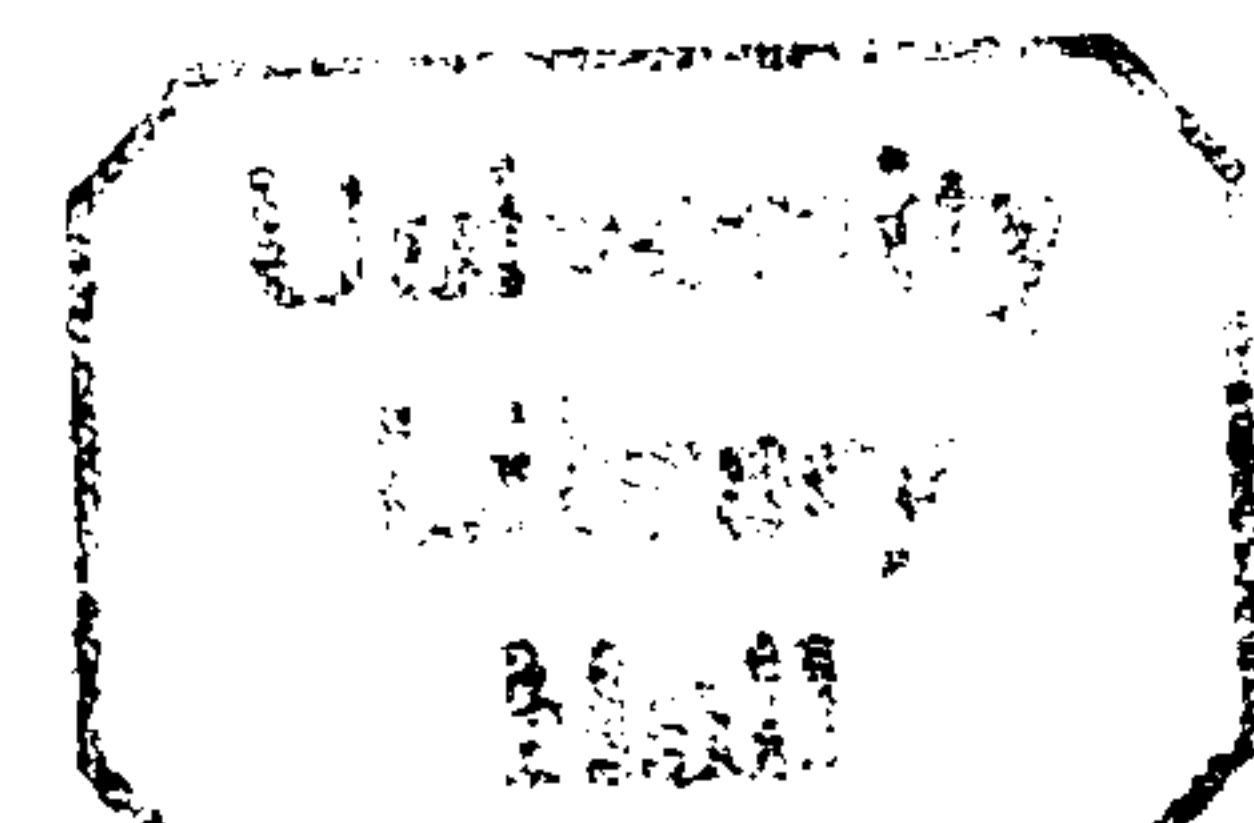
leads to shared community in the real sense. An argument for communitarianism in the parochial shared culture sense does not resolve the dilemma which political communities of the world face today. The answer has to be in moving forward from the insular sense of community to broader ideology.

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Section 1

The Anglo-American Conception of Nationalism



1. Nations and Nationalism

A great deal of ambiguity surrounds the origin of the concept of nationalism. It is often argued that historically the sentiment of nationalism itself, in some form, has been prevalent in the west since the middle-ages.¹ However, the application of the sentiment of nationalism in the political context, as we encounter it today, is widely considered to be a phenomenon of post-enlightenment, post-industrial Europe. The modern politicised phase of nationalism emerged, it is generally accepted, as a reaction to the changes which occurred in social and economic structures at the beginning of the 18th century. The spread of rationalism and individualism, itself an upshot of the Enlightenment era, it is observed, brought on momentous changes in the way human life was conceived. There was a significant shift in how people sought their dignity and purpose in life. Equality, liberty and the individuality of each member occupied the centre stage of human activity. Social arrangements needed to emphasize the maximization of individual happiness of all, without compromising their fundamental right to liberty and equality. The pre-existent political structures crumbled under the pressure of the modern outlook on life. It became imperative that old structures gave way, it is explained, to new political structures which ideally recognized and respected the autonomy of individuals and provided individual freedom and equality to all members. A polity was counted upon to provide a system whereby people could take on their obligations without begrudging the burden they were expected to carry for the sake of their community, and exercise their rights without treading on the rights of other citizens. The emergent political system was

expected to ensure social harmony and deliver fairness, dignity, and welfare to all its members.²

How is the nation perceived in the modern political context?

From the very emergence of the modern phase of post-industrial populist politics of the late 18th century in the west, each model of political community has attempted to provide a coherent political system in which people could participate in egalitarian government equally and freely and benefit from the membership for leading a fulfilling individual life. For securing the social conditions for delivering such an ideology, the first and foremost condition is that citizens necessarily act as a coherent group. They willingly share a mutual interest in the welfare of every member and choose to subordinate their personal interest to collective goals in order to secure a fair and free political community where they share social goods voluntarily. However, what makes sharing social goods acceptable for a group in political terms? Does sharing a political community become easier if the community is shared ethnically and hence the responsibility for the welfare of every member of the community is also naturally shared; or do individuals do so because they share mutual political interests, share political purpose, and common destination? Political theories which have developed in the west since have centred round two main lines of argument for deciding the membership of a political community. One strand of argument, that is, ethnic nationalism, argues that the sentiment of togetherness is inherent in the descent group since members are biologically connected and hence the pre-political national group based on common descent is the most appropriate criterion

for determining the membership of a political community. Deep family roots and the pre-existing power of national sentiment, ethnic nationalists argue, inevitably contribute towards political harmony. They think that such a group is naturally endowed with the disposition to share the social goods and look after the members as one would within a family. Obligations within such groups flow naturally, they argue. A community based on this form of membership would lead to least amount of conflict in the community and the utmost trust between members because, they say, members share a common way of life through which they understand each other well and can communicate easily. Also, they argue, a political community thus formed could be justified because people would naturally choose to share their political life with the group where they could share their social values and lifestyle. They follow the logic that membership of a political community in the world is naturally decided. As such, they believe that such membership is non-voluntary. Where one belongs socially and politically is determined by one's destiny; it is decided by one's birth. There are natural divisions in the world, and disturbing those dividing lines leads to social anomie. Hence, they think that combining naturalness of membership with political aims of delivering equality will be better served if they both merged.³

However, the second strand of argument, that is, civic voluntarism, contests the idea that membership of a political community is inherently 'prearranged'. It takes the view that the sense of unity between community members is nurtured. Civic nationalists believe that there is no compelling reason to argue that togetherness within a political community is contingent on shared natural relationship. There is no evidence to suggest, they

contend, that membership of a state has to be pre-politically 'given'. According to their view, nations are voluntarily created political communities. What holds the political community together in a state, they say, is not the common descent but it is the volition of the people to share a political structure. Nations are historically created political arrangements based upon the free will of the people who want to be ruled as a group. They are formed by the people who accept the obligations out of their own volition and they, in return, expect their right to free and equal citizenship to be assured. Civic nationalists conceive the membership of a political community to be a matter of common commitment to political principles and political structure rather than members being inevitably connected to each other through common descent.

This chapter will examine the rationale applied by the ethnic nationalists in defence of the concept of nations as non-voluntary political communities and look at various difficulties their assumptions raise for justifying their claims. It will pursue the reasons offered by civic nationalists for contesting the arrangement of political membership on inherent grounds and hence non-voluntarily acquired characteristics. It will expand on their justification that civic communities are formed out of voluntary acceptance of obligations and that they are politically organized in order to offer the freedom of choice and thus allow their members to exercise their rights. It will critically look at their claim that civic nationalism generally adheres to the tenets of liberalism more closely than any other form of political doctrine.

Nevertheless, I shall stress that, in spite of its inclination to distance itself from the parochial attitude which ethnic nationalism harbours within its structure civic nationalism also does not succeed in excluding itself from the risk of privileging pre-political national communities over and above civic communities. One can observe that they also advance the vision that, though not essential common culture is a significant aspect of a political community and hence that a connection between nation and state in some form is necessary for a coherent political community.

Nations as non-voluntary communities

The most natural state, the supporters of non-voluntary political community argue, is one where the dividing lines between the communities exist naturally. Ethnicity, they think, is one such division that nature provides. Hence, nations, as ethnic communities sharing a common culture, have been thought of by ethnic nationalists as the most natural way of dividing the world into manageable political units. This is justifiable, they argue, because if people shared common characteristics by nature they are provided with the right ingredient of innate compatibility and thus makes them the most appropriate group to be governed together.

Such argument leads to several claims being made by ethnic nationalists. Firstly, it steers to the belief that the membership of a nation is an inevitable accident of life determined by where one is born. Secondly, it also assumes that since members of a nation are related to each other through shared descent they innately transmit the understanding of

each other. They develop a common identity which is distinctive to them. Thirdly, ethnic nationalists think, nations formed by such a group of people who belong to a single culture and with a single national character necessarily constitute coherent political communities. Members within a nation are not attached to each other, they argue, because of the contribution they make to the community nor because unity is instrumental for providing social stability and security but simply because they belong to the community naturally and hence, they share the responsibility for the welfare of other members intrinsically. Each member accepts it as an inherent duty of every member to look after other members of the community. There is natural harmony, they argue, between members of such a community.

To examine the argument of ethnic nationalists I shall expand on the arguments of Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, two prominent German primordialists, who believe that ethnic identity is a primary identity and that political identity ensues from the sentiment of patriotism directed towards their kith and kin which guides them to the common good.

Herder

Herder makes several claims. Firstly, he takes a very organic view of the nation. He believes that “a people is a natural growth, is like a family, only spread more widely.”⁴ Love of nation, he argues, as in the case of family, prospers on natural inclination and not on nurtured or forced sentiment. Just as one would love her brethren, one loves her

fatherland. For Herder, ethnicity and common culture are almost interchangeable, and vital factors which make a natural social group. They are, he thinks, exclusive and necessary features of a national community. Political life is only a branch of shared cultural life. Hence, he does not accept the belief that political attachment alone can bring about the sort of social unity that naturally exists in ethnic communities. Herder's commitment to the idea of political community as an extended family makes it difficult for him to believe in the possibility that human rationality can separate one from the feeling of inevitability in accepting national identity. He does not accept the view that love of nation can be a rational impulse. He rejects the idea that reasons for loving one's nation can be developed by commitment to moral/ethical principles for sharing a community. For, Herder argues, loving one's own nation is natural, and reason, he thinks, can only corrupt one's natural instinct because it alienates one from one's innate inclination. Following nature, he believes, leads to 'progress of humanity' whereas, he says, dependence on reason leads to 'uniformity and death'.⁵

Secondly, Herder believes, nation means oneness. Oneness, he thinks, can only be achieved where people share their descent and ethnic identity. Not only does common culture bring about unity and welfare to the community but it transcends them to bring about spiritual oneness, which is the ultimate aim of human life, he claims. Shared ethnic identity, he believes, naturally leads to internal bonding. Attitudes of mutual help and the inclination to the general welfare of the society ensue only from such bonding. Loyalty is imperative for a coherent political community. Such disposition to loyalty, which members of the same group share with each other — the special attachment they have for

their kith and kin — Herder believes, is an inherent gift in a descent group and it cannot be expected in people who do not share the common descent and culture. It is shared common descent, he believes, which enables them to interact with other members with natural co-operation. Hence, one cannot expect, he argues, different cultures to share their lives harmoniously within a nation.

Thirdly, Herder says, shared cultural life overrides political interest. He does not distinguish between patriotism, nationalism, and common culture. To him, they are all one and the same. A national soul, he thinks, is exhibited by its culture. It is because of this connection, formed with common descent and culture, he claims, that the nation is a unique entity, non-negotiable and impregnable. It follows its own unique destiny. The people of a nation share their history, literature, religion, art, and science, in other words, every conceivable aspect of their life with their fellow nationals. One's dreams of an ideal life can only be realized within the narrow guidelines offered by the culture to which one belongs. Since natural bonding is an essential feature of common identity, and the foundation on which togetherness ensues, it is only logical, he argues, to think that mixing of other ethnic communities can lead to social anomie. He thinks that because of the fundamental difference in how different groups perceive social values and lifestyle, they cannot blend harmoniously with other cultural groups. Herder claims, "[n]othing seems, therefore, more clearly opposed to the aims which all governments should have in view than the expansion of states beyond their natural limits, the indiscriminate mingling of various nations and human types under one sceptre. The sceptre of a human ruler has neither the strength nor the range, which would enable it to weld together such

heterogeneous material into unity. So rulers are reduced to sticking them together, as it were, in order to constitute what is described as the “machine” of government – a fragile and lifeless contrivance between the separate parts of which no mutual sympathy is possible.”⁶ Hence, he says, it should not be artificially implanted to accommodate other ethnic cultures within any political community.⁷ He does not accept that laws can bring about that essential political and social harmony between people whereas common culture, he argues, provides that special binding through which people develop a special sense of belonging.

Fichte

Fichte, another German Romantic, also holds similar views and believes that national identity is achieved through common culture generated by common descent. He gives greater importance to common culture. Political and civic citizenship of a nation, though of great significance, does not bring the community together as a matter of fact, he says. Cultural unity is a necessary factor for the development of bond between members. The function of a political unit, he says, is to protect the community from the outside force. To achieve this, he says, the group has to have a common boundary drawn by the common culture and the identity of which they are proud of.⁸ He even goes further in saying that the aim of mankind is not only to hope for political freedom which can be brought about by homogeneous social life, but it is to strive for spiritual freedom⁹. That can, he believes, only be achieved through common culture. For Fichte, the love of one’s nation is not merely instrumental for harmonizing one’s political and social life but

patriotism, he believes, goes beyond that role and acts as an instrument for attaining spiritual freedom. This is necessary, Fichte thinks, because one's aim of life is not just the welfare of our own souls but also the upholding of the true traditions through generations. That aim can only be achieved through maintaining indigenous culture.¹⁰

Problems with ethnic nationalism

The whole logic of the family model of nationhood depends on the assumed naturalness of membership. For Herder and Fichte, the preconditions for a coherent nation are common descent and common culture. Their commitment to such a belief is based on their conception that members are inherently predisposed to accept political obligations within a community where a shared sense of family exists. However, one can see some obvious unease which ethnic nationalism harbours within its family model for political structure. Ethnic nationalists make three vital assumptions of the naturalness of family structure. They claim that a.) a family network is an essential unit, b.) loyalty naturally flows in descent groups, and c.) any mixing of different cultures leads to social anomie.

Family as an essential biological unit

The function of the family unit is generally understood to be procreation, nourishment and providing security for the group. One can concede that there is a definite need for a stable social condition for the survival and the welfare of individuals as human beings and that the family offers the necessary protection and care of its members. However, one

can argue that, though biologically they are significant functions there is no evidence to prove that the family unit provides that naturally. It cannot be substantiated that the survival of the group is dependent on such a biological unit. It is possible to explain the logic behind such provision of stability and care by the family unit differently. It is possible to argue that the family institution may not necessarily be a biological inevitability but a rational solution to the problem of securing individual protection, social solidity and harmony: hence family can be seen as a product of society and not vice versa.¹¹ What appears on the outside, to be a natural family relationship may as well be a rational choice of human society for maintaining stability. The family can be seen as a functional association which maximizes the protection of the young, infirm and the elderly members of the group. One can argue that reason can lead human beings to establish such a unit for organizing a harmonious life. (It is a well accepted fact that there are many socially created myths rather than anthropological truths in human society, for example, typecasting and fixing positions of issues like race, the position of women in society and so on.) Herder's commitment to the idea of the political community as an extended family makes it impossible for him to accept the possibility that rationality can separate one from the feeling of inevitability.

Secondly, just as one can question the naturalness of the family unit, the national group and the assumption of the inherent disposition of the members for the welfare of fellow members can also be queried. One cannot deny the claim of ethnic nationalists that loyalty is a necessary condition for unity and understanding for social coherence. It is possible that a predisposition to loyalty makes it easier to develop that special bonding

and understanding. Nevertheless, one can argue that a biological connection does not necessarily provide harmony nor is there any evidence to show that there is any need for common descent for arranging a politically stable society where every individual is naturally loyal to the community and the welfare of every individual is guaranteed because of such disposition. Their claim that the state cannot create a community where members develop such disposition is arguable, because the assumed tendency to look after one's own family member can be seen as a practical vision of realizing interdependency of individual members for their social and political well-being.

Dependency within the contemporary political community cannot possibly be tethered to family only. Members need other forms of organizations to avail of the help necessary for their welfare since family members are unable to provide such help in every area. Their claim that the state cannot facilitate such a disposition within a political community through rational coordination is debatable. Also, it is arguable that such disposition pre-exists in descent groups only. It is feasible to think that it can exist in any group which shares social and political space. There is a difference between shared family life and shared community life. Inherent loyalty may *exhibit* between family members and the will to care for the welfare may appear to flow obviously but it is also true that mutual sympathy *develops* between members, as a matter of fact, who share the common social space, no matter where they belong ethnically and culturally. It develops through shared social life, through interaction and interdependency between members.

Moreover, do all the families show natural disposition to the welfare of fellow members?

How many stories do we hear about dysfunctional families in the media daily? How

many of us rely totally on the moral guidance offered by the immediate family members only as an infallible guide? Or, for that matter, do only natural families show affinity, care and loyalty to other members of their family? One can see from everyday examples that adopted members of the family are, many times, better looked after with love and affection than the biological family. It is also true that loyalty offered by adopted members is more genuine because of the appreciation they feel for the love and care they receive within such community.

Thirdly, can one accept that it is a biologically justifiable claim to argue that mixing (culturally or genetically) is against nature and that 'welding together such heterogeneous material' leads to social anomie, as Herder claims? Does exclusivism, be it based on ethnicity or culture, necessarily lead to better preservation? Evidence suggests otherwise. It is a scientifically observed truth that drawing boundaries for preservation leads to gene mutation and extinction of life due to inbreeding and lack of fresh air into the culture. Historical observation also shows that communities which are criss-crossed by different races and cultures have grown into robust and culturally rich communities in every aspect of human life whereas mono-cultural communities have shown signs of cultural poverty and decay. One can cite the example of the Parsee community in India whose rigid rules of social structure and severe opposition to inter-religion marital relationships has exposed itself to the danger of near annihilation. Also, if Herder argues that no machine of government can expect to expand the borders beyond its natural limits, one can also contend that no machine of government has been able to separate the communities successfully on sentimental as well as ethical grounds. For instance, the laws governing

racial segregation in apartheid South Africa were stringent. However, the arrangement led to discontent amongst both the white and the black and the coloured communities. Mixed marriages always took place and rationalism dictated that apartheid was unethical and unsustainable in contemporary society.

Renan's critique of ethnic nationalism

More than the difficulties of basing membership of a political community on naturalness criteria, it is the logical and ethical discrepancies that the non-voluntary model accommodates within its structure which causes real concern. Ernest Renan, the 19th century French philosopher, has produced a comprehensive critique of their tenets. A major drawback of the doctrine which advocates that nation-states should be arranged with non-voluntary membership is, he says in his much quoted essay *What Is a Nation?*, the rigidity of membership entrenched within its structure. At a time when human life is influenced by rationalism, it is unacceptable, he argues, to think that accident of birth alone necessarily decides where one's loyalties should be directed, with whom one should share one's political community. Such argument for the inevitability of one's membership of a political community leads to oppression. Members cannot be expected, he says, to offer their loyalty regardless of their willingness to do so. National identity, Renan argues, is rationally nurtured and not instinctively perpetuated. They are formed by, he says, 'deep-seated' reasons and not by inevitable fact of birth. He contests the idea that membership of a nation is a choice made by fate and not a choice made by individuals with freewill.

Even though one accepts naturalness of membership, this would not provide justification for political membership being imposed on people. People are endowed with a mature sense of what they want and hence accept or reject the membership out of their own volition. Human nature is not communal but individual and diverse. Each individual is a person with her or his own vision of life and her or his own idea of contribution towards society. It is the individuals who make the group and though one can accept that culture interprets one's social surrounding and influences one's development and determines one's moral parameters it does not construct the individual to the extent that he or she thinks. Individuals receive their information from their group life but they interpret it in their own way dictated by their own constitutions. Renan points out this sentiment and argues that the family model of the nation does not respect individuality, and hence it is illiberal. Members are not free to choose where they belong. Membership is imposed on people regardless of their willingness to accept political association. This does not justify the principle of offering individuals the freedom of choice. Moreover, in their anxiety to seek social coherence they may also be abandoning the principle of equality. Members who would genuinely be interested in the welfare of the group and are willing to work towards harmony are treated as unwanted intruders simply because they do not belong there genetically.

Secondly, Renan rejects the idea that natural fault-lines, that is, pre-political divisions exist in the world that we live in. Basing nations on such mythical divisions, he argues, is false and dangerous. It gives people the impression that they have to be a part of society

regardless of the unacceptability of their way of life, ethical standards and values. It gives the impression that one adheres to the values of the society in spite of whether one accepts them as morally defensible or not. It also makes one believe that one is not capable of changing one's 'naturally given' values even if one wanted to. One can argue, on the same principle that if uniqueness of whatsoever form, let alone that of the extended family, is placed rigidly at the centre of political membership by assuming that it leads to natural loyalty, it runs the risk of promoting exclusivism. Such an argument erects inflexible, impregnable boundaries around the communities curtailing freedom of thought and exchange of cultural values. Treating society like an organism also leads to the idea that any new change introduced to the existing culture corrupts the social system and runs the risk of endangering life. Moreover, the rigidity of membership erected through common descent means belonging to the group is determined by objective criteria like the colour of skin and shape of nose and so on. Coherent ethical society cannot be established by following such assumed natural divisions.¹²

Moreover, ethnic nationalists have to account for the movement involved in the social, political and economic arenas if they want to adhere to supporting such rigid markers. In truth, as Renan says, there is no race that is pure in existence; there is no culture that is un-corrupt. Cultures are constantly being made and remade by incessant contact between groups. To hold them central to the formation of political community is erroneous. To base nations on '[t]he principle of the primordial right of race', Renan argues, 'is narrow and as fraught with danger for true progress, as the principle of nations is just and legitimate.'¹³ The damage this path causes to civilization is immeasurable. It is

detrimental to the future development of culture. No doubt cultures are important for leading a meaningful life. But, as Renan says, “[i]f you overdo it, you shut yourself within a prescribed culture, which you regard as the national culture. You are confined and immured, having left the open air of the great world outside to shut yourself up in a conventicle together with your compatriots. Nothing more could be worse for the mind; and nothing could be more untoward for civilization.”¹⁴ Moreover, such claims do not make sense if one is to accept that individualism and rationalism should control individual lives.

Renan’s objections to ethnic nationalism are greatly convincing. Firstly, it is a historically observed fact that there are no inevitable natural, genetically induced, impassable divisions in the world and that such divisions are necessary for the sustenance of a coherent political community. Political coherence sought and achieved in the USA is no less effective than in older nations like Germany and Austria who accept ethnic citizenship as a congenial element for social harmony. Secondly, even if one were to accept that there are ‘natural limits’ in this world it is unconvincing to assume that inherent divisions and common cultures are necessarily *the* factors which ensure coherence within social and political community. One can argue that it is the shared, interdependent social life, no matter whether that society is mono-ethnic and mono-cultural or multi-ethnic and multi-cultural, which binds the community into one harmonious group. Social and political coherence is more dependent on recognizing the interdependent nature of human life. It is contingent on accepting that every individual in the society is an integral part of the group and the reciprocation of such recognition is

vital for maintaining harmony. Cultural homogeneity itself does not necessarily lead to coherence nor do differences naturally lead to social anomie. However, social segregation, drawing the boundaries between the communities evidently leads to loss of freedom and inequality. This paves the way for social discontent and discord within the community even though the communities themselves plod on.

One can cite the example of the 'caste system' that existed in India for centuries (and still does) to show that common descent and common culture are not the only ways in which people establish social communication and understanding between members. Nor is it true to argue that such arrangements necessarily lead to social harmony. Also, social breakdown is not necessarily initiated by mixing of different cultures. The root cause of social unrest can be injustice as a result of discrimination and unequal treatment of its members. In the Indian caste system, society was compartmentalized into four sections according to the service every group was expected to offer to society: Brahmins, the priest class, were the custodians of knowledge; Kshatriyas, the warriors, in charge of protecting its members; Vaishyas, the tradesmen; and Shudras, the menial workers. The logic behind such division was that people were more equipped to provide the expertise if the skills they had developed through experience were transferred through apprenticeship which began, as it were, at birth. However, this system accommodated a specific condition. Members' positions in such a society were determined by accident of their birth. They belonged to a distinct group within the Hindu community and rigid social control ensured that there was no provision for mixing of groups through marriage or adoption between the communities belonging to different castes. There was very little

socializing between different communities belonging to different castes. In spite of such social division, it is a historical fact that society functioned as a reasonably settled single unit. Every member was cared for within the system. This way of organising the society did not lead to immediate social chaos. Social relationships were mainly established on the basis of valuable service each section of the community provided for the welfare of every member of the whole society. There was respect for each member of the group and recognition of every contribution, however trivial. Loyalty and goodwill to other members of the group, two essential requirements of an interdependent human life, were promoted. Every group co-operated within the community, whether they were related or not, so that each member could benefit from every other's unique contribution to the welfare of the community and for leading a meaningful individual life.

However, it is also a fact that Indian caste system did develop discontent and disorder eventually. The reason for such a breakdown, though, was not due to lack of co-operation between members nor was it because there was lack of understanding between members. It ground to a halt because social divisions which were meant to be vertical eventually became horizontal, that is, some groups held more privileged status than others who had

The
system, which was devised to provide well-trained members to run every aspect of life became hierarchical and exclusivist. There was widespread dissatisfaction among members who revolted against the illiberal apportionment of social equality and the lack of freedom to decide on the life of their own choice. Access to material wealth itself was

not necessarily the reason for such disillusionment because, for instance, one could find people from the business community to be richer than many upper class Brahmins. Nevertheless, the disenchantment with the system grew because a person born in the business community, for instance, however intellectually gifted, could not possibly gain access to academic education (which was the privilege of the Brahmins) simply because he did not belong to the group. He could not command the status of a Brahmin whatever his contribution towards the welfare of the society he belonged. There was no choice offered to individuals to intermingle or to change their way of life according to their individual wishes. The rigidity of the system did not allow enough movement for realizing individuals' dreams. Hence, such a system became logically unsupportable and morally unsustainable within a civilized society. Hindus, as a social and political group, failed to secure the loyalty and trust of their members who felt segregated, discriminated against, and oppressed.

Moreover, culture is a dynamic affair. As seen earlier in Renan's argument, one can say that it is wrong to assume that there exists a pristine national culture uninfluenced by other cultures and that some cultures are singular in structure. Every culture in some way, at some stage, has taken customs, values and habits from other cultures. Cultural hybridity, as Homi Bhabha points out, is an endowment of human society for leading a richer life. (This point will be expanded further on in the thesis) Take, for example, language, literature, fine arts, music and dance, culinary taste, clothing styles and so on which have adopted ideas from different parts of the world and have evolved to create a valuable variation to the monotony of sticking to regional art only. Languages adapt

words from different languages for their potency to carry certain expressions. Those languages like French, which have resisted adapting new words with foreign etymology, have been poorer in their development and spread. This has led to a form of linguistic isolationism whereas English has become richer and more of a world language with its openness towards other languages.¹⁵ Verbal evolution is a mark of success, not failure. Thus, it is wrong to think that cultures benefit by protecting them against outside influence and that there is any relevance to political stability and isolated single cultures.

One can conclude from the argument that national membership cannot be seen as a non-voluntary endowment which naturally leads to harmonious political community. Its tenets are neither logically defensible, nor practical or desirable for contemporary political communities. Moreover, it is not conducive to the natural progress of human society.

Nations as voluntary communities

Consent theory

Civic voluntarism, the second line of argument, highlights the position that there is nothing inherent about the membership of political community. Hence, say proponents of this theory, it is imperative to move away from deterministic, rigid and exclusivist accounts of nationhood and stress individual will as the deciding factor for the membership of a political community. They argue that national identity is not objectively determined but subjectively perceived. The doctrine of civic nationalism sees the nation

as a historically created, voluntarily constructed political community, that is, one where people form a political community through voluntary acceptance of membership. They argue that what holds the community together is the will of the people who wish to share the community. Members voluntarily accept their responsibilities, their share of the obligation towards other members in return for their own freedom to live the life that each individual finds fulfilling.

Civic voluntarism rejects the assumption of ethnic nationalists that the sentiment of nationalism is determined by birth alone. Its proponents argue that the sentiment of nationalism is something which is generated through the individual's will to share the community. Mere accident of birth, or belonging to a certain group because of shared objective criteria, does not automatically give the coherence one needs for a harmonious political community. A sense of belonging developed through shared sentiment of togetherness, they feel, is fundamental to national membership. Because, they say, to assume that nationalism is inherent one has to accept the concept that nations as political units have always existed. However, they argue, nations did not always exist: they were created historically. Renan sees nations as rationally created political communities which evolved from already existing political organizations. Nations owe their origin, he believes, to the need of the hour. He writes, "[t]he modern nation is, therefore, the historic consequence of a series of facts converging towards the same point. Sometimes unity has been brought about by dynasty, as in the case of France; at other times it has been brought about the direct volition of provinces, as in the case Holland, Switzerland and Belgium; or again, by a general sentiment, the tardy conqueror of the freak of

feudalism, as in the case of Italy and Germany. At all times such formations have been guided by the urge of some deep-seated reason.”¹⁶

The theory of civic voluntarism argues that the nation is there to serve a purpose. The purpose is to organize the political, economic and social lives of people into a coherent narration. Hence, it is instrumental in the construction of coherent community. The changing history of societies demands, every now and again, changes in the way that they organize themselves politically. The concept of nation is a product of one of those political evolutions. Nations originated because they respected people’s self-regard and their rights. Individual liberty, a vital ingredient of human organization, were respected and prioritised. Thus, within a nation-state, people choose to be identified politically as a group and organize themselves to lead a common life. They do not ‘discover’ whether they belong to a certain group or whether they inherently feel a sense of loyalty towards a certain group or, for that matter, whether the feeling of loyalty is sanctioned by their descent and culture; members choose to decide where they wish to belong and to whom they offer their loyalty. As Paul Gilbert puts it, according to civic voluntarism, “[f]or members of the nation, though not for others, whether their nation exists is not discoverable fact about them. It is something they can make and unmake at will.”¹⁷ For them, national identity lies within people’s consciousness and it is not a naturally imposed, unalterable identity.

Moreover, one cannot be blinded by the concept of nation that urges us to look after our own descent group at the cost of other group members who share our political space.

Such an argument, Renan says, is morally dubious. Nations are morally justifiable groups, he argues, because they are structured to look after every member of the group regardless of which sub-group they belong to. Nations as political units cannot afford to undermine humanism. Every member holds an equal position in such association. One's ethical commitment to humanity at large has to be safeguarded. Renan writes, "[l]et us not lose sight of this fundamental principle that man, apart from being penned up within bounds of one language or another, apart from being a member of one race or another, or the follower of one culture or another, is above all a reasonable moral being. Above French, German or Italian culture, there stands a human culture."¹⁸

Civil voluntarism is fundamentally a theory which clearly supports three major tenets of liberal philosophy. It supports the argument of liberals about human nature – that it is fundamentally individual. It also upholds the principle of liberal philosophy which argues that free choice is a fundamental right of every individual. One cannot be dictated to over with whom they have to associate and to whom they have to offer their loyalty. Any kind of dictation in that respect is denying them the liberty to choose for themselves. The state cannot dictate who should share one's loyalties. People should be governed by their consent. The state's power is granted by the people and not vice versa. The political power of the state is dependent on people approving their right to rule in a voluntary government. It is constantly decided by free individuals. As Renan famously says, it is a 'daily plebiscite'. It also indicates that there is no inherent national identity which one has to accept regardless of one's volition, thus emphasizing individuality. Secondly, since members can terminate their association if they so wish, they do not feel coerced or

oppressed into making decisions. People can only be a part of a community if they wish to do so, if they accept membership as congenial to their living. Thirdly, and more importantly, it recognizes the ethical commitment to humanism regardless of the group to which the individual belongs. One is morally obliged to follow humanity away from one's immediate community only, thus upholding the principle of equality.

Problems with consent theory of citizenship

However, though civic voluntarism supports all three tenets of liberalism in theory, it faces some problems in its application. Firstly, the question of volition to be a member of a political community itself is located in shared life. Renan positions the sentiment of fraternity firmly in one's shared past and inherited community. He says, "[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which are really only one, go to make up this soul or spiritual principle. One of these things lies in the past, the other in the present. The one is in possession common of a rich heritage of memories; and the other is actual arrangement, the desire to live together, and the will to continue to make the most of joint inheritance."¹⁹ Here, he expresses the view that the history and the culture of the nation provide the important factors which influences the will of the people to be ruled as a group. Shared experience and social network, according to him, offer the most important factors for people to will to share their political community.

One can spot a predicament here. Does their argument really move away from non-voluntarism? If we accept the premise that people who share a past will want to be

members of a particular present-day political community, which Renan highlights in his idea of nation, are we not drifting again into an ethnic/cultural model for political association? For, according to Renan, if one were to think who would possibly form a collective with a shared past, it will naturally have to be the pre-political group. Even if membership is voluntary, it is likely to be the people who share a common social lifestyle, a common cultural identity, even if it is through a non-choice situation, since they will be the people who happen to have shared their history. Moreover, what is one sharing in a voluntary association? Is it the commitment to political principles and loyalty to citizens who share the same principles or does one share 'the rich heritage of memories, and the joint inheritance'? Do we accept voluntarily the tenets of political dogma and share *political* commitment or do we need to share social space, rituals and customs and so on in order to be members of a political community? If the answer is yes to the first question then the shared history has little relevance to the membership of a political community of which one voluntarily desires to be a part. However, if the answer is positive to the second question then we are back again with the non-voluntary argument in a circuitous way. This, again, leads one to the distinction between 'us' and 'others', that is exclusivism. Though the boundaries for rightful membership, in this case, are not firmly drawn it gives the impression that they are logically perceptible. In that case nations are, once again, communities based on common culture, be it societal or non-societal, voluntary or non-voluntary. What does this mean to the newcomers to the nation who do not share the history and cultural and social set-up of the majority? Civic voluntarism does not explain how people relate to other members of the political community who do not share their past and present. Where can togetherness be located

within such groups? This is a major challenge for the contemporary western world.

Renan does not elucidate how will alone can ensure equal membership for minorities who do not share the mainstream culture, history and inheritance. The theory does not expound whether it is possible for different cultural groups to share a political community or how different cultural groups could bond into a political society. Civic society based on voluntarism does not adequately answer how this problem could be dealt with in a society of the 21st century without any hint of bias to indigenous people over immigrants.

Renan speaks of the “rich heritage of memories” and “selective amnesia”. One can see genuine difficulties here. “History is the raw material for nationalist or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction”, says E. Hobsbawm.²⁰

History has often been constructed in the way it is desired by the political movers by including the facts which serve the desired effect, some strategically forgotten, others conveniently remembered. It has the potential to be used and abused by politicians. Also, shared history, at times, works in a manner counterproductive to cohesion because of the past prejudices. For example, it has proved hard to eliminate prejudice in the west against past colonial members in the political community, though their membership may be voluntarily accepted and rightfully acquired. Majority instances of inter-communal problems arise out of accommodating prejudices of the past, historically created ‘otherness’, the bias particularly created to sustain ‘difference’ into single political structure. (The reference is to the coloured immigrant groups which are a legacy of colonisation.) Will alone is not sufficient to be a member of a political community with equal respect and recognition. It is difficult for the immigrant groups who do not share

pre-political groups to assimilate into the indigenous group despite their will to do so.

Nationality on such terms gives the feeling that there are two tiers of citizens living in the nation, some more authentic than others.

Margaret Canovan, a liberal nationalist, for instance argues though it appears that the argument for locating identity in voluntarism is based on historically inherited collective identity, this does not necessarily endorse Herder's idea of *Volksgeist* obliquely. Because, she argues, belonging is not as voluntary as it appears. The identities given are hard to shift even if one wants to. She may be right in arguing this point. Nevertheless, this may work from the other side of the spectrum also. However much one accepts the lifestyle, the conception of the 'good life' in one's adopted community over generation, some 'differences' remain unresolved. Some physical as well as cultural peculiarities are hard to erase. People are categorised by their origin, by their physical as well as cultural peculiarities. This makes assimilation a greater problem. However, Canovan says, this does not stop people changing their national identity willingly. But, she argues, nationals by choice are very much the exception.²¹ People do not change their nationality, she says, in any significant number. As such, she reckons, this should not be a cause for major concern.

The position Conavan holds is arguable. Changing citizenship may have been a rare event in the 19th century. However, in a world of changing economic climate, people change their residence on a voluntary basis for tangible benefit more readily than before.

Interchangeable educational qualifications and skills, common language, and the

exposure to outside cultures through travel and literature mean that people do not find making the move as daunting as before. Political uncertainties in many parts of the world have also raised the problems of asylum-seeking and immigration. Such groups are not necessarily running away from their culture but they are seeking political and economic security in return for their loyalty and hard work.

Should sharing citizenship amount to sharing culture necessarily? Moreover, it is not a matter of how many people change their citizenship. It is a matter of the liberal political principle that each is given equal status within a nation-state, whether they share collective cultural identity and history or not. Also, cultural identities are more difficult to shift than political identities, because people are not as isolated at any stage in this modern world. Moreover, should shared history and shared culture be vital for citizenship? If nationality can be seen as a voluntary membership through which one can expect equality, liberty, and individual sovereignty, it has to be granted on political membership alone and not on shared culture.

Another problem civic voluntarism faces is that if one can associate through one's own volition one can also decide with whom one does not want to share one's political community. The desire to associate cannot be one-sided. It has to be reciprocated. The state cannot impose on us with whom we share our political life. Doing so may mean different groups deciding with whom they share their life. This should, technically, give one a choice to decide not to be associated with some group in spite of its wish to share the political space. Individual autonomy is under threat once again if one is compelled to

share one's life with someone with whom she does not wish to share it.²² One can anticipate many difficulties for the state if one accepts this position because accepting such position supports exclusivism. The problems of racial prejudice which many nations face in today's world originate from the individual's right of association. Hence, civic voluntarism presented as a consent theory, does not resolve the problem of political membership of a state nor does it move away from privileging shared culture as the basis of civic membership.

Social contract theory

Is there any other way of envisioning the nation as a voluntary organization? Why would citizens within a nation-state take on obligations to other members if not by shared subjective identity alone? Some civic voluntarists argue that the will to share the political community has to be binding to ensure that there is mutual understanding of sharing responsibility. For this, they think, citizenship has to be anchored in contractual terms. Social contract theory, as generally known, favours the view that people want to be governed as a group for mutual benefit. Their theory bases its tenets on the assumption that the nation is formed by the people who voluntarily accept their civic roles for their own welfare and for the welfare of the society they live in. Civic membership, according to this theory, is not necessarily contingent on shared ethnicity or culture but is a political arrangement which members accept voluntarily by tacit agreement. It is a contract between members who undertake to reciprocate the obligations in exchange for the rights granted to them by the group. Such an arrangement respects individual will as well as the

commitment to the welfare of other members. Mutual reciprocation of goodwill, which can be accepted as binding, creates a coherent society where people work for the common good. Social cohesion is expected to ensue from the common interest people have in the society and their commitment to the efficient delivery of their part of the bargain. A nation, in this conception, is a civic association of interdependent members where interaction between members is purely based on individual interest being served in exchange for duties. Citizens are members of a civic society by virtue of accepting their responsibilities, their part of the bargain, in return for the rights they enjoy in a society. They form a group because they have individual interests at heart, which also happen to be the common interests at the heart of the group. This form of organization expects the commitments of individuals towards the common good. To strive for that, each member has to be aware of shared rights as well as obligations. In other words, such nationalism recognizes the fact that the net of social relationship is at the basis of political association but it also recognizes the importance of individual freedom to choose allegiance. It promises equality of all members of the community. Gilbert says: “Contractual nationalism like this neatly combines societal nationalism, where the right to statehood supposedly derives from the existence of social relations, with elements it shares with non-societal voluntarism.”²³

This concept of nation has many rationally convincing points. Even though nations are formed by volition, people are aware of the dynamics involved in the existence of a nation as a political community. It is their wish, not just expressed as such but also secured by willingness to accept their part of the responsibility. Citizens enter into a tacit

contract pledging their reciprocation to other members. It is such a contract which forms the nation. Willingness is translated into accepting the rights and delivering the obligations to the community in exchange. One knows one's rights and is also aware that to secure them one has to accept one's duties. Also, one knows where duties are directed and from whom to expect obligations in such social contract. Since membership is role-oriented people can only demand rights if they have accepted their obligations. Equality in such political community, one feels, is much more assured because membership is contractual. The national identity one develops is easily attributable and acceptable by other members without questioning its authenticity. Belonging is easily marked out in this form. It is easier for people to relate in this form of voluntarism because, in contrast to consent theory, relationship in this political community is 'causally established rather than logically conceived'.²⁴ People recognise what their obligations are and also know what their rights are. Accepting their membership is neither imposed, as in the case in the non-voluntary concept of nation, nor is it assumed on the volition but it is contingent on reciprocation.

However, these justifications by the proponents of social contract theory leave many points unexplained. Civic voluntarism as a contract theory, it can be pointed out, does not fully explain where one can place a mutual connection. Politics is only a part of our life. There is more to one's life than it being seen as a series of obligations for achieving one's coveted life. People are connected in the community not as mere contractors but as individuals ethically and emotionally responsible for other members. Members are concerned about the welfare of their members not merely to ensure their rights but also

because they are genuinely interested in their welfare. Moreover, it appears vulnerable to the argument that one cannot trace any contract being undertaken by the members at any stage in history. If one were to accept that tacit consent exists, it is hard to find where and how this contract exists.²⁵ One can only trace such contract back to an *a priori* relationship that exists in society.

S. Caney in his essay, *Individuals, Nations and Obligations*, brings out this point very clearly. He casts doubt on the arguments supporting national obligations as tacit contracts because it favours pre-political communities.²⁶ Civic voluntarism anchored in contract theory, he says, is justified by the theorists on the assumption that its rights and duties are directed at the people to whom we would naturally be returning our obligations anyway. The individual's membership of a nation is itself derived from such special relationship. Secondly, they justify nationality on the grounds that helping fellow nationals only promotes the welfare of people universally since everyone upholds the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. He elaborates on their value-dependent argument that it is important for human beings to be identified as part of a community, and the national community is one such group which satisfies this human need. Thus, obligations offered in special relationships are natural, according to them, and that such an exchange of obligations is necessary for the feeling of one's well-being. One can only ground such a relationship in a social network where one's identity is rooted, where one's affections are moored. Caney's argument very clearly illustrates how contract theory also supports the nationalists' argument that pre-political communities are essential for forming a coherent political community.

Thus, though civic voluntarism has moved away a great deal from the non-voluntary argument of nationality, it does not fully exonerate the claim of nationalists that pre-political communities, be they ethnic or non-ethnic, offer a solid foundation and hence are necessary for a coherent polity. They need to be nourished, they believe, by the state. As indicated earlier, though civic voluntarism as a principle sounds very different and morally defensible, it also believes that choice, the will to share political life is, somehow, contingent on shared life and common culture. Civic voluntarism is dependent on a pre-political community where assumed natural bonds already exist. If ethnic nationalists argue from an inevitably essentialist position, civic nationalists assume continuity from the no-choice situation. Although shared culture is not explicitly invoked, implicitly it still plays a major role in determining 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the civic voluntarism.

Conclusion

The validity of membership of a political community basically revolves round two arguments in western political philosophy. Ethnic nationalists believe that membership has to be inherently acquired because it is only then that people naturally relate to each other coherently. The family model clearly thinks that ethnic nationalism based on common descent is the most natural form of nation. Within nations which are formed on shared ethnicity, coherence, loyalty and disposition to the general welfare of all members flow as a matter of fact. Mixing of cultures, they believe, is unnatural and not feasible

and hence, they argue, obviously leads to social anomie. Membership of a political community, they argue, is an inevitable accident of birth and naturally exclusivist. It is objectively determined, non-voluntary and non-negotiable. On the other hand, the second strand of argument, civic voluntarism, rejects the claim of ethnic nationalists that there is anything innate about national identity. It argues that national membership is voluntary. It rejects inevitability and rigidity of citizenship and argues that it is the will of the people which determines the membership of a political community. People belong to a political group because they wish to be a part of the group. They are gelled together within a political community because they recognize the importance of reciprocation of obligations for coherent life. Even though civic voluntarism maintains that civic membership is decided by individual choice they concede that people would naturally want to form a nation with people with whom they share their lifestyle, history and their ancestry because it gives them a sense of continuity and meaning to life. Political togetherness, for them, appears to hinge on an existent social network set through common culture.

Thus, both these theories of citizenship, whether envisaged as non-voluntary or voluntary political communities, appear to have one thing in common for managing a coherent political community. That is, explicitly or implicitly, strongly or loosely they both ground nationalism in pre-existing cultural systems which members share between them. They assume that the shared sense of responsibility that they incur is through this relationship. They believe that political coherence can only ensue within such culturally bonded

communities. Such belief in shared culture predominantly manifests itself in the arguments of many contemporary western liberal nationalists.

In spite of the argument by voluntarists that favouring the idea of non-voluntary membership is illiberal, even civic voluntarism supports the idea of pre-political ties for maintaining a coherent political community. Such dominance of cultural nationalism persists even to this day in western political philosophy. Even in the age of the globalized economy and diasporas of historical proportions, some contemporary liberal nationalists (like Will Kymlicka, David Miller, and Charles Taylor whose argument I shall expand in the next chapter) argue very strongly for common culture as the basis of political community. They argue that social coherence is easily achieved if a political group is mono-cultural in its construction. How do cultural nationalists of the 21st century defend their position in present political conditions? Why do they see the relevance of common culture for a coherent political structure? Can political structure based on common culture be ethically justified? Even if it can be, how do cultural nationalists envisage accommodating different cultures sharing a common political structure within a contemporary nation-state? The reasons they provide in support of their argument and its implications will be explored in the next chapter.

References

1. E. J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997) p.3.

2. Johann Gottfried von Herder, 'Nations as an Enlarged Family' in *Modern Political Doctrines*, ed. A. E. Zimmern (London: Oxford Uni. Press 1931), p.166.
3. *ibid.*, p.166.
4. *ibid.*, p.165.
5. Maurizio Viroli, *For the Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.124.
6. Johann Gottfried von Herder, 'Nations as an Enlarged Family' in *Modern Political Doctrines*, ed. A. E. Zimmern, p.165.
7. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, as adopted by Maurizio Viroli in *For the Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and nationalism*, p.117-118.
8. *ibid.*, p.129.
9. *ibid.*, 130.
10. The whole stress of the family model of nationhood of Herder and Fichte's is based on the naturalness of membership. Their pre-conditions for a coherent nation are common descent and common culture. However, it is not clear from their argument whether the organic aspect of family model itself is congenial for a political community or the shared culture, which naturally exists in mono-ethnic group, which leads to congenial social structure. It is not very clear whether German Romantics really refer to biological properties or societal culture when talk of naturalness of collectivity says Paul Gilbert in his book, *The Philosophy of Nationalism*. He says that Herder's views of naturalness can be interpreted in two different ways. One is that, by naturalness he may be referring to natural divisions, that is those whose membership purely decided by birth. The

membership here is involuntary, indifferent to members' contributions and goodwill, though it is assumed that this follows necessarily. (This may include visibly discernable differences between people like the colour of their skin or the shape of their noses.) But it is also possible that he could be referring to the naturalness generated by *societal properties*. Nations exist, they may argue, says Gilbert, because it is constituted by their relationships, which are 'literally familial ones', organic in nature yet established by sharing common culture, common lifestyle and values, not through something concocted by the state, that is something mechanical. Because though it can be argued that sharing common descent itself does not necessarily lead to congenial social structure, sharing common interests and common values does drive people into a natural coherent group. It is hard to find such naturalness in a group brought together by a common state induced political structure. However, both the models assume blood relationship generates a disposition to show commitment. Whereas for the first model non-societal properties are sufficient to guarantee loyalty to other members naturally, for the other model it is the shared life which helps to develop a disposition to loyalty to other members. Nation can only be there when such disposition to loyalty pre-exists. P. Gilbert says, "[O]n this model the limits of the nation are, in theory, discovered by discovering the scope of the disposition, whose presence rests upon a discoverable, though possibly undiscovered, difference between members of the nation and others. There is no room here for any conception of the nation as a persisting entity with a particular history that shapes its identity of its members, for a history of the relationships

that express the disposition to solidarity which members share in virtue of their national identity.”(The Concept of National Community, p.154-155) Such argument could have provided as a precursor to cultural nationalism. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

11. P. Gilbert, ‘The Concept of National Community’ in *The Philosophical Forum*, V.xxviii, Nos.1-2 Fall-Winter 1996-97, p.154.
12. This brings to mind the identity crisis faced by a man of Caucasian descent in the apartheid regime of South Africa when he was struck by a skin condition which turned his skin to black complexion. His belonging to the community under the apartheid system was purely contingent on the colour of his skin and not on his own reflection of his identity, his own sense of belonging or his commitment to the welfare of his community.
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21. M. Canovan, 'What Is a Nation?' in *Nationhood and Political Theory*
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22. P. Gilbert, *The Philosophy of Nationalism*, p.68.
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25. *ibid.*, p.72.
26. S. Caney, 'Individuals, Nations and Obligations' in *National Rights and International Obligations*, ed. S. Caney, D. George & P. Jones (Colorado Westview Press, 1996), p.134.

2. The Recent Revival of Nationalism

In spite of most nations harbouring multiethnic, multicultural population within their political community, the significance of accommodating nationalism in some form within liberal polity predominantly occupies the political thought of some liberals. Even though liberalism privileges citizenship over and above social membership many liberal nationalists very strongly believe that there is more to citizenship than mere common interest in sharing social, political and economic system exclusively for mutual benefit. Membership of a political community is not, they believe, simply something which is subscribed by the people who share a common destination and hence work together to reach the goal. They are together, they argue, because they are inevitably interested in the welfare of other members of the community through a sense of solidarity developed through shared life.¹ (David Miller says that a nation is not like a lifeboat where people work together to reach safety rather than share a sense of commitment for the welfare of fellow members as a common goal.) It is the shared life, they argue, that brings out an innate sense of belonging and members feel they are responsible for the welfare of other members morally rather than as a legal requirement of the citizens. They emphasise that political solidarity is dependent on shared societal culture and argue that implementation of liberal ideologies becomes smoother if the political community adheres to a shared way of life, that is, if members share a common culture, common history and so on.

Such liberals argue that some form of cultural homogeneity is essential for generating mutual understanding and trust, and for political accord where citizens are expected to share their life and resources. They equate cultural identity with national identity and

argue that shared societal culture leads to political harmony. I shall, in this chapter, allude to the arguments of Will Kymlicka and David Miller, to illustrate the rationale that liberal nationalists offer in support of their belief that shared culture is an essential aspect of political community. Though their argument has some convincing points, I shall argue, it contains some inherent tension within its structure. I shall draw attention to the inconsistencies their arguments for cultural homogeneity harbour and the politico-philosophical problems their version of nationalism encounters if accepted in contemporary nation-state politics. I shall also outline the views of Charles Taylor, and comment on the type of multicultural political structure he envisages and the tension his vision of nation-state presents. I shall argue that their idea of culture and its influence in political life does not fully address the ethical problems posed by nationalism in contemporary multicultural communities.

Kymlicka

Kymlicka, a liberal nationalist, observes that ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism obviously are two distinct political ideologies. Ethnic nationalism assigns membership of the state exclusively to a descent group whereas civic nationalism bases the obligation of membership on the allegiance which members offer to the political principle. Ethnic nationalists believe that it is inherent ties which bring about political coherence whereas civic republicans believe that for a democratic state to be successful citizenship identity has to supersede all other identities. Nevertheless, he says, what many political theorists ignore is the fact that culture and polity are intricately connected in both the systems.

Ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism both recognize that shared culture is a vital component for political coherence. Common culture, they both assume, is a crucial component which binds the communities together.² Hence, Kymlicka observes, it is a myth to suppose that the state based on democratic principles alone can structure a coherent political community.

Kymlicka argues that common culture is functionally as well as instrumentally very significant for securing political coherence. Firstly, he thinks that societal culture is pivotal for its members because the autonomy of individuals, the capacity to develop their own conception of the good life is provided through shared societal culture. It “provides meaningful options, in the sense that ‘familiarity with a culture’ determines the boundaries of the imaginable”.³ Also, shared identity confers character and significance on our choices and actions. A shared cultural narrative is also important for making sense of the options available and to judge the value of our experiences. “Cultural membership”, Kymlicka says, “is a precondition of autonomous moral choices. Actions performed in a cultural context are “endowed with additional meaning” because they can be seen both as acts of individual achievement and as contributions to the development of one’s culture; and shared membership in a culture promotes a sense of belonging and relationship of mutual recognition.”⁴ Secondly, one’s sense of identity and belonging, he says, is derived through the culture one lives in. Such shared identity acquired through shared societal language, he says, is a necessary condition for political coherence because people understand each other through shared language, common public culture and, generally, through a shared social dialogue. Mutual trust and a sense of solidarity, two

essential elements for promoting equality and social justice. develop through such understanding.⁵

Functional value of shared culture

The aim of every individual, Kymlicka believes, is to lead a good life. Individual autonomy, he thinks, is a necessary condition for achieving such a goal because it is only when individuals are autonomous that they can lead their life dictated by their own beliefs and principles.⁶ It is crucial that we lead our life from ‘inside’, in accordance with our beliefs and principles which gives us a meaningful life.⁷ However, individuals can develop their own beliefs and principles only through their exposure to choices which are made available by one’s culture. Kymlicka says, “[m]eaningful choices concerning our projects require meaningful options, and (the social thesis tells us) these options come from our culture”. Hence, one is dependent on culture to develop individual autonomy.⁸ The ‘culture’, to which Kymlicka refers, is not located in shared values, practices and memories and so on, as it is normally assumed. He defines culture in terms of, “a societal culture – that is a culture which provides its members with a meaningful way of life across full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private sphere”.⁹ Such all-pervading societal culture, he reckons, provides the members with the options, and sets the moral parameters for their guidance.¹⁰

Kymlicka thinks that to live the life from within one has to be free to choose the life to which one aspires. To access the choices available in deciding one's choice of the 'good life', it is necessary that there exists a community which provides such a context of choice through its institutions, traditions, conventions and so on, informs individuals of the choices available and guides them through choosing their options available to them within their culture.¹¹ He believes that a political arrangement has to accommodate shared culture within its structure in order to facilitate the autonomous life of its members. This condition, he argues, can be provided if the political community is a nation-state.

Occupying geographical space becomes significant, Kymlicka thinks, only through sharing the community life one lives in, through sharing its culture, understanding the options available within its context and having the freedom to avail oneself of them. To be a part of societal culture and to understand social practices, he says, it is essential that members understand 'shared social vocabulary'. He makes a very significant point when he says, "[u]nderstanding these cultural narratives is a precondition of making intelligent judgments about how to lead our lives. In this sense, our culture not only provides options, it also provides the spectacles through which we identify experiences as valuable. The availability of meaningful options depends on access to societal culture, and on understanding the history and language of that culture – its shared vocabulary of tradition and convention."¹² Members choose their options for what it means to follow a certain practice, tradition and so on within their culture. Customs and traditions as observed by the group only make sense for members when the narration of its significance is included and introduced in the social vocabulary of members who share

that culture. For this purpose, Kymlicka says, it is important that communal belonging is respected and nurtured.¹³

Since, Kymlicka says, culture makes a significant contribution towards integrating the community by providing the context of choice and the moral parameters, common culture has to be recognized as a relevant factor in national context; nationally shared life has to become culturally shared life. He believes that national identity and cultural identity are so intricately connected through shared history, culture, and shared destiny that they are perceived to be one and the same by the nation's members. He says that in a sociological sense, 'nation' and 'culture' carry almost synonymous status.¹⁴ He defines a nation as a "historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture". National identity helps tie people's self-respect with group esteem and also establishes special bond between generations, thus giving one the sense of continuity. Although "members of a nation", he says, "no longer share moral values or traditional ways of life, they still have deep attachment to their own language and culture".¹⁵ Liberal goals of protecting individual autonomy, freedom and equality (the values which are central to liberal tenets) can only be achieved in a liberalized societal culture and hence, he says, ... "it is a legitimate and essential task of government to protect the ongoing viability of national cultures, and, more generally, to express people's national identities".¹⁶ Hence, he believes, it is vital that the state protects national culture through its structure.

The Instrumental significance of shared culture

Kymlicka thinks that societal culture is instrumentally as significant as it is functionally vital for democratic citizenship.¹⁷ Sharing societal culture, for him, means sharing “territorially-concentrated culture with the community centred on shared language which is used in a wide range of social institutions, in both public and private lives”.¹⁸ Because, Kymlicka says, it is a fact of contemporary political communities that they harbour more than one culture and one knows that diversity is a fact of life. Peoples within a pluralistic society belong to different religions with different ideas about the good life, and hold differing conceptions of social values and hence, he does not accept that ‘building a closed wall’ around cultures, to cut them off from the ‘general movement of the world’ is a healthy, or a viable option.¹⁹ Nevertheless, he says, it is unrealistic to sustain diverse cultures with diverse ideology and varied ways of life within the public realm of a political community because it unsettles the very foundation of a coherent community by creating a confused society with melange of cultures and conflicting ideas of the good life. Hence, political societies need a gel to hold the membership together.²⁰ He reckons that shared language is particularly significant for this purpose because he believes that shared political deliberation is only possible if members understand and trust one another. Such conditions exist, he believes, if there are some underlying commonalities within the community. People, wherever they share common language, relate to each other more positively. It is also necessary for promoting mutual recognition and accepting the responsibility for the welfare of other members and making sacrifices for the benefit of

other members.²¹ Recognition leads to greater social and political participation on equal terms.

A common standardized language, Kymlicka emphasises, is also a source of delivering equality in a democratic state where different cultural groups could be interacting.²² It provides every member with the functional requirement of common education which ensures equal access to training and job market, and job mobility. Members stand a better chance of competing on equal terms if they hold similar qualifications.²³ It facilitates social impartiality and adaptability. Common language also helps promote inter-group communication. 'Difference' becomes less sharp if proper communication is established. It helps ease the disadvantage of prejudice. Thus, it promotes integration of peoples into one social group.

Accommodation of minority cultures within a nation-state

However, arguing for shared societal culture in a multicultural society means people accepting a publicly standardised culture. Naturally, it leads to a situation where the majority culture becomes the societal culture which naturally leads to a position where minority cultures are obliged to accept the majority culture. This undermines both the arguments Kymlicka has been putting forth: that is, culture is important for every individual since a context of choice is provided by one's culture and one's conception of the good life is developed through one's exposure to the culture; and secondly, that one has to lead the life from 'inside' if one is to exercise one's autonomy. Kymlicka

recognises very emphatically that culture is vital for every member and changing cultural identity is not an easy process for alien cultural groups exposed to a dominant host culture. One may learn the language, religion and lifestyle through constant exposure to majority culture but the culture inculcated through the moral teachings from within the cultural group, the pattern of behaviour of a particular societal life established through the imitation of elders and peers, is hard to shake off. Since cultural embeddedness is an essential aspect of every individual, Kymlicka contends, claims for minority rights cannot be dismissed as irrelevant and unjustified in contemporary polity. Hence, he says, though it is essential to bring about the motivation to act as responsible citizens with shared understanding by establishing a common platform for deliberation, and by creating trust and a sense of solidarity between different groups, urging minority groups to assimilate into majority culture is not the right approach to accommodate their cultures within the mainstream culture. He advocates a pluralistic conception of integration. It is vital, he argues, in a democratic state that every citizen is granted equal civil and political rights. He supports the liberals' argument that if the state intervenes in the cultural market place by supporting certain cultures, be they minority or majority, either by offering positive or negative discrimination for supporting a 'particular way of life' it lays itself open to the charge of partiality. Hence, he says, the state should stay neutral and allow different cultures to compete in the open social arena. People within a liberal state should be free to choose between competing visions of the good life. As such, values worth maintaining would be preserved. No matter from what culture they originate, they only help to increase the number of options available for autonomous choice by the members and ensure peoples' right to self-determination.

However, he does make a clear distinction between two kinds of minority groups, namely, *immigrants*, that is, groups that have voluntarily chosen to move to another political community for their own personal reasons, and *indigenous groups* (which he regards as national minorities), ‘groups who formed functioning societies on their historical homelands prior to being incorporated into a larger state’, that is, whose lives have been uprooted by the majority culture through occupation and other historical events.²⁴ Since such indigenous groups, he says, already had an ongoing, institutionally operating cultural structure before they were merged into a larger state, they need to be treated differently from immigrant groups. In what he calls multi-nation states where indigenous minority groups’ culture is threatened by majority culture for example groups that have been victims of colonisation, as in the case of native Americans or Puerto Ricans, he believes that they should be given all the help they need to preserve their own indigenous culture.²⁵ However, he thinks, this privilege cannot be extended to immigrants in polyethnic communities. The reason for denying this privilege to immigrants is that immigrants exercise their choice to move to a different political community with the fullest knowledge of the fact that they are entering a new culture. They are aware of the hardship and the difficulty they may face in adjusting to alien culture. Since, they choose voluntarily to live in an alien culture, the onus is on them to adjust to their new surroundings and hence, they should be expected to accept the majority culture and be a part of societal culture in due course.²⁶

Even then, Kymlicka observes that the claims of minorities to their cultures cannot be dismissed as inherently unjust. To the contrary, he thinks, they have to be seen as consistent with principles of justice. Also, he says, effective citizenship is dependent on recognising and feeling solidarity with members of different ethnic and religious groups.²⁷ He does not accept that immigrants should merge totally by accepting the norms and customs of majority culture. He says that they can, and to some extent, should maintain and celebrate their cultural heritage and 'difference' but such adherence to their cultural practices should be retained in the 'private' arena, that is, within their own home and voluntary associations. They can be allowed to keep their religion and customs, learn and speak their language, and keep in touch with their own vision of the good life privately. However, it is not feasible to offer them the entitlement to maintain distinct and institutionally complete cultures within the state. Publicly, for the sake of harmony, they should accept the societal culture even if it means accepting majority culture in public arena.

The argument for state neutrality means, Kymlicka accepts, that members of minority cultures are at a definite disadvantage. It is a fact that a state necessarily privileges particular national culture through the language of public institutions like school, courts and so on.²⁸ Minority cultures are put under pressure to accommodate into the majority culture. But supporting minority cultures may not be a viable option for the state either socially or economically. (He thinks it may work out to be too costly 'in terms of other liberal goals'.)²⁹ Moreover, he says, it may not turn out to be such a difficult task even for the minority cultures to change their vision of the good life in the long run because the

displaced group would lose contact with their own cultures as they would be cut off from it. Lack of exposure to their original culture, a factor that is essential for perpetuating any culture, and their exposure to and influence by existent societal culture would naturally lead to their support gradually waning for their own culture. 'Benign neglect', as he calls it, may work to the benefit of minority cultures.

It is often argued by cosmopolitans that cultural rootedness is not a necessary condition for leading a meaningful life as Kymlicka implies. Clinging on to cultural groups is, they argue, unproductive and unwanted. They argue that coping with different cultures is not as hard and unrealistic as it is often made out to be by cultural nationalists. Social structure is all about the interdependent lives that we lead. One cannot aspire to separate cultural rights because every member of every community is intricately connected to the cultural group with which one is interacting and benefits from living in. Since one is dependent on the values of other cultures to live the life of one's own vision in a pluralist community it is unrealistic to hope to preserve one's cultural community and expect the state to protect it. To live the life of one's choice, they say, one depends on other cultures to provide the broad framework where one can exercise one's vision of the good life. By sharing such a framework she or he is already contributing to the principles on which she bases the liberty she is given by the political structure.³⁰

However, Kymlicka does not accept the assumption of cosmopolitans that there is no need for cultural rootedness in order to lead a fulfilling life. He argues that 'members of smaller group would willingly assimilate into larger groups, so long as their rights were

respected' has not been proven right in the contemporary world. Many nationalist groups have forcefully argued for their cultural rights in many parts of the world.³¹ Struggles such as, for instance, the Kashmir dispute for self-determination may support the point Kymlicka is making. Also, it is possible, he says, that some people may be living a successful cosmopolitan life, as multi-nationalist Waldron suggests. However, picking on such arguments of cosmopolitans, Kymlicka observes that though one can find people 'living in kaleidoscope cultures', (for example, an Indian enjoying western literature, Chinese cuisine, Scottish ballet, and Ravishankar's sitar) can only be seen as people enjoying the freedom offered by western societies to exercise their choices. This cannot be seen as real criss-crossing cultures, or people adapting to different visions of the good life within a political community. Some people may acquire the ability, he thinks, but it is a rare accomplishment.³² The influence of culture on every individual is deep-seated and that fact, he thinks, has to be recognised. This, again, does not mean, he says, that different cultures should be sheltered from being influenced by differing conceptions of the good life. It is a social fact that the choices available within any given culture are influenced by interacting cultures. We see that values from other cultures are constantly absorbed. However, options, Kymlicka argues, only become meaningful and available within the structure 'if they become a part of the shared vocabulary of social life', if they gain contextually recognisable status. The absorption of the achievements of outside cultures is decided by the society itself by way of embodying the cultural material in social practices and not by state imposition.³³

Kymlicka's argument in support of liberal nationalism, which I have tried to summarise, has many positive points. He very rightly points out the value of societal culture in structuring a political community. A sense of belonging, mutual trust, understanding and transparency are essential for better co-operation and sharing within any given community. Whether it is common culture, religion, language or all of them in conjunction, there is always some defining feature where an individual's identity is entangled with the formation of group identity. Shared identities have played a great part in the human psyche through history in some way or other. The 'us' and 'them' sentiment, in some form, has always dominated group identities and we all carry these ideas whether foreigner or a native.³⁴ Such sentiments cannot be dismissed but need to be addressed.

One can agree that, whether civic or ethnic, some common sentiment and sense of shared experience are necessary for a political unit to exist harmoniously. Also, one has to accept that societal culture provides its members with a meaningful way of life through whole array of social activities. It constructs the moral parameters for conceiving individual autonomy and its development and operation. It provides them with the freedom to construct the conception of the good life within the choices offered. Certainly, cultural narratives influence our behavioural patterns and give us worthwhile values to live by as seen by the culture. We are offered the opportunity to make intelligent evaluation of the choices available and live the life we choose in a liberal state. Instrumentally, common language, shared education, commonly shared public institutions, no doubt, help build the necessary connection between members.

His vision of society where recognition of minority rights is seen as a necessary aspect of justice and essential step for the generation of shared identity and solidarity is a step forward. However, his arguments do leave some unease about citizenship in the modern world.

Problems with Kymlicka's views on nationalism

There appears to be an inherent tension in Kymlicka's argument about how political identity is determined. Though he takes the view of membership as non-ethnic and gives due recognition to minority cultures and their right to their culture and accepts that membership of political community can be acquired voluntarily, his argument suggests that national identity for most part is decided by shared culture, shared history, and intergenerational bonds, that is, non-voluntary elements, and that such identity, for functional purpose, has to be a dominant feature of civic identity. The elements which Kymlicka associates with shared coherent life are most likely to be present in groups who share their history through generations, thus leading to the assumption that the membership of a political community is more valid if it is inherent. Though he promotes voluntary membership as a political principle, he favours involuntary membership of a political community for facilitating much needed political coherence. This leaves very little room for voluntary membership on equal terms, somehow giving the feeling that 'otherness' is harder to be accommodated in the public arena.

The second tension one can spot in Kymlicka's argument is that, according to him, "a societal cultureprovides its members with a meaningful way of life across a full range of human activities, including social educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private sphere"³⁵ and that "it is a legitimate and essential task of government to protect the ongoing viability of national cultures, and, more generally, to express people's national identities".³⁶ One can justifiably be worried whether in their anxiety to homogenise culture, with the exception of indigenous culture, societal cultures could be comprehensively controlled by the state. People could, one can argue, possibly be manipulated by the state into accepting only the options which it supports and promotes them as the right options for the community.

Membership of a political community is not just a matter of equal political rights; it is also a matter of inclusion. Apportioning certain qualifications for national membership, which only a section of society is likely to possess, creates the argument that some groups are more authentic than other minority groups in spite of their contribution towards the welfare of the members, their loyalty to their national community, and the sacrifices they make to make the nation a better place, with their commitment to their accepted political group. The membership of minority cultures, for example immigrants, has to be valued and recognised with equal respect within the political arrangement.

Secondly, it is arguable whether it is the homogeneity of culture or the interdependence of communities which is at the basis of togetherness. One can trace back the basis of togetherness to interdependency. Historically, one can trace ethnic and face-to-face

communities sharing a coherent social space because they were confined to the geographical area with limited need for widespread diasporas. Members depended on each other for their day-to-day lives. The scope of the community extended as a historical necessity in the wake of social movement initiated by industrial revolution. The social structure also changed as a result of changes in the social group. The pattern of social relationship changed. One can argue that the basis of togetherness changed because the form of interdependency changed.

Thirdly, Kymlicka's argument that minority cultures can be accommodated within the structure of majority culture by relegating them to the private arena and applying the strategy of 'benign neglect' so that their cultural narrative is lost in the long range can be observed as illiberal. He stresses very emphatically in his argument how important it is for every member to lead the life from 'inside', yet, he restricts the right of minority cultures to this privilege to private life only because they choose to share a different culture for their own reasons. This means minority cultural groups are not given equal rights to express their individuality and recognition of their vision of the good life in public life. One can argue that understanding of different groups can only develop when other groups are recognised publicly as equal members, that is that, although they speak a different social language, yet they share the same political space, and are committed to the welfare of the group in their own capacity as equal members. Understanding and coherence only develops when difference becomes a part of societal language. Every option for the good life, be it religious, social or economic, that is available in any culture has a logical narrative to it. What is necessary, in that case, is a public dialogue to

understand the practices which are culture-specific rather than relegate them to the private arena and out of the public domain. It can only widen the horizon of options available to every culture.

Fourthly, Kymlicka may have a point in arguing that it is possible to mobilize loyalty with relative ease, if the political community shares the same societal culture, says Bhikhu Parekh. However, can one accept that it is a desirable option in the long range? One can agree with the points Parekh makes while summing up the drawbacks of striving for nationalism. He says, “[i]t also has a tendency to become closed, intolerant, averse to change, claustrophobic and oppressive, and discourage differences, dissent Since it has limited resources for internal resistance, it can as easily be mobilized for evil as for good purposes. It is narrowly based and lacks the conditions necessary for the development of such great intellectual and moral virtues as intellectual openness, humility, tolerance of differences, critical self-consciousness, powers of intellectual and moral imagination, and extensive sympathy.”³⁷

Fifthly, can Kymlicka’s support for liberal preference for the cultural market place, where the state maintains neutrality, be ethically justified in a liberal state? He is aware that it is essential to ensure that ‘all groups in society have genuinely free and equal access to cultural market place’ so that they can trade on even grounds.³⁸ However, the meaning of the word ‘market’ is, ‘a *public place* where people trade by exchanging goods’. How can minority cultures relegated to private life only be traded in a public place on equal terms with majority culture with a distinct public arena? In such a community, minority cultures

cannot get an equal trading ground. Hence, one cannot assure equality in trading the values which are better equipped to deliver better vision of the good life. Freedom to choose one's own lifestyle is restricted by the covert lack of acceptance of the minority way of life. Individual dignity is undermined and cultural hegemony is put very much in the picture. One cannot expect social harmony where one is required to come to terms with majority culture, as Kymlicka advocates. Rather, people understand the values of every culture publicly so that they can choose the options from a wider context.

One can trace a hint of confusion in Kymlicka's assumption of cultural community. As Waldron argues, what is important for a fulfilling life is not a secure culture but a rich cultural structure where one can derive one's values from, no matter what culture they originate from.³⁹ The ethical guidelines one draws from the culture are important and not the membership of the cultural community. Waldron touches a significant point when he argues that, "we need cultural meanings, but we do not need homogeneous cultural frameworks. We need to understand our choices in the contexts in which they make sense, but we do not need any single context to structure all our choices. we need culture but we do not need cultural integrity."⁴⁰

Moreover, and very significantly, 'strangeness' or 'otherness' is a relative term and contextual. A southerner will find northerner 'a bit different' and an Australian may find an Englishman so, in spite of shared common language and genetics, and other commonalities. There are no two groups who are totally at ease with each other on all aspects of shared life. Also, when one accepts cosmopolitanism as a realistic way of life,

does one refer to appreciating music and food etc. or does one refer to more than that?

Adapting to societal language, taking on social customs and so on can be a rational solution for developing better communication within the community which one has chosen to share and practical solution for enjoying one's life, and for widening one's horizon. They do so by accepting that 'recognition of otherness is a right and a duty for everyone', be it host community or immigrant community.⁴¹ As Parekh observes, people can accept and understand other cultures and live meaningful lives in different countries if they are exposed to other cultures for a length of time. It is a common occurrence in the contemporary world that people move around in different cultures for education, jobs, business and so on. It is possible to connect to people who develop attachment to multiple communities, share visions of others' idea of good life, and offer loyalty while sharing political space.⁴² (For example, in spite of not sharing religious beliefs, one may participate in activities like carol concerts, and appreciate and take part in fund raising events for Christian Aid for the gain in cultural as well as humanist aspects of life.) People in a multicultural society accept that it is the individuals and their contribution towards the care and welfare of every member which matters most to social cohesiveness and not their cultural affiliation. It is not that this factor is not recognized by nationalists but merely recognising their contribution alone does not lead to accepting their presence in social domain. As Kristeva puts it, considering 'foreigners simply as an additional strength or extra pair of hands useful in running the state is not going to bring about harmony within the political community. Proper integration can only ensue when individualities are recognized and respected as the norm'.⁴³

In spite of Kymlicka's argument for multiculturalism, his views appear to be very much centred round mono-cultural political community biased on majority culture and suggest accommodation of minority cultures within majority cultural community.

Miller

Nevertheless, Kymlicka is not alone in thinking that cultural identity and national identity are interdependent and hence cultural nationalism should be accommodated within a liberal state in some form. David Miller, another liberal philosopher, also argues that the political community cannot be seen as an institution where people share their social space because of the benefits they gain by the membership. He argues that national identity, which emerges by sharing common culture, is intrinsically vital for arranging the political life of nation's members. Like Kymlicka, Miller also accepts that political communities cannot be viewed as rigid non-voluntary associations –as in the ethnic nationalists' sense, where membership is genetically acquired. However, he argues, membership of a political community cannot be seen purely as a voluntary choice of individuals based on reason alone. Miller does not believe that the membership of a state positioned around shared allegiance to the state alone is sufficient to form a coherent political community. Political community, he says, cannot be equated to a 'kind of a supermarket in which different goods and services are on offer in different places, and in which it is perfectly reasonable for individuals to gravitate to whatever place offers them the best package.'⁴⁴ Assuming such a vision of society is, he says, pathological and it does not fully recognize the contribution the shared life makes to achieving political coherence. Moreover, he

argues, it is difficult to make such a community into a viable political group because “a society in which every one held such views would be unable to sustain itself - it could not call on its members’ loyalty when under attack, for instance - and so in the long run it could not provide the conditions under which they could pursue their personal visions of the good life in security.”⁴⁵

National identity according to Miller

National identity, Miller argues, is not just functional and hence important, as Kymlicka believes, but it is significant because people share subjective identities; they share a sense of togetherness. He says that common group relationship in a polity is not something that can be initiated by official citizenship but people have to feel they are a part of the community from within. National identity, he thinks, is entangled with the self-identity of its members. People derive their personal identity from national identity. He says, “nations exist when their communities are constituted by belief: nations exist when their members recognize one another as compatriots, and believe that they share characteristics of the relevant kind.”⁴⁶

Miller chiefly identifies five essential elements which contribute to the formation of nationality and distinguishes the inner group from the outer group. National identity, he says, is constituted by ‘i.) shared belief and mutual commitment, ii.) extended in history, iii.) active in character, iv.) connected to a particular territory and [they are] v.) marked off from other communities by distinct public culture’.⁴⁷ Common national identity,

which develops when people share these ingredients, he says, leads to a natural sense of shared belonging.

Nationalism, Miller claims, is a natural sentiment born out of an all-embracing shared way of life.⁴⁸ When people share their identity with shared life, he says, they experience a special bond, a sense of togetherness between members of the community. They sentimentally belong to each other. National attachments, bonds of relationships people have between them, play a significant part in individuals' political and social lives because people naturally share the care and nurture of their group members. This, Miller believes, essentially leads to social and political harmony.

Miller acknowledges that arguing for nationalism means favouring ethical particularism, that is, prioritising a national group over and above other groups. One can argue that supporting a particular culture can be seen as logically incompatible with liberal tenets of equality, and yielding to sentimentality rather than rationality. However, this criticism can be defended, he argues, on the grounds that such national communities are moral communities, and politically arranged ethical standards, laws, customs and regulations are socially determined in the first place. They are drawn from the values which members themselves hold to be morally valuable. Hence, when people follow the laws and customs they do so willingly rather than as rules imposed by the state. Moreover, it fulfils the principle of utility by drawing a boundary around a referable set of people to whom one can offer help practically.

Nationalism as a natural sentiment

Though Miller concedes that national identity is, at times, constructed by political means, he does not accept the argument that national identity is nothing more than a mere political construction.⁴⁹ He thinks that national identity subjectively constructed by shared public culture is socially and politically significant. Though there is nothing inherent about national identity in the ethnic nationalists' sense, that is, as an extended biological family, he says, it is 'in most parts un-chosen and unreflectively acquired' for most of the people. It is given through birth and nurture; it is socially constructed and acquired through shared life.⁵⁰ The lifestyle one shares, and the values one cherishes as guidelines for leading one's life are derived, he argues, from the very group to which one belongs. People of such a community form a political unit voluntarily, Miller thinks, not because they share *objective similarity* but they share *subjective identity* with other members and their *will* to share collectivity with those individuals who they believe share similar lifestyle, outlook, and principles.

National identity thus constructed by shared experiences and common culture, Miller thinks, is an essential part of everyday social life. Shared culture, he believes, is intrinsically valuable to its members. Cultures are the products of community life and communities live the culture of the group. People live it through nation's laws, languages and customs, in fact in every walk of life. Their ideals, dreams, expectations and a sense of belonging are entrenched in the national community to which they belong. Life becomes much more meaningful if one knows the aims and ambitions, moral parameters,

and the value of personal and social achievements. One sees oneself as a member of the community and depends on that identity for one's guidance throughout one's life. This is functionally significant, Miller says, because arranging political community is made easier within such communities by the inherent sense of mutual commitment members feel for each other. Due to this special relationship national communities form ethically bonded groups which work for the benefit of their members willingly. One's rights and duties are naturally manifest in such relationship. A sense of natural brotherhood, as in the family model, facilitates the task of arranging social justice within a democratic state because members deliver their obligations without the need for judiciary to force them into delivering. The duties they owe to each other, Miller feels, go beyond the legal requirements laid down by the state. The obligations are directed more passionately than they would be to members of other nations. Hence, he argues, nationalism has to be accommodated in the political context and national culture nurtured by the state.

One can argue that cultural values are not fixtures that never change and values from other cultures never absorbed. For that matter, as Renan says, there are no cultures which are pristine in their structure. Ideologies are fostered and acted upon constantly at their own pace in every culture. Miller acknowledges this fact. He also accepts that the constituents of culture are not always initiated within an existent social culture. Many times, they take their shape through 'political debate', created and spread with the help of mass media. At times, they are political constructs. Values are sometimes determined and promoted by the state.⁵¹ But, he says, this does not warrant diluting existent national

identity through the state machinery if different cultures happen to share the political community due to diasporas. Supporting and maintaining existent culture could be a healthy option even for the minority communities in the long range because the advantages of nurturing a sense of community developed through shared national identity far outweigh the problems minority cultures encounter if they hope to adhere to their own culture. Hence, he says, though it is not demanded of minority members, in a liberal state, to forsake their own values and traits, they have to be willing to take on the traits of national character in order to be a part of that national community and abandon the values and traits which are in direct conflict with the values of the majority culture.⁵² They have to assimilate within the majority culture. Miller does not believe that integrating within majority culture has to be a necessarily one-sided effort, as Kymlicka suggests, by accepting state neutrality which obviously means privileging majority culture by his own admission.⁵³ He thinks that there has to be adjustment on both sides, a give-and-take approach, to establish common ground so that mutual respect and understanding prevails. He thinks that majority culture also has to recognize the values of other cultures and imbibe values worth nurturing within their culture.

Defending the claim that national culture is vital for a political community, Miller argues that social values develop within a cultural community. The obligations, laws, customs and practices are initiated and approved by the deliberation of the public and hence more authentic than state-dictated norms. The state does not formulate the laws which are expected to be obeyed by the citizens because they seem appropriate for some rational argument, but the very moral laws and rules, duties and rights adopted by the state are

born out of people's own perception of moral values. It is, he says, the 'shared public culture which results from rational deliberation over time' that determines the nature of duties and rights and it is the prevalent culture which influences the political aspect of society.⁵⁴ Since social values are determined by the community solidarity and social justice, they are accepted and delivered better by members of the community. Hence, one needs to share a culture in order to identify with the peoples of the nation and understand the nature of rights and duties that one is called upon to fulfil within a political arrangement.

Trust is at the basis of every relationship, be it personal or social. It can only develop when people can understand each other, communicate with each other and recognize each other as compatriots. The vital requirement for initiating and developing such rapport between members is communication. In order to establish communication, Miller thinks, it is important for people to share a common language and a common way of life, and accept shared values. It is for this reason, he says, that minority cultures have to accommodate themselves within the majority culture through establishing communication and accepting common goals and social values so that they are accommodated within the fold with respect.⁵⁵

Ethical justification of National communities

Like Kymlicka, Miller believes that nations are ethical communities. He does not quite accept that the concept of rights and obligations as understood by citizens in the

republican state is similar in ethos to the rights and obligations comprehended in a nation-state. The very fact that one belongs to a certain group entails one's special responsibility for the welfare of other members of one's own group. "It would ...be a great mistake to suppose that, once a practice of political co-operation is in place, nationality drops out of the picture as an irrelevance - that we simply have the rights and obligations of citizens interacting with other citizens," he says because, "(t)he bonds of nationality give the practice a different shape from the one it would have without them."⁵⁶ Social relationships are based on reciprocity. Because of this special relationship created by shared life, there is no misconception about where their actions are directed and no anxiety about reciprocation.⁵⁷

It is often argued that general principles of morality rather than group interest should dictate action, and hence ethical universalism should be a plausible option for arranging political communities and not ethical particularism. Supporting ethical particularism, that is, showing preference for securing the welfare of members of one's own national community as opposed to arguing for ethical universalism, may lead to a situation where interests of the majority social group could take precedence over a rationally dictated solution to a particular ethical problem. Such conception, it can be argued, does not adhere to the principle of equality which liberalism hopes to facilitate so strongly and hence cultural particularism is ethically indefensible and logically unacceptable.⁵⁸

Miller accepts the argument that accepting cultural particularism in the political structure could amount to supporting the ties of sentiment, and thus, encourage prejudice.

However, he defends his position for advocating ethical particularism on the grounds that since nations are communities with special relationship and shared commitment, members are justified in privileging cultural particularism. He says, "...[a]gents are already encumbered with a variety of ties and commitments to particular other agents, or groups or collectivities, and they begin their ethical reasoning from those commitments."⁵⁹ Though ethical principles adopted by the community are fundamentally derived from general principles of humanity, he argues, they can only be meaningfully delivered within a limited framework. He believes that cultural nationalism is not just significant for its instrumentalism but, in a sense, it is facing realism. Ethical universalism is too vague and unconnected to local problems. When one is faced with abstract universalism and concrete particularism, particularism is bound to gain favour. It is a fact that we, as human beings, naturally tend to nurture our own kind before we support others who are in difficulty. We understand the problems well, empathize with the problems and deliver the help conducive to the community of which we are a part. Moreover, Miller observes, an argument against particularism does not take into account the whole dynamics of social life.⁶⁰ Firstly, he says, one has to accept that no arrangement within human society can be sustained by pure reason alone. It has to accommodate sentiment. There has to be, Miller thinks, a sense of belonging prior to members being called upon to fulfil their obligations. One is naturally well disposed to give and accept benevolence from other members if they belong to the same cultural group, where they share social values. It is only when people are sentimentally involved within the community that they can participate actively in the welfare of other members of the community. An innate sense of belonging promotes welfare naturally.

Moreover, one also has to acknowledge, Miller says, that national obligations are derived out of 'public culture'. He does not think that the state simply passes the laws which citizens are expected to obey. He believes that though political debate contributes to the shaping of national obligations they stem mainly from public culture. Obligations are derived out of the rationally reflected social values of a stable common culture where each member contributes on an 'equal footing' to the enterprise. The values one subscribes to are well defined and responses to situations well-understood as they are the reflections of their own moral commitments. Hence, he says, the conception of the good life in such pre-political community is shared within the group.

Rational justification of nationalism

Miller says that privileging sentiment in supporting ethical particularism does not necessarily mean undermining rationalism, nor that being non-universal obviously amounts to being unethical. It can also stand the scrutiny of ethical justification based on basic principles like humanism and utility. Nationalism, he says, can be defended rationally on the grounds that it has great instrumental value in securing the welfare of its members. Unless people feel special bonds towards other members within a political community, redistribution of wealth, and primary social goods becomes difficult as any kind of taxation can be seen as coercion and hence, against the principle of liberalism. Rationality dictates that the members of our own group understand our needs more than any other group because we share the same set of values and ideologies. Logically, he

says, ethical universalism does not work because the support offered to different cultural groups may not be relevant to the needs appreciated by the group since the ideals and values differ greatly. The priorities differ from one public culture to the other. Moreover, he says, it works on the logic that no nation can provide unlimited support to other nations for the basic reason that there are not enough resources to go round to reach every community *ad infinitum*. Hence, it makes sense to assume that it is the duty of every nation to work for the welfare of its own group according to its supply of resources and requirements. It should be the duty of each group to look after the welfare of its own group in a way that its members find congenial. That is the only way also, he believes, to ensure that the right kind of help reaches the needs of a community.

Problems with Miller's argument

One can criticise Miller on several points. I shall expand on a few points which are particularly debatable. Firstly, one can feel a sense of paradox in his argument. Like Kymlicka, he also makes a direct connection between national identity and cultural identity when he argues that nationality is 'un-chosen membership of a historic community'; that birth and nurture determines one's social and cultural identity. One identifies with a national group because one shares the values inscribed through shared culture, and intergenerational bonds. Since cultural identity and intergenerational bonds are vital for political coherence, he assumes, citizenship naturally involves shared culture. This amounts to the concept of nation replacing 'exclusive ethnic groups' with 'exclusive cultural groups'. If national identity is seen as shared identity generated by shared

elements which he specifies, it excludes outsiders. Yet, he accepts the liberal view that the membership of a political community can be acquired voluntarily and that the members within such a community can expect equal rights, equal respect and dignity regardless of their group membership. The two accounts of nationality do not go together. Either, citizenship is voluntary, in which case, citizens need not necessarily share birth and nurture; shared values and customs and coherence can be achieved through rationally responsible citizenship; or, it needs to be involuntary because shared cultural community is intrinsically valuable for coherence. It is inconsistent to argue for both. One can argue that the obligations of a citizen can be delivered equally responsibly whether one has acquired the membership voluntarily or one carries it as an inevitable accident. If achieving a harmonious political community where individual equality, freedom and respect is valued is the aim of nationalism, it is possible to argue that it can be achieved through shared unequivocal commitment of every member to the state to which all citizens are ultimately responsible. Merging both nationality and culture within one structure leads to an uneasy feeling that some members are more authentic than others, and the values assigned by some groups are more valid and worthwhile than some others.

A second point of anxiety can be spotted in some of the elements which Miller identifies as the markers of shared identity. He emphasises shared history as a contributory factor for shared political identity. He draws the connection between a sense of belonging and the historical association the people of a nation have as a community. However, his argument that nationals share common history and take responsibility for their actions does not sit comfortably within post-colonial nations where membership is multi-national

and multicultural with conflicting historical experiences within cultural groups who are aware of the history of the land. The fact is, not all nationals necessarily appreciate the past deeds of their ancestors nor do they want to be a part of the tradition. One can argue that sharing history and taking responsibility for the actions of older generations are two different matters. One can share history but may be affected differently by their actions. One may take moral objection to their deeds. The legacy of slave trade, practice of apartheid can very well explain the position.

Moreover, history, as Miller himself suggests, is constructed by a political agenda. It is an observed truth that choosing which historical stories attain a legendary status is a matter of the instrumental value it provides, rather than their truth-value. Such an approach is obviously politically constructed and apparently favours dominant culture from emotional as well as utilitarian point of view. For example, the national history of the Americas and Australia is the history narrated from the point of view of settlers. The original inhabitants of those geographical areas do not share the historical narrative and the heroics of the conquerors as their history. If history has to be a part of the narrative at all in a multicultural society, myths should be spun with a different perspective, that is, it has to include the history of minority communities, their relationship to the history of mainstream population, and their contribution to the history of the nation in a positive way.

One can also observe that Miller's argument for taking responsibility for the actions of ancestors does not correspond to the experience of immigrants particularly from former

colonies who have arrived from colonial regimes of the past. For example, as a descendent of Indian grandparents who actively agitated against the British occupation as an act of evil imperialism, I am not a fit candidate for British nationality. I do not share the history of Britain, not in the way Miller means, nor am I in a position to feel responsible for the actions of the colonial English. Also, Miller implies that my special obligations to my compatriots are derived from my indebtedness incurred for the toil and sweat of my ancestors. National myths, he believes, perform 'a moralizing role, by holding before us the virtues of our ancestors and encouraging us to live up to them'. This is particularly sensitive because the very minority groups of Britain are the victims of oppressive, exploitative imperialist rulers of the 20th century. It is a tricky scenario for a person like me who, I think, is an ideal citizen. I can cope with the idea of being indebted to a decent minded present generation which has offered me citizenship in return for my loyalty to the state and its people, but it might be an unacceptable demand if I was asked to be indebted to the past generations and return my obligations on their behalf. National identity for me does not consist in shared history or common culture, but in ethically derived duty towards other citizens.

Thus, it is arguable whether shared history has to be a part of national identity. People can share social values, regardless of whether they share their past, if it is ethically acceptable to their own standards. Americans fought their war of independence with the British in spite of sharing common descent, ethnicity, and common history. This was mainly because they saw the British rule as oppressive and restrained their individual liberty to lead their lives the way it suited them. They wanted economic and political

freedom to express themselves. They wanted sovereignty over the land in which they had toiled. Their political identity was born out of this need and still thrives on those principles. To pick another example, the case of Australian identity, multicultural Australians place their political identity before cultural identity. For political purposes they draw a boundary around geographical area over which they claim their sovereignty and not around any cultural group.

Thirdly, one can contest his assumption that national communities are marked off by distinct culture. Is there a homogeneous culture to be found within the nation-state? One has to concede that cultural communities exist, in the sense that people do share common beliefs, practices and so on which make sense of the outside world and regulate their lives. Culture is a part of one's individual self but can one say that a common culture, a common lifestyle exists across the nation? Nations are made up of different cultures with different interests. They are only brought together for political interests.⁶¹ Miller himself accepts that cultural homogeneity is only perceived and, at times, is politically constructed and also concedes that when he claims common culture he does not claim total homogeneity but commonality enough to establish communication in all-important social and political life. For this, he thinks, it is necessary that common goals, common laws, common language and interests exist in any given nation. This is a valid suggestion. However, even if one accepts his version of homogenous public culture (which is much more watered down version in some aspects than that of Kymlicka) how is commonality decided? Who does the construction? Commonality, many times according to his own admission, is decided by the political agenda and not by social reality. The contents of

national culture are not always naturally existent but they are strategically accommodated. As Uma Narayan suggests, the very 'distinct British culture' can be seen as a product created for excluding native groups in order to sustain colonial power through imposed superiority⁶² and 'orientalism' as Edward Said thinks, is a construction of the colonizing westerners in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created for the sake of controlling political power over the colonized.⁶³ One's membership of a cultural group is contingent on what is projected as shared cultural commonality. Projected commonality is constructed with the intention of creating 'us-ness' and isolating 'otherness'.

In a multicultural society, this leads to a problem. How can minority cultures gain any respect if their values are not projected as worthwhile? The onus is on minority cultures to accommodate majority culture at the cost of suppressing themselves. This leads to inequality within a political community and loss of freedom to follow the values one holds so close to one's heart. Miller recognizes that identities are not so easily done and undone. The contents are not so easily changed to accommodate different incoming cultures. Hence, he suggests a 'give-and-take' approach by both minority and majority communities. Here lurks another dilemma. If cultures cannot be adopted so easily, 'give-and-take', which Miller suggests, means the minority cultures 'taking' from the majority culture through suppression rather than 'giving' to majority culture in a free and fair exchange. However, if it can be done with such ease, on the other hand, how can one think that national identity is a distinct identity and national character is a unique endowment? How can the distinctness be preserved in a shrinking world where different

cultures are interacting constantly at various social and political levels? Moreover, one can argue that tethering equality to assimilation itself can be seen as a form of oppression.

Fourthly, Miller's argument that nations are ethical communities and hence need to be protected is not convincingly supported. Such an assumption of Miller's raises two difficulties. Firstly, Miller does not provide any evidence to prove that reciprocity and loyalty in a national context flow naturally because nations are naturally formed communities and hence members share the concern and accept responsibility for the welfare of other group members. Nor is there enough evidence to show that non-nationals are always reluctant to fulfil their obligations to the community by sharing the responsibility. As Parekh suggests, one can argue with examples that loyalty is not evidently dependent on mainstream or immigrant membership but depends on one's social conscience and attitude towards respecting laws. One can argue through examples that it is not particularly true to assume that goodwill flows naturally to fellow nationals. It can be observed that national identity did not bring about an end to injustice and inequality for the needy in Victorian England. Tax paying or tax-avoidance has no evident link to the type of membership, that is, immigrant or native citizenship one holds. People who support national health and social service and those involved in providing such services conscientiously in Britain are not necessarily the group who share common culture. Mostly, they are fair-minded citizens, regardless of their cultural affiliation; may be immigrants serve such social institutions more conscientiously because they may have come from the countries where they may have experienced the hardship arising out of non-availability of such a system. Nor, for that matter, slavery as an unjust and immoral

practice was abolished by the efforts of voiceless, powerless black people fighting for their own voiceless, powerless fellow-citizens belonging to the same cultural group, but by fair-minded and morally aware Britons like W. Wilberforce who argued their cause as fellow human beings. National identity does not make us stand up against injustice to fellow nationals but it is social conscience and mature citizenship that dictates our actions.⁶⁴

Also, Miller's justification of nations as ethical communities raises another problem. Philip Cole puts forward a convincing argument to demonstrate that the rationality Miller applies to justify nations as ethical communities, and the argument he offers to justify ethical particularism are unsubstantiated. The ethical particularist premise stems from the assumption, Cole says, that 'our rights and duties, expectations and obligations arise from these relationships. Therefore these relationships generate moral principles.'⁶⁵ Moral principles to which community adheres emerge from within and they cannot be imposed from outside. Such argument implies that only the moral values emerging from within the community are legitimate and worth pursuing for that community. Miller also assumes that since such moral parameters are set within, the community duties and rights can only be legitimately distributed within the community.⁶⁶ This leads to the argument that ethical particularism is an inevitable solution for sustaining a coherent political community.

Cole rightly observes further that, for Miller, 'nations are ethical communities because nations are, by definition, communities and communities are, by definition, ethical;

communities are ethical because they involve relations of reciprocity and loyalty, and such relations are by nature ethical.’⁶⁷ However, he says, ‘nations are made into ethically significant communities by the assumption that membership as such is ethically significant.’ This is problematic. One can query Miller’s claim that communities are necessarily ethical. To follow Cole’s argument, even if we accept that because there is a kind of intrinsic value in membership of the group and hence we can expect loyalty and commitment to flow naturally to members within a community, and that members do respond positively to the needs of the community, can one be sure that all communities are ethical communities? How can one explain a community whose principles are not ethically justifiable, for example, those of fascism? Loyalty to other members may be anticipated within such a community but can they be seen as ethical communities just because members reciprocate their obligations within the community naturally? If a racists’ attitude to the exclusion of certain individuals is unethical, as Miller himself would agree, how can ethical particularism in his cultural community be ethically justifiable?⁶⁸

Moreover, one can observe that ethical particularism does not sit comfortably with most modern nations where multiculturalism prevails as the norm. Ethical particularism means favouring sentimentality over rationality. It means favouring one group over the other and that is against liberal tenets of equality and justice. As Freeman puts it, “Miller’s defence of nationality is illiberal in that it entails an obligation to accord preferential treatment on the basis of nationality.” Obligations to nationals put communitarianism before justice for all.⁶⁹ His argument of favouring national particularism is ethically

undefensible because favouring certain groups over other groups itself is unethical and against the tenets of liberalism, which argues for morally defensible equality over and above sentimentality. Each decision taken by the community should be answerable to moral principle and not undertaken as an obligation to protect 'one's own kind' or on what people currently believe (as Jones suggests) at the cost of other communities.⁷⁰

Miller addresses such criticisms in his reply and defends his position on the grounds that ethical universalism is not a viable option from the utilitarian point of view as well as an emotional one. People, he argues, would relate to a homeless person on the Thames more readily rather than to the needs of one on the Ganges.⁷¹ Also, respecting ethical particularism, he assures us, does not mean that one deviates from a moral principle, but recognizes the beliefs and behaviour of those who think that they are duty-bound to look after their fellow-countrymen and expect reciprocation in case of their needs. He says, "[o]ur ethical ties to other people simply vary, both in character and in strength, according to how we stand in relation to them."⁷² Hence, he says, it must be recognized as a reality. I have a problem with this argument. I do not share any element of national identity apart from the fact that I share the geographical territory and constitutional citizenship of the UK. Yet, I am sure I respond to a homeless person on the Thames as responsibly as Miller himself would do as a moral duty to another citizen. It would be beside the point how I would react to a homeless person on the Ganges. Despite being Indian by birth, my moral commitment would guide me in that respect. Also, such argument of Miller favouring cultural community means one sees a nation not as a

rational, ethical community but an unthinking closed group and not many people would accept to see their political community with that view.

Miller's defence of ethical particularism also falls short of explaining how certain decisions are taken when there is a moral dilemma. It is hard to accept that we can remain oblivious to the problems faced by other nations arising out of benefiting one's fellow nationals. I have in mind here political decisions like, for example, importing arms to morally bankrupt countries where mass genocide is rife or droughts and other natural disasters add to the suffering of people just because it keeps jobs in the arms industry secure for local people. Also, how does one choose between drug companies refusing life-saving medicines to poorer countries at lower profit levels and accepting lower income for one's own shareholders? (I am referring to the recent furore over the pricing of HIV drugs in spite of South Africans being in a position to provide at a cheaper rate, yet refusing to do so because of the fear of reducing profit levels.) By privileging the duty to look after the interests of the co-nationals one faces restriction on the moral choices one can make under the circumstances. One faces a moral/community-interest dichotomy. Since one cannot ignore one's duty to the community, individuals are expected to resort to charity to appease their sense of justice. However, charity is viewed as people making sacrifices to help the poor. Helping the poor is not a sacrifice but a moral duty. One does not have to see supporting others as a generous act of charity but an essential requirement of humanity. National identity, thus, suppresses such duty to the poor and suffering by not obscuring the ethical solution.

Miller's argument that cultural nationalism is rationally defensible because it is in a better position to demand the fulfilment of obligations as the sense of shared identity brings about strong relationships between members can also be queried. He believes that people are willing to sacrifice for the sake of their own kind more willingly than for the sake of others, and it is only rational to think that such sacrifice only works if one knows whom we are protecting. Can that be a fair assessment of one's support for one's group? Does one fight for the sake of preserving the dignity and freedom of the group if it is under oppression or does one fight a war simply because it happens to be one's own group or it profits one's own group? Rationalism in populist state rests on equality, human dignity and justice for all. It cannot be justified by constructing boundaries around a community and isolating others. Reciprocity does not necessarily require bonds of nationality as a guideline. It is dependent on the innate sense of rights and wrongs. One does not check one's nationality before helping a victim of crime or a handicapped person or a crying child.

Liberalism without nationalism, Miller argues, may prove 'self-annihilating, because it provides people with no particular motive to participate in public life or to defend their community'.⁷³ To the contrary, as Julia Kristeva suggests, adhering to nationalism and thus parochialism is a sign of regression into national origin as an understandable response to insecurity created by new advance in social structuring and it could lead to reversing evolutionary progress.⁷⁴ Also, where does this leave one's ethical principles, and political commitments to the tenets of liberalism, that is, equality, liberty and respect to human society?

Taylor

Charles Taylor is another prominent liberal thinker who agrees with Miller and Kymlicka, and argues that shared communal life is necessary for political coherence. Political coherence, he also believes, cannot be achieved by shared rights alone, because sharing rights does not create shared identity and shared identity is vital for promoting political solidity. However, he does not think that supporting common culture brings about shared national identity. Under present social conditions, working towards culturally homogeneous political community means imposing majority culture on minority groups in the name of achieving political harmony. It is an observed reality, he says, that some differences are never going to be homogenised unless there is a commitment to recognising 'otherness' in a constructive way and persuading majority cultures to accept it cogently. Neither Miller's argument that the state should strive for cultural assimilation through political and social machinery like education, mass media, and so on, because shared culture is ontologically significant and intrinsically crucial for unity, nor Kymlicka's argument that people should be free to decide for themselves their visions of the good life, and the state should stay neutral and let different cultures settle a common concept of the good life in a cultural market place are, Taylor argues, ethically defensible for a liberal state.

Contrary to the idea of a nation based on a version of common culture Taylor argues that neither pluralist theory, as Kymlicka proposes, nor assimilationist theory as Miller

advocates, offer a healthy option for accepting different cultures within a single political fold. He disagrees with the conviction of Kymlicka that culture helps people to develop individual autonomy so that they develop their own vision of the good life and provides them with the options to pursue such life. Taylor believes that though shared culture may be significant for the development of atomistic individualism, the communal context itself is fundamental for exercising those meaningful options attained through shared culture. Individuality and autonomy are social constructs and hence individuals need a social context where they can exercise their individuality and autonomy. He follows a very communitarian stance and argues that individuals are provided with meaningful choices of the good life only within their own cultural context and hence, it is necessary that each individual is given the necessary social condition within which she can develop and exercise her autonomy. A straitjacket of common culture is particularly oppressive to minority cultures as it denies the resources and the freedom of members of minority cultures to lead the life from 'inside', that is, according to their own vision of worthwhile life, listening to the values and beliefs which give meaning to their life. It is neither a desirable nor a justifiable solution for the exercise of individual autonomy.

Shared culture instrumentally significant

Though Taylor agrees that some kind of homogeneity is necessary for political coherence he does not believe that one has to strive for culturally homogeneous community because it essentially leads to political harmony. Homogeneity, he thinks, is rather a matter of necessity, with instrumental value for the proper functioning of the organization, and

hence every state has to adopt it. "A homogeneous language and culture is fostered and diffused and hence also to some degree defined by the state. Modern societies necessarily have official languages, almost official cultures. This is a functional imperative."⁷⁵ Thus, what is required, Taylor says, for social coherence is not a homogeneous culture in the way Miller assumes, that is, for developing a strong sense of an ontologically significant national identity which dictates one's sense of belonging and one's roots, which, in turn, is essential for undertaking moral obligations to other members; nor in the way Kymlicka thinks, that is that culture presents an essential element for the development of autonomous individuals and provides them within a stable community with a range of options where members can lead a meaningful autonomous life by choosing their own vision of the good life. But, he says, it is necessary for instrumental purposes. that is, as a national identity to enjoy a shared sense of the 'common form of life'. Because it is through such a shared sense of identity that people feel they belong to the community and accept their duties as citizens. Hence, though shared culture is not sentimentally significant, he believes, it is functionally crucial.

Taylor's proposition for a multicultural political community

However, Taylor observes, one cannot anticipate to achieve this vision in a multicultural society by imposing the majority culture on the minority either by state neutrality, which would mean ignoring the problems that the minority faces in a majority culture, or by the state actively helping assimilation. The very problem with such arguments, he says, is that they undermine one's dignity and worth in a community where majority culture

dictates the norm. It fails to offer a 'horizontal, direct access' society where each citizen is equally positioned to access the state machinery. Treating minority cultures with state neutrality only augments the chances of the members of such communities being reduced to second-class citizens.⁷⁶ He says that social harmony cannot be generated through suppressing the autonomy of minorities and supporting majority culture but it lies in understanding other cultures and accommodating them within its fold, by allowing them space, with an open mind.

Taylor argues that each community should be given the space to express its preferences, enjoying equal consideration and respect. The key issue is, Taylor says, recognising this need. He believes that one has to recognise and appreciate the existence of different visions of the good life. Group differences, he says, must be publicly acknowledged and accepted as a part of one's society and their culture supported through special arrangements, if needs be. Withholding recognition can be a form of oppression because it hinders the human potential to develop to the fullest. Striving for a single culture is not a step forward for progress but regression on civilizational ladder. Though accommodating other visions of the good life is challenging in a community which has traditionally shared single culture, social recognition and understanding of other members with whom we share our political space and their cultures, he believes, can be done through open dialogue. "On the social plane", he says, "the understanding that identities are formed in open dialogue, unshaped by a predefined social script, has made the politics of recognition more central and stressful.... Equal recognition is not just the appropriate

mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it.”⁷⁷

Taylor makes a very important point here. Since cultural community is important for every individual in order to exercise her autonomy, society has to promote the values which each group recognizes as its ideal of purposeful life. To offer individuals the real autonomy to live the lives according to their own conception of the good life, the state has to provide equal opportunity to each interacting culture. However, it is often argued that if each culture is allowed its own space within a community, it is bound to lead to tension and confusion. But, as Taylor says, the discord between differing cultures arises not necessarily because they do not agree on their vision of the good life but because they do not understand how the ‘other’s’ way is marked. Accommodating other cultures may not be a problem if one accepts the fact that the difficulty of accepting other cultures within its fold arises out of the failure to grasp the other’s idea of the good life, their collective goals and their vision of achieving it, rather than the practical difficulty of allowing the other’s vision of the good life.

This problem can be solved, Taylor suggests, by promoting understanding between all cultural groups and making people realize that there are other ways of reaching the same arrival point of harmonious social life. This needs recognizing that others are also striving for the same goal in their own way. He suggests that the state, instead of attempting to establish a homogeneous culture, should strive to preserve different cultures if the incumbents so wish and promote social harmony by actively promoting ‘the politics of

common good' that is, nurture social conditions where people can pursue their preferred way of life and discard the ways which conflict with the concept of the good life of other communities.⁷⁸ Such a goal can be achieved by facilitating an optimal combination of preferences which means giving a platform to minority cultures to sustain and pursue their own vision of the good life and promote them within the wider context for other communities to understand and appreciate.

Social harmony is best promoted, Taylor says, when the shared conception of the 'common good' is nurtured through establishing the dialogue between cultures through understanding. People do not respect each other unless they are bound by a shared conception of the common good. In a multicultural society where different visions of the good life exist, difference-blindness does not open the necessary discourse essential for interacting with other cultures and arriving at a shared vision. This is because apprehension about alien cultures never gets dissolved due to lack of exposure to other cultures. Majority cultures never get the opportunity to develop the knowledge and understanding of minority cultures. Thus, Taylor says, it does not furnish the necessary condition for developing a shared conception of good life for all the members of a national group. Hence, he argues, a shared forum is necessary for evaluating the options provided by all the cultures within a political community. Mutual understanding, he stresses, not only brings about trust and fellow feeling between cultures but also widens the horizon for all to lead an enriched life. Every culture has its own view of how harmony can be achieved in social life and they all need not be incomprehensible, or unacceptable.

Taylor proposes that recognizing other cultures could be achieved, among other proposals, through the state machinery by emphasizing the worth of other cultures through education, exposing their art and achievements in a wider sense and making people aware of the contribution other cultures can make to the host culture. He believes that the dominant group can be persuaded to alter their perception of minority cultures and their 'otherness' through rationalizing that a hostile perception of otherness is entrenched in misapprehension and lack of appreciation. Educational institutions like schools and universities should add the works of art and literature produced by different cultures to expose their richness. This will, he believes, lead to a wider social horizon, and, at the same time, reduce misconceptions about other cultures. If the state were to adhere to the liberal principle of individual autonomy, it is vital, he thinks, that it abandons its policy of neutrality and support minority cultures.

Taylor's argument that all cultures should be publicly recognized and given equal importance, and their members allowed to preserve their cultures comes across as quite a forward-looking contribution, ethically justifiable and more in tune with liberal principles than those of Kymlicka and Miller. Allowing minority cultural groups to survive in the cultural market place and yet not recognizing them publicly itself leads to a form of oppression because public recognition is necessary in order to gain an equal trading position. His major contribution to the debate of accommodating other cultures in a liberal state, one can say, is identifying the danger arising out of non-recognition of other cultures and their contribution. One can see through examples, like the rise of the black

movement in the USA. Also, I feel, one can see the signs of this in the U.K., to some extent, with some Muslim communities in certain areas demanding special schools and so on. These are the dangers of non-recognition. It leads to the risk of self-segregation, whereby people find their self-expression and social identity by living within their own community and lead isolated lives in spite of sharing political/social space with mainstream community. Self-segregation reduces the opportunity for intermingling and developing any kind of understanding and trust between communities. As a consequence, one can observe, it often leads to a stratified social structure of dominant majority culture and 'other' minority cultures. This situation has the potential to lead to the resistance by the minority for accepting the inferior position which they are placed under in spite of their right to equality, and their loyalty and equal contribution towards the welfare of the community. (I shall expand on this problem in chapter 5.) Hence, if liberal citizenship is about equality, the state has to recognize group identities and their importance to its members and to the state.

Problems with Taylor's vision of nation-state

However, his vision of a political community where different cultures are supported and their worth promoted through state machinery gives rise to some unease. Firstly, are there clearly definable culturally bound communities in the contemporary world we live in? Identifying different cultural groups as distinct entities and giving them separate status does not necessarily hold the key to political coherence. Because, one can argue, there are no cultural groups, as Renan puts it, 'pure' in existence. Every community is constantly

exposed to different cultures and takes on values from each other as a matter of routine.

Hybrid cultures have emerged all the time and they are always in the making. Hence, one cannot possibly think that it is feasible to preserve different interacting cultures as independent units.

Secondly, when he talks about developing the understanding through introducing literature, works of art and so on of minority cultures through state machinery, he still covertly implies that minority cultures nonetheless have to show a positive noticeable contribution through art and literature etc. They still have to prove their worth to the majority culture so that they are worthy of recognition. One can argue that this should not be the basis for recognition or for respect or equality. Recognition, status and respect are not conditional in any given community. They are the fundamental rights of every citizen. The condition for recognition of individuals or groups should be on the same basis as it is offered to the members of host groups, that is, on the basis of membership alone. His argument again shows the signs that accepting otherness is dependent on understanding their cultures.

Moreover, his solution of recognizing other cultures may not be sufficient to develop the communication he anticipates. As Meena Dhanda suggests, knowledge about others' culture, spread through educating one by the introduction of different material away from 'white' writers and artists, does not help promote understanding. Even if it did, it does not necessarily follow that it endorses respect for other cultures. Recognizing others' culture is not a matter of understanding alone but it is the willingness to accept the concept that

everybody has a right to their culture because it is an essential part of every individual's life. It is about appreciating the fact that each culture has values which are of significance for their members. This willingness does not develop either by sharing space or by being informed about the difference and recognizing other cultures but by acknowledging the fact that there are other ways of leading a purposeful life apart from their own prescribed way and that accepting them does not lead to social anomie.⁷⁹ It is about recognizing that otherness is normal and we deal with it to a smaller or larger degree every day of our life. It is important to understand that it is in the interest of every cultural group to accept otherness in order to live in a harmonious and just society.

There is another difficulty also. The problem of non-recognition is rooted in long-standing, historically established prejudices towards other cultures. This problem is not going to be addressed by the state promoting understanding alone. Many prejudices are born out of orchestrated social superiority as in the case of the created image of the Negroid as an inferior race. Race, for example, as Linda Alcoff argues convincingly, as a biological category may have been discredited theoretically but it certainly has not disappeared as a category ontologically. This issue needs to be tackled constructively in order to establish a fair political community. Understanding black culture is not going to bring an end to the prejudice that has dominated the western world for so long and damaged the identity of black people more than liberals are willing to consider.⁸⁰ Neither of the solutions for establishing shared life – single culture or supporting multicultural society – builds the social coherence necessary for political community. Homogeneity in a 'way of life' may be achieved but accepting other cultures on equal terms and as

worthwhile cultures needs a different approach. The query has to be whether culture itself is a significant factor for social harmony.

Though Taylor's argument is a very positive step forward from the argument from a mono-cultural nation-state in today's world where most nations are multicultural in their structure it does not move away from the thinking of liberal nationalists' view that shared culture in some form is at the basis of social coherence. The social world is not neatly divisible into distinct cultural groups nor is there any need for it. There is much overlapping and interchanging in multicultural communities. It needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

Liberal nationalists defend their position for advocating political arrangement based on nation-statehood mainly on the grounds that common culture promotes common conception of the good life, which in turn, sustains social and political cohesion. Social solidarity initiated by shared culture, they claim, facilitates political solidarity within multicultural states. They defend nationalism on the grounds that nations are ethical communities where social coherence ensues naturally. However, they suggest different kinds of solution to accommodating minority cultures within multicultural communities of the present day. Kymlicka argues that minority cultures should adapt to societal culture for the sake of political and social coherence. Nevertheless, he draws a clear distinction between immigrant cultural groups and indigenous cultural groups. He favours polyethnic rights for immigrant populations and suggests that the state should stay neutral

in imposing values; individuals should choose their options from among those that they are offered by the society which they are a part of to live their own conception of the good life within the 'private arena of family and their community'. However, he says, cultural rights of indigenous ethnic minorities should be recognised, and they should be offered equal rights for their culture. Miller proposes that since ontological identity with the nation is vital for coherence, minority cultures within multicultural structure should assimilate within majority culture and develop a sense of belonging through give and take. Though Taylor does not advocate cultural homogeneity at the cost of depriving minority cultures of their right to their culture and the freedom to exercise their autonomy, he argues that the state should strive to develop the concept of the common good, the common way of life.

Both Miller and Kymlicka's arguments for homogeneous culture harbour the potential to be illiberal and the possibility of leading to unethical social practices. State neutrality, as Kymlicka suggests, does not administer equality but favours majority culture, particularly if we accept Miller's argument that the laws and customs which the state adopts are initiated by the public culture and are *ipso facto* influenced by the majority culture. Taylor's conception of recognising and understanding interacting cultures is a way forward but recognition, on his terms, is given on the cultural markers set by the dominant culture. Secondly, non-recognition is not always a matter of ignorance. It is often prejudice-ridden and sometimes power-related. The projected image of black or Asian people as a category plays a great part in the way the community is perceived as a group. By deliberate assignment of an image of a community, one can help to sustain

their social position, as it was often the case with women or people belonging to different race. The impressions are hard to be got rid of by simply introducing the art and literature of the group. Historically, it is often argued, non-recognition is associated with an effort to keep domination of the colonial subjects within the imperial power. (I shall discuss the analysis of Bhabha in detail in chapter 5) Nationalism has a built-in tendency to encourage xenophobia which often leads to extremism and the attitude to demonise the 'other' by portraying a mythical self-righteous 'us' that leads to tension between two cultures on an unexpected level. Hence, it is unsuitable for contemporary political communities which accommodate varying cultures as a political and economic necessity. Multicultural communities are the norm in the contemporary world rather than an exception. Hence, liberal nationalism can be seen as an unsuitable ideology for political application in the modern world.

If the premise of shared culture as a vital component for political harmony can be seen as illiberal, how and why has shared culture has dominated western political discourse so persistently? Has culture necessarily been the linchpin for political harmony through history as often argued by liberal nationalists? Is nationalism a natural sentiment, as it is generally assumed by the nationalists, or is it an ideology that has emerged historically? Is there any other explanation for the involvement of culture in polity in the west? Can one trace the inception of shared culture within political arrangements for seeking political unity? I shall endeavour to trace the historical background to nationalism as explained from the sociological point of view, in the next chapter.

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3. An Historical Account of Nationalism as a Concept

The arguments of liberal nationalists, which have been sketched in chapter 2, stress the importance of common culture for a coherent political community within liberal state. They believe that political solidarity is best maintained and individuals' autonomy best exercised if members share a common culture. Also, they believe, equality, justice and the welfare of every individual can be promoted effectively if people share the same culture because people have an inherent attachment to each other, they understand each other better, and trust each other. Hence, these thinkers argue that cultural groups and national groups have to be congruent in order to sustain a coherent political community. Such assumptions cajole liberal nationalists into placing culture at the centre of their nationalist argument. I observed in my argument that their justification of accommodating nationalism in liberal political structure is not very convincing because it cannot be conclusively proven that inherent attachment necessarily leads to better understanding and will to share the resources. It also fails to show that nationalism delivers equality, freedom and expression of individuality even-handedly within a liberal state. It favours national culture to the detriment of minority cultures and their right to equality, and freedom.

Thus, one can argue that their assumption about the influence shared culture holds in organizing a coherent political community is not conclusively proven. Yet, nationalism, historically, one has to accept, seems to have been successfully used as a force to unite peoples into a formidable political group. This raises an important question. How and why has culture occupied the central stage in political context? Have pre-existent shared

cultural ties always been at the centre of national solidarity as it is assumed in western political discourse? If not, why is it thought that only through shared culture can people understand each other and work towards a common interest in a political community in recent history? When loyalty and willingness to reciprocate obligations to other members, two vital elements for political coherence, cannot be proven to exist only in predominantly shared single culture communities, why is there such a strong lobby for promoting shared culture? Has common culture always existed in political communities? Is individual identity entangled with national identity to the extent that some liberal nationalists believe?

This chapter will argue that there is nothing inevitable about the involvement of culture in political arrangement as suggested by nationalists. I shall endeavour to point out through the analysis provided by some sociologists that extant social and economic conditions influenced emergent political dogmas in history, and hence they cannot necessarily be justified fully in ethical/philosophical terms. Nor can nationalism be assumed as universal doctrine because it is more likely to emerge under area specific social and economic conditions. It is likely to raise its head, one can argue, wherever similar social conditions to those which dominated the 18th century west develop anywhere in the world.

I shall argue that historically there were no homogeneous cultural communities. Shared culture is a social phenomenon which evolved at a time when western society was subjected to astronomical changes in economic and political changes. The involvement of culture within political structure is accidental, and hence one cannot claim any serious

philosophical claim to the argument. I shall focus on the theory of sociologists which explains nationalism as a historical event which developed to fill the lacuna left by the historically dominant and now defunct ecclesiastical and monarchical rule due to the rise in populist movements of the 18th century in the west. The instrumentalist explanation of Ernest Gellner, a social theorist, that nationalism is a causal development within industrial society and that nations are more of an invention than originating from an innate disposition will throw some light on the concept of nation and nationalism as we perceive it today. However, though his explanation provides a plausible constructionist view of nations it does not fully explain all the aspects of the development of nationalism. It will be argued here that it emphasizes the manipulative power of the state and ignores the contribution individuality makes to the construction of any community, be it social or political. As the sociologist Anthony Cohen suggests, political community cannot be viewed purely in instrumentalist terms. Though society provides the conditions for the development of individual personality, it does not, and cannot impose identities on individuals. Gellner's argument is contrasted with that of Benedict Anderson who, though he agrees with Gellner that national consciousness, as it is expressed today in the west is possibly a sociological phenomenon arising from the upheaval caused by changes in the society, disagrees with his opinion that nations are inventions. He recognizes the psychological aspect of shared identity and explains nations as emergent political groups rather than constructions. I shall pursue his argument that though there is nothing inherent about nationalism, nations are not fabrications, as implied by Gellner. They are creations; they are 'imagined communities'.¹ National identities are not politically created and imposed on people to sustain economic prowess, and social equality, but they are

imagined by the people themselves as a process of social adjustment. Culture occupied the central position not as a manipulated political strategy but because of various factors interacting at that specific epoch in history.

I shall draw the conclusion that common culture has not been a significant factor through history for political coherence but it gained its political significance, particularly in the wake of the industrial revolution in the west, to accommodate the changing political and economic scene of the day and harmonize changing social structures. Shared culture became instrumental in bringing about shared understanding through homogenized language, education system and public institutions and so on in order to sustain economic growth. However, the involvement of shared culture within political structure was accidental factor which influenced the ‘imagining’ of ‘nation’ in the west and hence, I shall argue, common culture need not be seen as a pivotal component for political solidarity and coherence ubiquitously, as liberal nationalists believe.

Explaining nationalism

“Nations are not as old as history. The modern sense of the word is no older than the eighteenth century, give or take a predecessor”, says E.J. Hobsbawm.² Though the concept of nationalism itself, it is often argued, can be traced back to the middle ages,³ the modern political application of nationalism as an essential component for political coherence can only be located as far back as the 18th- early 19th century, particularly in the context of western political philosophy.

Is there any explanation for such development of national consciousness in political terms? Can one locate any significance in the emergence of the rise of national consciousness to this era? Many sociologists share the view that nations were constructed for the purpose of accommodating the momentous changes which occurred in the social, economic and political scene of the 18th century West. Gellner takes a very anti-primordial view of nationalism and offers a strong instrumentalist account of nations. He does not accept the assumption of cultural nationalists that nationalism is a natural disposition and that it is *beneficial* for political harmony. He argues that political identities of the late 19th- early 20th century west were constructed for a purpose. He declares in his book *Nations and Nationalism* that “[c]ontrary to popular and even scholarly belief nationalism does not have any deep roots in human psyche.”⁴ Ideologically, it projects itself to be ‘a manifest and self-evident principle’ whereas, he reckons nationalism is only a specific phenomenon in the history of mankind. He locates the rise of nationalism purely in historical terms and suggests that small self-contained political units were necessitated to sustain industrialization, hence an *avatar* of the era. He thinks that nations were invented to fulfil a political agenda of ensuring a sense of togetherness which was disturbed as the industrial revolution took its grip on the community life and unsettled the existing social system. It also necessitated common education to sustain industrialization.

Thus, nations as political groups, Gellner argues, are a modern concept. He reckons them more as a political strategy than a social and political process which involves cultural.

political, as well as psychological phenomena as nationalists argue. He argues that nations did not engender nationalism but nationalism created nations. In other words, nationalism invents nations where they do not exist.⁵ National consciousness is socially engineered, and common culture strategically constructed and politicised in order to achieve social harmony and cohesion. He does not even accept nationalism as a sentiment but he sees it as a 'political principle'.⁶ He says that, "...nationalism is *not* the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalised, education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state. It uses some pre-existent cultures, generally transforming them in the process...."⁷

Gellner justifies his claim that nations are inventions by tracing the history of social structure prior to industrialization. Nationalism claims historicity for culturally based political groups whereas, he says, there were no extensive homogeneous cultural groups on a national scale in terms of polity prior to industrialization. Tracing the history of common culture, Gellner points out that homogeneous cultures were absent in pre-industrial and even in pre-agrarian societies. Common culture was not connected to the political aspect of community life. It was irrelevant, for example, to the hunter-gatherer who did not need complex political structure to organize his day-to-day life. Politics itself took its roots in agrarian society and even then, there was no common ground established for national boundary. Prior to the industrial revolution, people lived in small, self-contained villages and depended mainly on agriculture for their livelihood and for their social support. Their world was limited. Their workplace was restricted to a small

geographical area, and their social life to their neighbourhood. Culture was seen rather in horizontal and hierarchical terms of royals and plebeians than in homogenous terms of equal social membership. Even though there existed a common culture for local groups it did not cut across the social structure nor was it connected to political ideology or to the geographical boundary of the regime.⁸

Analyzing the concept of nationalism in its present form, he traces the origin of nations to historical changes that occurred in social and economic arena at the turn of 18th century. Industrialization changed, says Gellner, the social as well as the economic scenery. Agrarian community gave way to people engaged in seeking work in factories. They moved away from their villages in search of employment. This situation provided two main ingredients for the concept of homogeneous culture to develop, that is, the industries needed the workforce to produce goods for the mass-market. There was a definite need for the labour force who could provide the skills necessary for running the factories. It became imperative in the industrialized world to form the workforce into trained large groups with homogeneous education so that they gained mobility, employability, and communicability between disconnected peoples. This meant the standard had to be set for an education system so that effortless communication could be established between people hailing from different villages and also to keep the supply of skilled workers, wherever and whenever the need arose.⁹ A common language became imperative for establishing communication between peoples. Structuring an educational system and establishing a single language could only be possible, it was perceived, if it was pursued through state machinery. The onus fell on the state to support educational

institutions to set a standard system in order to train the workforce. This was also a time when the existing social system was disintegrating. The proletariat had lost its economic and social bearings. Society as they knew it was disappearing only to be replaced by disjointed peoples. They were in need of a new social identity.

Gellner thinks that the state took on itself to organize the workforce technically, and socially to suit the modern face of society. Collectivity was formed for the purpose of creating a community which shared common social structure through homogenizing language, and developing an uniform education system. The education system became so pervasive that people reached a stage when they could not exist outside the lifestyle vision provided by the state. The state controlled the economy and it controlled culture through the education system it organized. It *created* a society where people felt they belonged. It reproduced social values, morals and traditions, that is, cultural markers, by using the political machinery so that uniformity was maintained. This is how, he believes, the concept of widespread culture entangled itself with politics. This is how common culture came to occupy the centre of political and economic activity in the post-industrial era. People *believed* they spoke the same social language; they *believed* they shared an identity through shared ways of thinking, speaking and behaving, and pursuing common ideals. Once people began imagining themselves as a group because of a shared way of life, he says, the shared way of life itself began to be the target of invention. Thus, nations as political units were invented, he thinks, and national identities created because they cut up the world into manageable units so that they could provide a stable economic and social development. This was the reason, he believes, nations were invented where

they never existed before. Thus, nationalism as a concept, he observes, did not emerge by accident but was a historical invention. The cultural shreds and patches around which nationalism revolved were picked arbitrarily and distributed by the state machinery.¹⁰ Political arrangements were superimposed on to social units and made them appear as one entity. Artefacts that were supposed to represent the country were, in fact, chosen to emphasize the most effective character which would hold the unit together and, at the same time, to project it more significantly against other political communities.

Gellner's account of nation suggests that there was an intentional manipulation of the people, though not entirely to streamline economy but to accommodate the momentous social and economic changes. It is not the pre-political culture that determines nations, though he concedes that, 'it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if...as indicated, these are purely negative', but, he thinks, nations determine culture.¹¹ The general view shared by other social, and social anthropological disciplines supports Gellner's argument about group identity and its relation to polity. Richard Jenkins, a sociologist, comments that if society has to continue as a purposeful group with a secure future, it needs a meaningful narrative for commonality. "Without some commonality", says Jenkins, "there can be no collectivity".¹² However, he contends that there are no inevitable commonalities which lead to the formation of a collectivity. Collective identities are always constructed with a 'point of view,' he says.¹³ Choosing the markers that make the characteristic of a cultural group is strategically done so that it initiates social cohesiveness. These are many times provided by a carefully chosen shared past, shared characteristics and so on according to the purpose of the collectivity. Social

narrative is, he says, at times imagined, at some other points picked out of some existent similarities and some selected accounts of experience relevant to the type of community 'in-the-making'. Jenkins thinks that social identities are 'systematically produced, reproduced identities' and they are 'implicated in each other' They are chosen with the intention of categorization. Creating such identities, he believes, is a power game. "Social identities", he says, "exist and are required, claimed, and allocated within power relations."¹⁴

Gellner's argument has a certain appeal here. Political identity which developed in the 18th century west shows that such collectivity was constructed for a purpose. One can spot similarities of this kind in the application of nationalism as a concept in other parts of the world. For example, the construction of political identity of Indians by the Indian nationalists of late 19th century India another example of identity constructed for the purpose of uniting peoples under one banner, for gaining independence from the colonizer. India with diverse languages, religions, and customs, acted, more or less, as a single unit for the purpose of liberating the subcontinent from the coloniser.

Social anthropologist Fredrik Barth's study of collective social identities supports Gellner's assumption that political identities are carefully constructed. Though social groups are seen as, to quote Barth, 'self-perpetuating, bounded, sharing fundamental culture values, forming a field of communication and interaction, conscious of a category identity which is recognized by others', it is misleading to think that they are *a priori* in nature.¹⁵ Social groups are a necessity for political coherence and hence Barth says, they

'are socially constructed and [that] content of the group - in terms of both culture and personnel - has no *a priori* existence or stability'. They are intentionally organized as functional institutions to serve as pragmatic guides to group welfare. The main function of such a political group is to create homogeneity within its borders and difference outside it so that it can sustain its power base within its limits. Cultural contents are chosen not so much to locate similarity but to demarcate *difference* from other groups, for drawing boundaries around the group for political purposes.¹⁶

The construction of national identity in Gellner's terms also fits this description. Identities constructed in the wake of late 18th and early 19th century were very much influenced by the political map dominated by colonial power. Cultures and cultural traits of the western and of the colonised was created to draw out maximum contrast.¹⁷ The borders were patrolled effectively by emphasising the influence of ethnicity on one's character. An economic stronghold was maintained by categorising the colonised as a group who were deemed as only capable of managing the clerical jobs,¹⁸ if at all, and no more and intentionally keep them away from power. This did seem to work for the west during the colonial era.

Gellner provides a convincing account of historical events, which led to the involvement of common culture with politics to substantiate his claim that nations as we see them today are modern constructions. Though the sentiment of nationalism may have existed in smaller units, as it is often claimed, before the industrial revolution and the rise of populist states in the west, he rightly argues that the application of nationalism to

widespread political units is a modern phenomenon. The origin of nations as we understand them today can be attributed to the break in the social order with the rise of the industrial revolution and a need for new structure to replace the old social system where horizontal cultures operated. The nationalists' idea of invoking the historicity of nations prior to industrialization is not compatible with the actual social condition of the time. There was no common culture, as Gellner points out, in the pre-industrialized west. Also, it is very plausible to think that common culture became widespread in the post-industrial world with a state controlled homogeneous education system. He makes a justifiable connection between economic, cultural and political arenas in the aftermath of the industrial revolution. Hence, the assumption of cultural nationalists that shared culture is an essential factor for coherence can be seen as tentative.

However, Gellner's argument that societal cultures were created to fulfil a political agenda, and that political boundaries engendered common culture as a 'political principle' has raised a few reservations. It has been argued emphatically that no common culture can be created without some form of pre-existing commonality pervading social communities, be it common language, religion, or shared beliefs and customs.

Homogenisation of education and economy by the state cannot necessarily establish a common identity for people and their idea of the good life; it can only politicise and reinforce existent commonalities. Such support was anticipated, and it was realised in post-industrial society where common identity in some form already existed. Since modernity is dependent on shared culture for successful implementation and operation, it necessarily suggests that cultural and national identities are at the basis of modernism.¹⁹

However, Gellner himself accepts this. Gellner does not argue that nationalism is 'reducible to economic interests' but it recognizes the fact that there is an inherent sense of attachment within a community, and such shared identity is essential for standardizing modes of education, communication, and organization of the labour force and thus explain why common culture and shared national identity got entangled in the modern political context.

Another uneasiness with Gellner's theory of nationalism points to the fact that the concept of nation is not a modern invention but one can trace the sentiment to the medieval era. It is possible that in many parts of the world, as Hobsbawm shows, communities existed which had a sense of 'collective belonging', and they politically operated almost on the same ethos as modern day nations.²⁰ However, Gellner's point can also be defended because the searching question one can ask is: even if the sentiment of national consciousness could be traced historically, was such a sentiment involved in a political context? Did the concept of nationalism exist in proto-nationalist discourse? People may have seen their identity as tied to the land as fatherland, *patria*. Did they see their political identity through shared life? One cannot trace much evidence to believe that nations as political communities existed before 17-18th century historical developments. One can accept O'Leary's observation that, "there may have been talk about nations and, indeed national consciousness, before nationalism, but...*there was no nationalist talk of nations and national consciousness before nationalism.*"²¹

One can also quote instances within recent history to support Gellner's account that in many cases nationalism has preceded nations. For example, if one were to take the characteristics that Kymlicka and Miller identify as the elements constituting national identity, there was no basis of shared sentiment of nationhood for demanding the right to self-determination claimed by many colonies in the 20th century. For example, historically there were no separate India and Pakistan, nor was there a separate Indian or Pakistani national identity before the Asian subcontinent was partitioned by the imperial power in 1947 into two independent nation-states. Peoples of both nationalities shared common territory, spoke every language of the region whichever they themselves spoke, shared the societal culture and common history. Nevertheless the region was partitioned on the basis of the common religious identity that people carried in spite of the fact that shared identity could not be located in religious identity alone because generally Hindu and Muslim identities were not located territorially. (Religious identity is usually a universal identity.) National identity was constructed, as history tells us, for political purpose, the kind of identity what Hobsbawm calls *ex post facto* development.²² Cultural commonality was argued for political reasons and the sentiment of nationalism whipped up and two independent nations erected.²³ (As Hobsbawm rightly says, even the Muslim League, which was arguing for adequate recognition and equal treatment of Muslims, did not expect a separate state at the time of dissolution of power by the British.)

However, there are a few historical and contemporary political events which do not follow Gellner's constructionist theory of nationalism and the purpose for which it is employed. Firstly, one can observe that nationalism does not necessarily hold that

national and political boundaries always collide. Not all states combine common culture with the state in order to secure political solidarity²⁴, and not all national groups demand self-determination.²⁵ There are many national groups who do not necessarily seek a separate state on the grounds that it may not be feasible or it is perceived as unnecessary. One can argue that cultural groups exist regardless of political ambitions and aspirations.

Secondly, we can dispute Gellner's claim that the spread of nationalism is a direct effect of industrialization, and that this was more acutely established in societies where the difference between the poor and the rich was most severe. Nations acted as equalizers of economic, social and educational status of their members through state sponsored common culture and education system. Such understanding can be queried. If this is true, why do we see so many minority nationalist struggles in various parts of the world to this day, even in the most advanced industrial states? Defending this doubt O'Leary argues that secessionist movements in industrialized states have not been as substantial as demands for severing ties between contesting cultures.²⁶ However, one can still wonder why, if nationalism was a practical necessity for ensuring the sustenance of industrial society and to break down the traditional social barriers which existed in the agrarian society, would industrially advanced nations want to retain their own culture by secession from the majority culture whether violently or peacefully, in spite of economic, social and other opportunities being offered to every member of the nation equally? Is there any further interest involved in nationalism?

Thirdly, and most importantly, can identities be created to fulfil a political agenda? There is another important facet to human society, one can argue, and that is the individuality of its members and the intentions involved in socializing. Cultural nationalists appear to believe that we interact with people because we gain by our social relationships; we maintain our goodwill towards other members in the hope that they reciprocate our support. However, our interaction with others cannot be assumed to be purely for instrumental values. We do not associate with other members or care for others because we need them to gain our own welfare. A fulfilling life does not always mean being able to secure the means to the life that one wishes to lead. We communicate with other members of our society because interacting itself has its own rewards for leading a fulfilling life. At times, we make sacrifices so that other members benefit. We accept social norms because we are positive contributors to that norm. Consistency in behaviour is essential for understanding others. To comprehend others there has to be interpretable data for us. Politics can only reinforce such social necessity.

Fourthly, where does that quality to hold the community together lie? How do people relate to other members within a national group? It cannot be argued that social elites or the intelligentsia created the group through state fostered culture for controlling political power. Arguing that the intelligentsia can arrange identities for citizens sounds just as deterministic as arguing that nationalism is inherent.²⁷ It means high culture dictating the polity to a level where it is almost dictatorial as to which language, religion and social customs are adopted for defining national identity. History proves that manipulation of human society and creating common identity for peoples may not be a viable task. (The

example of attempted identity formation in colonial India is a fine example. I shall expand this argument in the fifth chapter.) It is very undermining to think that individuals can be seen as cogs in a political community, receive and accept information as it is given and behave as they are expected to by the state. No doubt, education helped to bring in culturally homogeneous societies in 19th and 20th century Europe but it is difficult to believe that nationalism was a well thought-out political principle planned to control the common man and it succeeded in doing so. It is difficult to accept the instrumentalist view of nationalism and believe that common culture can be constructed for a purpose.

One can observe, as sociologist Anthony Cohen says, that social identities are cognitive products, subjectively perceived social constructs rather than political manipulations. He rightly observes that one can see social identities as ideologically formed rather than practically fabricated. Individuals are, one can argue, independent agents with personalities of their own. Each individual is, as Cohen puts it, a unique member with his or her own 'personal experience, genetic history, intellectual development and inclinations'.²⁷ Each person is a significant contributor to the formation of a community with her own personality. People are not silent absorbers of their environment without no positive input by the members themselves. Personal identity develops in *reaction* to the group with one's own perception of things. People construct their own sense of where they belong, how they relate to other members within a group; and take on values according to their own perception of moral worth. The sense of shared identity is a cognitive acknowledgement of sense of belonging and not necessarily being a part of it in actual sense.²⁸

Hence, the idea that politicians can subordinate individuals into presenting themselves as members of a common culture is debatable. It is erroneous to think that politicians can make people recognize themselves through the nation, and the nation as nothing but a collection of individuals who conform to social norms set by the elite. The truth is that people's consciousnesses cannot be created for them. This fact is also recognized by the social constructionists. It is in recognition of the fact that whenever such identities are constructed for 'a purpose' the historic symbolization of communities is carefully chosen in order to boost the effect on individuals. As Cohen observes, politicians use the symbols, "(that) look natural than forced..." because, "it resolves contradiction between individual and society by locating the impulse to sociality within the individual and thus *makes society an embodiment of individuality.*"²⁹ However, even if the contents of the construction are carefully chosen, the effect they have on every individual cannot be seen to be similar. Because, as Cohen adds further, even the cultural markers that are assumed to be hand-picked by the politicians to create a homogenous culture are subject to individual interpretation. People respond to these markers in their own way. He says, "... cultural forms, such as language, ritual and other symbolic constructions are made meaningful and substantial by people's interpretations of them. They are given life by being made meaningful. We may well regard these symbols as being compelling. Nevertheless, the power they exercise lies in providing us with the means by which to think. The assumption that under given circumstances they can make us think in a specifiable way is mistaken. It privileges culture over thinking selves, instead of seeing it as the product of thinking selves."³⁰

There is more to group activity than mere anticipation of gain, simply instrumental for securing solidity and mutual benefit by the membership and for the construction of identities for political coherence. The sentiment of nationalism can bring about togetherness without the expectation of political advantage. Gellner's account of nationalism fails to accommodate individuality and individual's contribution towards collectivity. It does not give credence to the fact that identities have to be acceptable subjectively. One has to account for the shared sense of belonging which ensues within a shared community. Though his placing of nationalism in a historical context is understandable, it does not explain the whole story of the rise of nationalism.

A nation cannot entirely be thought of as a product of rationally created functional structure, an invention constructed by the state to manage economy, as radical nationalists would like to think, nor can they be assumed to be primordial in nature, as conservative nationalists would like to believe. Neither account explains fully the rise of the present-day concept of nationalism, which appears to have emerged in the wake of industrialization. The account of individual consciousness and the awareness of collectivity and how it shapes the perception of individuals' membership in a society needs to be given credence in explaining the phenomenon of nationalism. Any change in social scenery cannot be seen in isolation, or from an economic point of view only.

Alternative explanations to Gellner's account of nationalism have been offered with reference to sociological interpretations of collectivity to justify the involvement of

culture in nationalism and emergent national identity by Benedict Anderson in his theory of nationalism.

Nations as Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson expounds cultural nationalism as an evolved historic phenomenon and not a political construction. Though he also explains nationalism, as Gellner does, in instrumental terms and accepts that nations are a modern product and that they are created by the historical changes which occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries, he disagrees with Gellner on the point that they are intentional fabrications. He develops this argument in his book *Imagined Communities*.³¹

Anderson recognizes the fact that, in spite of nations being political communities and hence necessarily related to power, a great deal of individualism, and sociology and psychology of collectivism have influenced the development of nations as we see them today. He accepts that historical events have played a great part in the development of nationalism. However, he denies the suggestion that it has been an invented identity implanted in peoples for arranging unity within a political community for purely instrumental reasons. He thinks that though it can be argued that there was no national identity as such in political terms prior to the rise of national consciousness in post-industrial era, neither the new emergent social identity nor the political identity was arranged deliberately by capitalists, as Gellner argues, to organize the proletariat. It is possible, he argues, to envisage nationalism, at the time of its inception as an ideology, as an evolved concept. It developed at a time when the dispersed social and dismantled

political communities of the post-industrial, post-enlightenment era were rearranging themselves into a new social and political structure. The newly formed group needed a structure on which it could build a community where its members could exercise their newly found dignity and self-respect. They were organizing themselves to accommodate to the changes when the hierarchical societies which had existed in the monarchical reign, gave way to the horizontal societies of populist government where each individual was directly connected to the authority as a citizen with equal status.

Anderson locates three historically significant factors arising out of the enlightenment and the industrial revolution that led to the birth and the spread of nationalism and the involvement of shared culture within political structures. He explains that these factors gave rise to the need for a different kind of social and political structuring. Existing certainties, the cultural conceptions to which people were accustomed, were fundamentally shaken as a result of the Enlightenment. It changed the way people perceived their lives. The elements responsible for such a change in thinking, he thinks, were a.) separation of cosmology from history b.) script-technology that offered common man the access to knowledge unmediated by the clergy; c.) decline in the belief that monarchs were born with a divine dispensation upon the earth. These three major shifts in human understanding of life unsettled the way people could relate themselves to the world, to life and death etc. and slowly alienated themselves from the spell of cosmological influence they were under which they had so far been in history. People could query the truth about life and servitude to aristocrats and the value of their own

lives. This is where, Anderson says, the drift towards social, political and economic re-arrangement began.³²

Anderson grounds the development of nations as political units in socio/political evolution, a step up the ladder of civilization. The era of Enlightenment, Anderson says, brought rationalism as a way forward for mankind. The social order until the enlightenment mainly revolved round religion. The old faith in the religious explanations of human life was seriously undermined by rational explanation of events. Before the advance of science, people looked up to spiritual leaders for answers to life's unexplained events. Meaning to life was sought in terms of mystical explanations. With the development of science, life took on a different complexion to what it had been perceived to have so far. People lost their 'frames of reference'. Life as a mere chance brought its meaninglessness to the fore. The futility of life had to be dealt with. There was a need to find new meaning and a sense of continuity to life. There was a need for a new outlook on life. Nations provided such a vision where people could imagine a past to which they could refer and an unlimited future to which they could relate. This gave them a chance of immortality in the face of inevitability of death. (Ethnic nationalists like Fichte, as seen earlier, refer to this as one of the reasons for maintaining ethnic communities.) Moreover, increase in population movements due to improved transport and trade in the world also meant that people of a community in the west were exposed to the followers of more than one religion. Religion could no longer hold the community together with a single belief. The influence religion had on people waned. Political community which developed in the aftermath thus, had to be free from religious influence.

Another contributory factor, at such a time in history, Anderson thinks, was the development of print technology. It gave access to the kind of knowledge which had been the privilege only of the select few, until then. Before print technology, he says, the only access people had to knowledge was what they saw and what they heard through well-travelled people. However, with the availability of printed books they could read for themselves. Instead of learning about the community beyond earshot through privileged people who could tell them about their wider community they could read and learn about them for themselves. They could develop a field of communication that many common people could understand. It allowed them to forge a relationship with a wider community without ever actually meeting it. Printing also meant there was need for establishing a common format of language that people could understand widely. This paved the way for the establishment of vernacular language. That made a big difference to how the world was apprehended. They imagined a common social unit because of this perceived commonality brought to them by books, media and so on. People could relate themselves to the world outside in an involved way. Anderson thinks this was how self-consciousness developed. They saw themselves identifying with people whom they had never seen before. A sense of togetherness was generated by such perceived homogeneity which helped as a unifying factor in political terms.

Another consequence of the enlightenment was that people began querying the authenticity of monarchs and their assumed authority to retain political power through dynastic rule. They found it difficult to surrender their sovereignty to such an artificially

created superior person who could wield power over them to rule. This resulted in the rise of populist states where the 'frame of reference' for citizens, which existed in the form of religious community and a dynastic realm so far, shifted to nationalism. Nationalism served the purpose of creating self-consciousness and awareness of 'us', thus, being able to know where they belonged socially and how they related to 'others'. However, says Anderson, those events themselves did not create nations or 'produce nationalism'; they were responsible for the way that nationalism filled the vacuum felt by the waning of these institutions. He says, "[w]hat I am proposing is that nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which-as well as against which - it came into being."³³

Anderson defines a nation as an "imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."³⁴ People of such a community, he says, relate to each other not because they are genetically connected nor because they know through experience that they share commonalities but because they imagine they belong to a community; they perceive themselves to be a part of a community through shared culture. They believe they share the ideals, values and the lifestyle which leads them to realize those ideals. Anderson argues that all communities larger than primordial villages where face-to-face contact is not possible are imagined in their construction. "It is imagined because", he says, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the

same image of their communion.”³⁵ They do not share the lifestyle but they share the images of the imagining.

Psychologically ‘imagined’ homogeneity is at the centre of the nation and not necessarily the actual similarity of lifestyle. However, even though they are held together by imagined commonality Anderson does not believe that as a unit they are totally false and fabricated. They are, he observes, ‘imaginary’ communities. They were shaped by the people who see themselves sharing a lifestyle, a way of thinking, be it politically constructed at times, by a shared cultural identity with a created past and a constructed future. “The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty free time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.”³⁶ People imagine a sense of fraternity and of equality without actually experiencing it because of their sense of imagining of a common life. They belong to the same community because, he says, the relationship between members is conceived to be of equality, a ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ in spite of ‘actual inequality and exploitation’ that predominantly exists in any given society.

Such homogenisation of lifestyle set the stage for culture taking a central stage in populist states. People in such a society could narrate to the state without mediation and enable themselves to participate in market economy with equality and individualism. Yet, they could relate between them through shared culture on equal status. It abolished the hierarchical structure of society and supported individual dignity. Anderson does not

argue that nations were constructed purely on past cultural markers. Some national artefacts were selected from the past, some invented and some traditions mixed to conjure up a culture that suited the need of the hour. However, existent cultural traits did play a considerable part in the development of the nation as a political community.

Explaining the spread of nationalism in the world, Anderson says that the development of nations which occurred spontaneously in France and America provided a blueprint, 'a real model of what such states should look like'³⁷ for the rest of the west to base their political communities. The idea of 'nation-of-citizens' caught on in the world and resulted in 'combining naturalization with retention of the dynastic power'.³⁸ The idea of nationalism was used elsewhere by dynasts to keep the territories accumulated throughout their reigns within their control by giving people the sense of identity and sovereignty. He quotes many examples from history where power groups seized on the opportunity to be included in the emerging popular community and retain their power through identifying themselves as one of the people and the spread of nationalism to support his argument. He shows with historical evidence how the rise of nationalism in Germany, Russia and Britain followed the example of France and America. Once the model of the nation was established in the west political communities in the rest of the world, for example India and Africa, followed the example of the west. He says, "(T)he key to situating 'official nationalism' – willed merger of nation and dynastic empire- is to remember that it developed *after*, and *in reaction to*, the popular national movements proliferating in Europe since the 1820s. If these nationalisms were modelled on American and French histories, so now they became modular in turn."³⁹ He says that the

Anglicisation of India and other nations was also an attempt on the part of the imperial power to keep its grip on the political nerve and occupation of the colonies through the spread of common British culture. The imperialists tried, he says, to create a progeny that spoke their language, followed their religion and lived in the same style as the British with the same ethical standards observed.

Anderson's view of a nation as 'an imagined community' has a particularly interesting side to it. It brought a new dimension to the idea that nations were not merely a source of 'false consciousness' as Gellner puts it, invented by the capitalists and the intelligentsia to promote their self-interest. Though Anderson's argument does not deny the significant effect that the changing economic, social and political scenery had on the concept of nation, he puts forth a very plausible variation on the reasons behind the emergence of nations as cultural units. It initiates a new interest in the concept of the nation. His conception that the origin of a nation does not lie in an ideology but is to be found in the narration is plausible. Secondly, his conception gives the idea that though nations are not inherent they are not an illusion either. There is some spontaneity about it. They originated in their own way, and in their own time against the circumstances that arose at the time. Common culture that is common language, religion, customs and so on happened to be prevalent owing to close geographical proximity and being sheltered from outside cultures interacting within the stretch and not necessarily because it was planned that way.

His explanation makes a significant contribution to the understanding of cultural nationalism in a political context. The argument of nationalists, as we saw earlier, depends on the assumption that there exist pre-political cultural groups where loyalties are expected and offered naturally, where people would be ready to lay down their lives to protect fellow members and more importantly. These pre-political groups are national groups, thus, giving the impression that, as Bhabha puts it, 'nation, national culture and a people are an empirical social category or holistic cultural entity'⁴⁰ throughout history even though nation or national culture, as we see them today, can only be traced back to Enlightenment era. However, Anderson's concept of nations as 'imagined communities' explains how the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution brought about the changes in the perception of individual dignity, respect and awareness of the world around them. It explains how collectivity was perceived in the changing social world, how shared culture got involved into political identity, and recognizes the contribution individualism and rationalism made to the development of the concept of nation and national culture. It illustrates how the fatality of human life was counterbalanced by the idea of the nation as a community which guaranteed continuity and give meaning to life, how it acted as an agent which established 'secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning'. Though nation-states were new, it explains how they helped to forge a conceivable bridge between past and future, and between historical institutions and democratic states.

Though Anderson's conception of nation has been challenged by nationalists on the point that imagining a nation could not have been possible without the existent culture - an

understanding of who we are, to whom we belong - his theory has a compelling explanation as to the involvement of culture within western political discourse. One can also argue effectively that political unity does not necessarily evolve from shared culture.

However, there is a problem in his theory of nationalism. Nations everywhere, he declares, picked on the model set by the western nations and established political communities on the principles provided by western nationalism. If it is the people who do the 'imagining'; if it is they who locate the sense of togetherness in the community according to their own social, political and economic situation then how can he claim that non-western nations are nothing but the extensions of western imagination? It appears here that he also falls prey to a Eurocentric horizon that the concept of nationalism spread throughout the world on the prototype established in the west. He also focuses on the social construction of identities in non-western political communities and thus gives nationalism and national identities a kind of normative implication. This argument opens a vital point of contention. Can every nation be arranged on the prototype provided by the west? If nations are 'imagined communities', can one accept the assertion that nations can be imagined for the people?

Conclusion

Liberals like Kymlicka, Miller and Taylor defend their assumption that civic citizenship alone cannot blend a nation into a coherent and just political community. Shared public culture is an essential factor for making sense of our lives and for us to relate to other

members of the community coherently. However, as we saw earlier their arguments do not defend the position by proving conclusively that shared culture necessarily involves solidarity and multicultural group and that coexistence of multicultural groups necessarily lead to social anomie. Their argument does not fully explain the connection between culture and polity. Is shared culture inherently involved in political structure or is it that it has gained currency due to some other influencing factors?

Instrumental arguments which have been advanced recently, explain the phenomenon of the emergence of the nation as a political community as a historic event. They locate the establishment of culture at the heart of the political community as an almost inevitable factor for connecting the political and social life of the community. Gellner and Anderson both put forward persuasive theories to explain how coherence between common culture and polity was sought and achieved. Gellner thinks that they were invented to cope with the economic and social upheaval created by the industrial revolution. Common culture was put in place to create a community of mobile workers who could fulfil the job requirements necessitated by the industrial revolution with relative ease out of a displaced, disorientated proletariat. He thinks, in some way, nations took their shape on such 'created' homogenous culture and spread through state machinery. He believes nations were invented where they never existed. Nationalism engendered nations and not the other way round, as it is assumed by nationalists. However, his theory does not take into account the contribution that individuality makes to the formation and maintenance of coherent society. Though one can pick examples where the state has influenced changes in social culture as in the case of abolition of discrimination practiced through

caste system in India, one can still argue that changes can only become effective in social domain when individuals make a positive contribution.

Anderson also argues that nations are historically formed but he does not believe that they are somehow fabrications. He queries the claim of Gellner that identities can be arranged through the state machinery. He explains nations as a product of socio/political evolution initiated in the wake of the changing social, political, and economic scenery of the post-enlightenment, post-industrial era. Though common culture is at the centre of political communities, political communities did not give rise to common culture.

Homogeneity of culture, he argues, was imagined rather than invented. It is within human nature to seek commonality and coherence. Self-identities were subjectively formed, he says, rather than objectively presented. Various historical factors contributed to this development. Culture became entangled with political identity by chance and not by intentional manipulation.

However, both Anderson and Gellner share one argument which is that they both argue that nations are sociological phenomena arising out of a fundamental shift in social and economic world. If Gellner thinks cultural homogeneity was created to support the industrialisation programme of the west. Anderson attributes it to 'print-capitalism'.

Either way they both point very clearly to social changes, which occurred at the turn of the 17th century as the precursor to the development of the concept of nations and nationalism. Such persuasive arguments unsettle the claim of nationalists to historicity and raise further doubts about defending nationalism as an appropriate doctrine for

contemporary political communities from the philosophical aspect. If togetherness between members ensued as a process of adjustment to the situation at a certain time in history as a reaction to certain circumstances, how can the concept of cultural nationalism be seen as a relevant factor for 21st century multicultural political communities? If it is a situational solution to geographically induced sociological and economic conditions, how can it be envisaged as a doctrine for universal application? Can nationalism as a doctrine provide a prototype for non-western political communities where multicultural communities have existed for centuries? Moreover, do people feel a sense of togetherness in the political arena through shared culture only?

I shall endeavour, in the next section of my thesis, firstly, to draw out the fundamental problems of nationalism as a political ideology. Its tenets, I argue, are at times misconceived, and at times, do not deliver the desired unity between groups, particularly within contemporary political communities. I shall argue that conceptually nationalism does not base its tenets on any deep philosophical claims, but that it is a historical development and hence a doctrine serving a specific function for certain social and economic conditions. It cannot be accepted as a political ideology for universal application. Liberal tenets of equality, liberty, and individualism, in the true spirit, are not delivered within a political system which favours nationalism.

I shall refer to the strong reservations voiced particularly in non-western political discourse for accepting nationalism as a relevant ideology for securing political coherence. I believe India to be especially equipped for challenging the premise held by

the nationalists that shared culture is a necessary condition for securing social and political coherence because India has historically accommodated several cultures within its social space. Though it has encountered many problems in doing so, it has not caved in under the pressure. I shall particularly bring in the arguments of some contemporary political thinkers, namely, Parekh, Bhabha, Chatterjee, and Spivak, from the Indian subcontinent to emphasize the reasons for the non-acceptance of western conception of nationalism as a relevant theory for 21st century political communities. I shall observe that neither can cultural identity be seen as political identity within multicultural nations, nor can it be argued that identities can be arranged for the people. Lastly, I shall elaborate on the strong views expressed by Tagore and Gandhi, on the inappropriateness of adopting nationalism as an ideology, as perceived within western political context. I shall evaluate their approach to viewing political identity and solidarity and argue that it is methodologically more appropriate to the modern political context.

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Section II

The Indian Critique of the Anglo-American Conception of Nationalism

4. Is Nationalism a Coherent Concept?

Some liberals, as we have seen earlier, place historically established deep roots, shared societal culture, and the sentiment of nationalism at the heart of achieving a harmonious political community. It is only within the shared culture of the land, they argue, that members can enjoy a meaningful and autonomous life, and benefit from living within a stable political and social community. Support for a shared societal culture stems from their belief that shared culture establishes communication between members. Without this, they think, it is difficult to establish understanding and trust between members. Moreover, they argue, liberal values of equality, freedom and individualism are best delivered within the nation-states because, they say, members are naturally attached to people within their communities bound by shared culture. The ties of sentiment are important for fulfilling the obligations and responding to the welfare of the community and for making the sacrifices one is called upon to make by way of defence, taxation, and so on.

Such beliefs raise some of the prominent problems of nationalism as a political ideology: Can one accept unequivocally that cultural communities and political communities are inherently connected, and hence, by virtue of being communities, members within the nation are ethically bound to the welfare of other members? How can one maintain this argument within a community where more than one culture exists? Secondly, is there any evidence to justify the claim that re-distributive justice, a major role of a liberal state, is easier to implement within a nation-state? Even if it does, is re-distributive justice the only goal of shared political community? If political coherence is anchored in shared

culture, how can historically established multicultural communities accommodate nationalism, as envisaged by the west, within their structure? Can national/cultural identity be arranged for people within multicultural nations? If attempted successfully, does it necessarily eliminate inequality? Is cultural nationalism the only ideology which ensures shared political identity? Can it be seen as a benevolent doctrine which leads human society to a higher level of civilisation or is it a force which constructs difference and divides the community?

I shall put forward an argument, in this section, that nationalism is not based on a convincing belief that it will deliver social and political harmony. Even if it did it cannot persuade one to believe that it can be morally defensible. As a concept, nationalism can only be viewed as a historically constructed political arrangement which took its shape to accommodate social and economic changes at a certain time in history, and hence, I shall argue, it cannot be viewed as a doctrine which is based on any compelling philosophical ideology. It cannot be applied to a different period, and to contrasting social conditions. I shall endeavour to defend my thesis with the example of the Indian subcontinent where nationalism as a concept has always been viewed with anxiety. I shall highlight the problems envisaged by different Indian theorists in applying nationalism as an ideology in the political context to communities which are different in social and political composition.

I shall turn to the critique of nationalism offered by many Indian political thinkers, in this section, to argue that nationalism as an ideology does not stand up to the philosophical

claims it makes to prove its validity. I shall particularly allude to the critique provided by Parekh in this chapter. His contribution in stressing the problems faced by contemporary multicultural communities has been very substantial. His recent book *Rethinking Multiculturalism* highlights many-sided problems the theory of nationalism harbours within its structure. He has coherently analysed theoretical and practical aspects of accepting nationalism as a theory for multicultural societies. Firstly, he observes that multiculturalism is not about just accommodating or recognising other cultures amidst the majority culture but it is more to do with accepting difference as the norm and respecting it. Social justice and economic redistribution are not the only issues concerning sharing political communities; the issue is about creating a society of shared relationships where people with diverse views share a common political structure with a positive sense of belonging and diversity is viewed as a positive asset for creating a richer culture. Secondly, he provides a clear analysis of the function of culture in society and its implications and also argues very constructively, why liberal nationalism is conceptually misconceived, ethically undesirable and impractical for contemporary political communities. One can accept that cultural consciousness is vital for a meaningful life. Nevertheless, he argues, there is no overriding reason for converting it into a political objective.

Parekh

Parekh emphatically rejects the whole concept of nationalism as viewed by nationalists and argues that it is an irrelevant political doctrine for contemporary political

communities. The main thrust of his argument against liberal nationalists is that the hypothesis of nationalism itself is based on an outdated conception of the relationship between the political community and the cultural community, and the role culture plays in a political community. He analyses the concept of nation according to nationalists and highlights the fundamental mistake in assuming a few basic benefits of the nation-state.¹ According to nationalists, says Parekh, 'the nation is a culturally and linguistically (and for some ethnically) homogeneous, easily distinguishable and solidaristic self-conscious social group bound together by familial sentiments and deeply attached to a specific territorial homeland.'² These features, all inter-dependent, are essential, they say, for defining one's national identity. They presuppose that nations are societal cultures.

Explaining nationalists' theory of a political community, Parekh says, nationalism bases its tenets on three assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that a homogeneous culture exists within a nation and it is through this common culture that one gains one's distinct national identity. Human beings interpret life according to the guidelines set out by their culture. They interact with other members meaningfully and find meaning to their existence within the cultural framework. To live the life guided by the culture one belongs to, it is essential that one belong to a political framework which promotes one's preferred lifestyle. Social culture and nation as a political community, thus, are intricately, and internally connected, and, as such, national identity and cultural identity are one and the same. Nationalists also think that national culture is significant because they believe that nation shapes the identities of the people and moulds them into the kind

of personality they assume and it provides them with meaning for leading an enriched life.

Secondly, says Parekh, nationalists argue that it is through a homogenous lifestyle that they develop group identity. Common national culture naturally gives rise to a sense of brotherhood. Such familial sentiments are of vital importance because they are instrumental in creating a stable and just political community. People readily accept redistributive justice if they happen to belong to the culturally shared community. They pay taxes out of their hard earned income for the welfare of their group members, to support the sick and the elderly, to fight wars for preserving their way of life, and for leading a fulfilling life. For this, it is necessary on the part of individuals to feel they are an integral part of a group. This makes the duty of the state to function efficiently, and establish a fair, harmonious welfare state easy. It is also equally true, they argue, that only such sentiments can create a stable, democratic state.

Thirdly, Parekh says, nationalists assume that there is a direct relationship between territories and culturally induced political identity. The attachment to societal culture and the commitment to people residing within the territory are interdependent and hence, nationalists believe, it is essential that they merge for achieving social and political coherence. Though they accept that it is not necessary to belong to the group through blood or ethnicity, it is necessary that they belong psychologically through a common idea of the good life. For this purpose, they believe that the territory should and could

sustain only one culture because difference in customs and beliefs in public life, as they see, pose a threat to the integrity of nationhood.

Cultural identity and political identity

Parekh, refutes all three assumptions of nationalists. Firstly, he queries the understanding that there exists a shared national culture and that national/cultural identity forms a major component of one's personal identity.³ To him, political identity and cultural identity are two different facets of human life. Cultural identity is an acquired personal identity that we develop for self-expression and social interaction. National identity, again an acquired identity, is a group identity that we develop for organisational coherence. Hence, one cannot necessarily equate the personal identity that we seek through culture to the political identity we seek through national identity. One cannot deny the importance of different identities for bonding people as groups with some kind of continuity because it is possible that through this sense of identity that one places oneself on the topography of the world with a definite grid reference to various aspects of life. However, each identity has its own significance and influence on the individual's life. They cannot be argued to be one and the same. There is more to multifaceted individual identity than politics occupying the whole space. Also, there is more to social and political coherence than the prevalence of common culture binding people.

However true it is that we define ourselves in national terms when we identify ourselves politically, we do not necessarily refer to our cultural identity, that is, when one claims

one is British or Indian, or German one does not necessarily refer to one's cultural membership. Civic identity and cultural identity are two different aspects of our lives. Each of us living in any given society carries both of the identities. They may converge in some political communities whereas they may exist side by side in some others.

Composite identities are natural to human disposition and national identity is only a part of self-definition. As Parekh suggests, one refers to one's identity as professional and to oneself as a colleague if one is in a congregation of group members, be they students, academics, engineers, sports persons or doctors. The political affiliation of individuals is irrelevant to the group. Coherence within the group is dependent on the positive contribution members can offer in such engagement. National identity only plays a part if there is a particular reference to one's political belonging. Also, it is possible that one may favour or appreciate and belong to, for instance, a certain culture aesthetically and ethically but politically may choose a different country for its political structure for obvious ethical problems. For example, one may choose the membership of a liberal political state which proclaims that it offers equality and freedom to all and adheres to democratic process to deliver as against one's own country, if it happens to be under military dictatorship, or a theocratic system if it robs one of individual freedom to choose one's lifestyle without rejecting one's cultural heritage. Belonging to a particular culture does not restrict one from accepting the membership of a different political community. One does not have to renounce the membership of one's cultural links in order to accept the political membership. One can belong to western culture and live in the orient or vice versa. One can support an Indian cricket team, yet very plausibly fit politically in Britain with pride and loyalty.

Parekh distinguishes between the development of individual identity as a part of self and social development, and political membership as a part of socio-political need. He argues that though they are interconnected they represent separate aspects of human life.

Individuals are shaped by the society of which they are a part. Within the social group they learn to interpret the behaviour of other members, learn the meaning of life and how to interact meaningfully with the outside world. Many areas of human society contribute to the development and use of such understanding. Culture is one of them. He defines culture as, “a system of beliefs, and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives. It is a way of both understanding and organizing human life.”⁴ It shapes individuals’ personalities and also gives content to their life and locates their social identity. Language is a major common factor that helps bring people together to form a group through understanding. Common rituals, customs, traditions etc. also contribute to such understanding and organizing meaningful life. Culture is expressed in literature, art, music, morals, religion, and so on, and it is shaped and reshaped constantly by the expression of individuals through these mediums. It spells out the moral and ethical boundaries as a way of guidance for leading a meaningful life but also acts as a controlling force of individual behaviour with sanctions as a threat against transgressing the limits set by the cultural group. Culture, he says, offers a deeper meaning to life, structures the individual’s inner life, and offers peace in one sense, whereas the peace and meaningful life which polity offers is of a different category. Peaceful inner life, one can say, is derived from leading one’s life adhering to the values and style one aspires to whereas the peace which political life

provides is located in facilitating the condition by which individuals can live the life from within. Since they both serve different aspects of meaningful personal and social life different cultures can exist in any political community concurrently, independently, coherently and congenially at the same time.

Parekh makes a very convincing distinction between sharing a culture and sharing a political community. Nationalists, he says, confuse two separate issues, cultural community and political community, making them out to be one and the same, thus creating a very parochial societal culture. Though he accepts that societal culture exists in some form or the other⁵, he does not agree with the interpretation of societal culture of nationalists like Kymlicka and Miller. According to them, as Parekh puts it, “nation requires a moral content and entails not only common belonging and fellow feeling but also conforming to a specific view of how its members should live and what qualities of character they should develop. Common belonging and fellow feeling are therefore conditional upon one’s fellow nationals’ living and behaving in a certain manner, and they might legitimately be forfeited if the latter appear to the guardians of the nation to have become national embarrassment.”⁶ However, he says, one cannot support the argument that societal culture has to be organised through ‘social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private’ so that mutual understanding and trust are generated and a shared sense of fellow-feeling prevails. It can be argued that responsible political membership lies in the constructive support given to social/political structure in members’ own ways, and for their own reasons. Society can

accommodate different conceptions of the good life, even if it is not included in the societal language and lifestyle, without damaging the political structure.

Moreover, nationalists' assumption that there is some kind of commonality in social behaviour even within a community is debatable. People of a certain society, they reckon, think, react and interact in a set pattern. However, one can argue that commonality they assume is not of shared common values but of inclusion of the values of members in the social pattern. Social coherence does not ensue from common social behaviour but by common acceptance of social structure. Though people have to accept, know, understand, respect and participate in social customs of the society they are a part of, they do not necessarily have to reject their own cultural society to do so. There is no need to assume that shared societal culture has to be nurtured so that people pledge their loyalty to other members in order to achieve coherence and harmony. Societal culture may also mean a combination of many cultures which accepts the existence of many customs, many languages, many ways of seeking meaningful lives, and yet where people understand their own rights and duties and deliver them, where they share the concern for the welfare of other members. Sharing a different cultural group does not hinder them from giving their loyalty to the political community to which they voluntarily belong. It may be conceivable that political agenda, power-politics may make it difficult for different cultures to coexist harmoniously but there is nothing in cultural content itself which suggests that interaction with members of other cultures leads to difficulty in achieving a harmonious political community. Hence, the claim of nationalists that a shared common

culture is an essential ingredient for forming a stable political unit cannot be convincingly vindicated.

One can also argue in support of Parekh that homogeneity of culture even within a nation is a myth. At times, cultural and national identities and the moral/ethical contents they are given can themselves be a product of political manoeuvring. As Uma Narayan suggests, projected culture and cultural values are not always the widely existent or practiced values in any society at any given time. Speaking of colonial identity, for instance, she says, "...these pictures of different "cultures" and "cultural values" were "*idealized*" constructions which were far from being faithful descriptions of the values that *actually pervaded* their institutional practices and social life."⁷ She rightly observes that western culture, which projected itself as upholding the values like liberty, justice and equality, was, in fact, a culture that harboured slavery, and denial of basic civil rights like voting to certain sections of society, particularly to women and to blacks. (Voting power was not granted to blacks until the 1960s in some states of the USA, for that matter). Indian culture, which prides itself in the position of "Goddess" it confers on women, fails even to grant them the normal dignity due to them across their culture. 'Common culture' in western colonial discourse is a creation rather than a natural instrument which 'unites' peoples under one political community.

Parekh rightly adds that the expectation of homogeneous identity leads to the control of social culture. It is a known phenomenon where norms which are not necessarily common to national group but are imposed on members by the leaders. He says that

nationalism and the concept of national identity involve artificially homogenising and reifying the nation and presenting it as an 'impregnable wall'; in the process, it invariably distorts the character and the history of the country concerned.⁸ One is expected to toe the line in order to be included in the group, whether one chooses to or not. Social norms can become dictatorial in nature and hence not desirable especially in a liberal social/political community. This does not leave much room for the individual's liberty to choose his own way of life voluntarily. Such imposition of common culture, again, does not adhere to liberal principles.

Moreover, it can be argued also that the cultural markers one sports as one's shared national character are not necessarily exclusive to a particular nation and that such shared commonality does not automatically leads to common identity. There are many Asian social groups in the UK who have spoken English as their first language for generations, whose forefathers historically converted to Christianity as their religion and are more committed to the religion than the originators, follow the same customs and have always identified with the English since colonial days. Yet, they have not enjoyed social/cultural equality within the British mainstream society despite their common cultural identity. People who behave and share social values alike do not necessarily make a homogeneous social group. One may wonder whether there is more to recognition than shared societal culture. There appears to be more to social/political inter-relationship between groups than just shared culture.

A cultural identity, one can argue, is a group identity. Cultural group may or may not be a political group. A political group may or may not be a cultural group. Not all cultural groups wish to share political independence and not all nations, even historical ones, share a common culture within their structures traditionally. This is so because political identity and social identity are two separate identities. There is no need for an enveloping identity for political coherence because they can coexist coherently as they have always done. For example, there is no evidence to prove as a historical fact that common culture existed in Britain.⁹ Even at the present time, there is no common culture which can be acknowledged as 'the culture' of the 'indigenous population' of Britain. The conception of life, ethical values, family values change from group to group. We hear of 'middleclass values', and 'underclass ethos' and 'female culture' and so on. The internal distinctions may have been irrelevant or they may have vaguely collided into one in broader terms of common race and religion but it is not truthful to assume that a homogenous culture exists even within an assumed mono-cultural political state.

Parekh draws a clear distinction between cultural sharing and political sharing and says that "[T]hey (that is, nationalists) look for the identity of a political community in the traits of temperament, character, habits, custom, social practices, and so on in a word, in the cultural or ethno-cultural characteristics that are supposed to be common to all its members. These are all personal or individual characteristics, rarely shared by them all, and even then as individuals and not as a collectivity. They do not pertain to their public or political life..."¹⁰ The structuring of cultural groups is different from the structuring of political group. Parekh rightly observes that the political community is held together not

by common traits and habits but by commitment to sharing of what is held publicly, that is a political territory.¹¹

Also, one can observe that by promoting cultural nationalism culture becomes politicised to some extent which itself, in turn, brings about friction in institutional organisation and, at times, within the community. Though liberal nationalists like Kymlicka assert that minorities can adhere to their cultural values in private, it is difficult to draw a line between private and public practice of adhering to certain values, at times. For example, one can quote the problem of wearing a turban as a religious symbol by the Sikh community members, particularly when they are holding public office as in the police force or army etcetera. Recent struggles for the right to wear veils in the schools by Muslim women is another area where cultural values have clashed with public culture which is dictated by the majority culture. Such instances make one wonder whether arguing for shared cultural identity does lead to harmony within a political community or bring in more tension.

Is ‘difference’ the problem or is ‘how difference is perceived’ the root of the problem in political context?

Though one can argue whether there is any inherent connection between shared culture and shared territory it cannot be argued that there is no such thing as shared identity within a political territory. (One has to accept that there are many cultural communities which are territorially demarcated, for example, as in the case of Kashmir.) Moreover, a

community-sense, a sense of identity is necessary for a political unit to function effectively. Parekh agrees with this. He says, “[L]ike any other community, a political community needs to, and as a rule tends to, develop some idea of the kind of community it is, what it stands for, how it differs from others, how it has come to be what it is, and so forth.”¹² However, it is not a matter of social observation that communities differ in their structure but it is of political significance to see how ‘difference’ is viewed and accommodated. In one sense, difference is referred to as the ‘inner structure of a community’ and tells how a society is constituted as a ‘coherent whole’. In this sense, difference is a matter of fact. Just as individuals are different in their temperaments and constitutions communities also differ in their constitutions. Sometimes difference is referred to as describing something ‘unique, peculiar or specific to a community’ which makes it a unique group. However, ‘difference’, in another sense, if viewed as a peculiar position has far reaching consequences, he says. In the first sense, there is no denying that difference exists. Different communities are different because their development is influenced by various factors like history, geography, religion, weather and so on to which they are exposed. Nevertheless, it is of little consequence for political identity and their relation to other political communities. However, in the second way of looking at it, unfortunately the one which is more popular in national narrative, difference is viewed more ominously. The difference in such context is at the crux of defining one’s individual/social/political identity. Hence, identity which is unique to particular community becomes a relevant factor for political community because it is the difference which defines that community. This leads to the position that the political community sports a single common identity, defined by whichever factor is hallmarked as the

identifying factor, be it ethnicity or common lifestyle, which is different from other political communities.

This major difference in how 'difference' is perceived has far reaching consequences. Historically, difference in traditionally multicultural communities like India is seen as a norm. Difference in such communities is something one celebrates and accommodates socially as routine. It is not seen as a factor which creates lack of trust and understanding. People understand and accept that people differ in their conceptions of the good life. Political identity is not necessarily positioned in shared culture. Cultural identity, one can argue, is not particularly relevant to political identity and hence, there need not be any anxiety to preserve it through political structure. (It is only at strategic points in political history of India that shared culture is brought to the forefront for political gain and has led to major disturbances in inter-communal relationship e.g. partition of India in 1947.) However, in western thinking difference is viewed as something which hinders social/political coherence. It assumes otherness creates apprehension. Togetherness, it believes, is somehow located in shared culture. It advocates a shared way of life, shared vision of the good life because it thinks only groups so conceived share some special binding between members. Shared national identity is somehow perceived to be vital for coherence. Intermingling is viewed with scepticism, lest a nation should lose its identity. Such anxiety undermines the positive advantages of merging cultures. It is plausible to think, one can argue, that it is for this reason that nationalists constantly struggle to keep national identity in a condition where divisions are well marked. One can observe that such fear and political strategy is more detrimental to a coherent political community

than cultural difference itself. There is a constant pressure to preserve one's exclusivity for the fear of losing one's identity and this leads to self-defeating stagnation and also to political and social conflict.

Distributive justice and national identity

Parekh also queries the second assumption of liberal nationalists that there is an inbuilt tendency to look after the members of the same national group because of the inherent link and understanding they share through belonging to a common culture. He says that there is no overwhelming evidence to show that there exists a natural disposition to tend to one's own kind more readily than to those who belong to different cultures due to lack of natural sentiment and internal understanding. To the contrary, one can argue that there is no reason to claim and no reason to believe that mutual sympathy, trust and fellow feeling are not naturally shared and that they cannot be generated without sharing a shared sense of nationhood, without sharing a common national identity based on shared culture, history, and attachment to homeland and its people. Care and offers of help are natural dispositions developed in all cultural communities and they flow freely from all fair-minded people to anyone who is in need. It is not such a mammoth task to recognise social injustice if it prevails, whether one belongs to the same culture or not.

The argument of liberal nationalists that re-distributive justice is easier to achieve in mono-cultural society is also debatable. Examples through history indicate that it has not always been proven true, Parekh argues. As discussed in the second chapter, the poor and

the underprivileged have not always been taken care of with sympathy in affluent nation-states like Britain, no more than they receive attention in a multicultural state with a moral commitment to the welfare state. Nor does the payment of taxes and readiness to lay down one's life for one's nation prove that common national identity is invariably at the basis of such motive. Coaxing is still necessary for the members of the nation to part with their money in taxes in order to look after the less well-off. For that matter one may plausibly think, as he suggests, that whatever has been achieved by way of re-distributive justice in the west is not necessarily as a result of the demonstration of shared responsibility towards the needy but a reward of the concerted struggle of the marginalized groups towards improving their own social position.¹³ The sentiment of nationalism may have very little to do with it. One can also observe that people who support the National Health Service, and social services and those involved in providing such services conscientiously in Britain do not necessarily belong to the group who shares common culture but mostly they are fair-minded citizens, regardless of their cultural affiliation. It may be possible that immigrants serve such social institutions more conscientiously because they may have come from countries where they may have experienced the hardships arising out of non-availability of such a system. As Parekh implies, national identity does not make us stand up against injustice to fellow nationals; it is social conscience and mature citizenship that dictate our actions. What is required for sharing responsibility for the welfare of other members is not a common identity, as Parekh rightly points out, but a moral commitment to ensuring a humane, civilized way of life.

Also, even if one were to accept the liberal nationalist's assumption that distributive social justice only works better if the group belongs to the same culture, it would be ethically objectionable. 'Fellow-feeling' means putting the welfare of one's own group before other groups' welfare. Again, as discussed in the earlier chapter, it may lead to a situation where commitment to the group welfare jeopardises the welfare of other needy groups. A strong sense of nationhood that advocates the protection of members of one's own nation cannot be morally justified in the light of global injustices imposed on other communities to safeguard the formers' welfare. One can quote a few recent examples of this kind of protectionism to secure the job market which has led to morally depraved decision. The examples like the sale of military air safety systems which it does not need, to economically deprived Tanzania, and the price protection policy of vital medicines for the sake of safeguarding profits for the shareholders at the cost of depriving citizens of developing countries of basic medical treatment, and the plight of the farmers of third world countries who face unfair competition in the global market by the subsidy offered to the farmers of developed world and so on make a strong case against ethical particularism. Moral binding is consequentially thwarted by privileging national binding. Justice cannot be advocated in terms of one group against the other but, it has to be ethically justifiable; it has to be administered as right against wrong. Strong social conscience does not develop with cultural belonging but by commitment to moral principles.¹⁴ Development of fair mentality is nothing to do with national identity but it is a matter of acquiring moral and social conscience. It is a matter of transcending from 'me and mine' to the general welfare of the community.

Moreover, it is wrong to assume that natural loyalty is logically attributable to the group whom one understands the best. There are varying reasons why one pledges one's loyalty to a political group. There is no single factor that ensures it. Some may accept the norms of a group because they are born in it, or may be because they agree with the principle on which the community is formed, or one may accept it because one so much wants to be a part of that group for the benefit one may get from belonging to that group. Immigrants and asylum seekers, perhaps, appreciate a fair economic and political system more than indigenous people since they know the pain of coping with a life in an unjust political community and hence work more ardently towards fulfilling their part of the obligation. It is a known fact that converted members of any religious community are more committed to their faith than those born in it because they feel they have an obligation to repay. They pledge their loyalty to the political system and their civic obligations but they would be happy to do so without any need to change their lifestyle.

Redistribution of wealth and social justice, however important they are for securing equality, are not the only issues which need addressing in a shared political community. Though they are important in political terms, developing shared political identity is about creating a new kind of coherent social relationship between different groups, to nurture a healthy climate for accommodating diversity.

Territorial group and cultural group

Thirdly, Parekh does not agree with the nationalists' assumption that people as a cultural group are attached to a specific territory as their homeland, as most liberal nationalists believe. He says that their assumption feels as though the land is the body to which people belong and culture belongs to that particular land. This idea, he reckons, is somewhat flawed. Culture is attached to social groups, he says, and it travels with the group. Historically speaking, land has never been a defining factor of cultural identity for the community. People, as a cultural group, define themselves in terms of a way of life, the ethical principles they adhere to, the religious practices they follow, the language they speak, and the way they organize their social life.¹⁵ Land is connected to political identity and to the people who live in it.

This argument of Parekh's can be substantiated by the recent history of western nations also. It is true of the colonizers who went to the new world countries like America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. They clung on to their culture because it was through common culture that they found comfort in the unknown land. They formed their social groups. Territory was a factor added to their identity later. This supports the peculiar nature of culture. One view is that, culture keeps the group integrity and secondly, cultural community need not necessarily be tied down to territory. One can adhere to one's culture without being territorially attached to it. Also, one can attach to a territory without totally belonging to its culture. For instance, one can remain a Hindu, and live a cultural life as guided by Hindu scriptures without being territorially attached to India where Hindu culture predominantly prevails. Maintaining cultural ties has significance to human life because one draws strength from one's culture to survive in a

society with a different way of life. Arguing that placing territorial and cultural identity together is a necessary step to establish coherent political community is not justifiable in every condition. Political identity is, there is no denying, inherently connected to territory but there is nothing imperative to hold cultural identity within the parameters of political territory for its members. Though it is true that political structure requires social coherence, it is wrong to argue that common culture ensures such condition.

More importantly, one can also argue that, because of the western vision of and commitment to political identity built around varying existent common aspects like ethnicity, religion, customs and so on the Anglo-American liberal tradition does not recognise the fact that there could be other aspects in other communities where the aspired political togetherness is sought on the grounds of different kind of distinctiveness.¹⁶ They do not give, as Uday Singh Mehta thinks, a sympathetic understanding to the fact that political community can be envisioned on common identity based on different kind of sovereignty. Mehta puts forward very effectively that the most strikingly overlooked factor in western nationalist discourse is the fact that geographical territory itself could be a defining variable for some political communities. Territory and political identity itself, he thinks, are perhaps interconnected. It is possible that attachment to other members, duty towards the welfare of other members itself is instilled not as a rule by common culture but by shared life arising out of shared territory. One of the constituents of political identity is shared territory because territorial, that is, socio/geographical conditions themselves contribute to the formation of certain way of life. If politically shared life is abiding by the laws and regulations, shared way of life is

developing a distinct way of life by virtue of sharing the territory. The uniting factor in this respect is not the shared culture, nor shared political structure but a shared way of life which is common to the territory. Shared way of life may be exhibited in shared religion, shared customs, or shared multicultural structure. Thus, he makes a very significant distinction between 'shared way of life' and 'shared life'. To quote Mehta: "Liberals have failed to appreciate that the territory is both a symbolic expression and a concrete condition for the possibility of (or aspiration to) a distinct way of life, and that in the modern epoch it gathers together many of the associations through which individuals come to see themselves as members of a political society."¹⁷

Parekh also thinks that the reason nationalists give for territory and a sense of belonging is wrongly conceived. Nationalists argue that nationalism provides individuals with rootedness,¹⁸ whereas he believes that the sense of belonging is a sentiment nurtured and acquired through sharing common life. It is not the same as political identity whereby one is attached to a certain territory, shares the social space, and is bound by constitutionally structured public laws. The real feeling of attachment we develop is not to the land but to our immediate surroundings. One can agree with him, particularly those of us who have experienced voluntary or involuntary uprooting. The community, to which we are not exposed, is as alien to us as a foreign land and the people we have not seen are as much strangers as outsiders. To assume that culture, social customs, etc. are homogeneous in every part of the nation is fallacious. This is particularly true if the nation is vast. It may be true that, being born in India and having spent my developing years there, I may feel more at home in India than in the U.K. where every aspect of socializing is different

whereas in India I may find some factors like ethnicity, religion, maybe language etc. more akin to me than in the U.K. An Englishman may feel more at home in Scotland than in India. However, I feel, feeling at home is a matter of degree and not of category. For example, the cultural narrative is different for my children who were born here and are making a living here. Their territorial embedded-ness is in their immediate surroundings. Culturally they may belong to a group different than their peers. But, they feel they belong to that territory because they share their life with the people who live within the territory.¹⁹ Their loyalties naturally develop towards those with whom they interact on a routine basis than with those relatives back in India with whom they have very limited contact and share very little of their life routinely. They may show clan loyalty and make a special trip to India to attend the wedding of a cousin or empathise more actively and offer to help more generously and passionately in the event of need than their indigenous counterparts but, to argue that their political loyalty will naturally flow towards their cultural group is not really true. One shows loyalty to and identifies oneself with the social life one shares with the rest of the community rather than with one's cultural community indiscriminately.

Rootedness in a particular territory has not been a permanent feature of life for any cultural group. Historical reference has not stood still at a certain point in history. If nationalists assume that national identity is historically grounded they also have to understand that history moves on and new facts are added to it. It changes with the dynamics of time just as culture also modifies with changing social set-up. For instance, the nationals of the USA today with a special national identity were once the special

bearers of respective British, Irish, Italian and so on national identities before they established their independent national identity in due course. They still refer to their cultural identity while dealing with private life and public social life while politically they have no doubts where their national identity lies and their political ideals are involved.

Another interesting point which one can attribute to the involvement of territorial identity with cultural identity is that nationalism as a concept evolved to accommodate the changing social and political scene, and hence, one can observe, it accommodated the historical facts that united the territories and discarded the facts that were likely to divide. One can agree with Parekh when he says, “The purpose of national history is not to give an accurate historical account but to enable individuals to position their personal life-stories within the larger, more significant, national history. Identification, not knowledge, is its *raison d’etre*. It allows individuals to identify with something outside, and greater than, personal experience. It bonds individuals into broader interdependence with others in the nation-building project.”²⁰ Political identity and cultural identity are both fluid in their construction. What is included in national history is, more or less, a construction which helped the sustenance of the political group at the time of its inception. It does not rule out the inclusion or exclusion of other shared features in the future within its context of reference.

Parekh’s conception of national identity in modern context

The structuring of cultural groups is different from the structuring of political groups. Parekh defines a political community, as quoted earlier, as, “a territorially concentrated group of people bound together by their acceptance of a common mode of conducting their collective affairs, including a body of institutions and shared values. It is not shared by them in a way that we might share a piece of cake, but in a way we share streets, parks, the institutions of governments, and so on. And it is common to them not in a way that having two eyes is common to all human beings, but in a way that a dining table is common to those seated around it. The identity of a political community lies in what all its members share not individually but collectively, not privately but publicly, and has an inescapable institutional focus.”²¹

Parekh locates political identity in political structure. He argues for a minimal political identity which should include all its citizens in its definition regardless of their peculiarities. He believes that it is important to separate civic identity from cultural identity. Civic identity should relate to the public sphere rather than the personal level. One cannot generalise, he says, the habits, attitudes, family structure etc. of one group and treat it as a standard for the rest of the political community. He does not see any need for an enveloping identity in order to seek political harmony. No group has the right to feel that they belong more closely to the national community than others. Demographic movement has meant that many varieties of people inherit the region and for legitimate reasons. Hence, it is necessary, he says, that everybody is made to feel she/he belongs there legitimately rather than being viewed as an intruder purely because of her or his lifestyle. This can only be achieved by recognising different interacting cultures. Non-

recognition of one's culture in public sphere amounts to damaged self-esteem. This often leads to the withdrawal of individuals and of the groups from public participation. It is wrong, he says, to instil into people the idea that integration is not possible until minorities shed their cultural distinctiveness or that they accept societal culture in public life, simply indicating that tolerating others' way of life is not an answer either. Only when other cultures are politically accepted and recognised as a part of mainstream culture can psychological rapport be built and harmony anticipated. Obligations, he says, flow if people feel a part of a group, and if they feel they have a stake in the group of which they are a part. The institution of democracy cannot function effectively if a section of the community fails to respect the process. To avoid this, the political community has to recognise cultural diversity and profess the advantages of being exposed to different cultures, which leads to a richer cultural life by way of literature, art, social ethics, and so on.²²

There is no denying that society is held together by common values, Parekh believes. However, setting up common values and working towards a common vision of the good life is not easy. Such view of the good life has a general tendency to pull towards majority culture. The worthwhile values of minority culture vanish under the pressure. This is neither necessary nor desirable in modern communities. Willingness to imbibe values from every culture should be a guiding force for future political communities. He says common values 'must emerge from democratic dialogue and be based on reasons that individuals belong to different moral and cultural traditions can agree on. They should not be so defined that they rule out legitimate moral differences or impose a

particular way of life on all. Nor should they be seen as fixed and settled forever as new insights and experiences are likely to call for their reconsideration.’²³

Parekh spots three means through which a state can bring about solidarity in a present day political community: ‘a widely accepted structure of authority, the pursuit of the common good, and an overlapping body of moral sentiments based on the differential relations of the citizens to the state’.²⁴ The social set up in changing times, he says, needs a new approach and this could may well be in accepting ‘constitutionally prescribed structure of public authority entitled to take and enforce collectively binding decisions.’ This will be a step forward from the 19th century European idea of the nation with its parochial conception of political community, and open up in a mature way to the reality of life that difference exists and that it has to be accommodated. Secondly, he says, the common good that the public pursues has to be defined in such a way that it ‘satisfies certain basic criteria such as that it must give equal consideration to the interests of all its citizens, assure them commonly agreed basic rights, and endeavour to meet their basic material needs.’ This will lead to people feeling their sense of belonging to the state on equal terms and hence pledge their loyalty and pride to the structure. Thirdly, he says, the modern state has to address a very modern dimension: ‘the complex, crisscrossing, and sometimes overlapping pattern of support given by its citizens for their own different reasons.’ The state has to recognise that different people have different kinds of relationship to the authority. Some may be there because their forefathers were there, that is indigenous people, while some may be there because they were brought to the country by the forefathers of this population that is, slaves and indentured labourers. While some

others may be there because they were the legacy of past history, for example, East African and Hong Kong Asians and even groups who were threatened in their own land – refugees and asylum seekers from oppressive regimes. Not all citizens share the history, not all of them can be categorised in broad terms as indigenous and immigrant population. People have to be seen in their own light and recognised as part of a set up and the sense of patriotism they might project has to be recognised.

He concludes: “The unity of the modern state neither rests on an illusory pre-political foundation nor can ever be taken for granted. It is necessarily complex, multi-stranded, and multi-layered, is nourished by different streams, and needs to be sensitively and continuously forged.”²⁵ Turning to the concept of the nation being initiated on imagined common culture to bring about its unity is not an option in a modern state. “What motivates some critics of nationalism, to distinguish “ethnic” and civic conceptions of nationhood is not the absurd notion that language and cultural identity are politically irrelevant. Rather, what animates the “civic” conception is the vision of a shared citizenship and civic identity that would be in principle capable of transcending these cultural preoccupations, however legitimate they may be, in a political community where linguistic and cultural identities are in potential conflict,” says Beiner summarising the arguments of some theorists. Parekh certainly is one of the proponents of that view.²⁶ He thinks, “(t)o be a citizen is to transcend one’s ethnic, religious, and other particularities, and to think and act as a member of the political community.”²⁷

All three of Parekh's points are vital conditions. However, even though they are essential, are they sufficient to bring about a harmonious political community? A community has to develop coherent interaction between its members if it has to survive under a common political structure. Establishing a common society is essential before one can think of establishing a common political group. Coherent society evolves and is not constructed. Such evolved society accommodates political structure and not the other way round. Society gives rise to political structure in a coherent system and for that social harmony is a first step. Simply recognizing that otherness should be accommodated because others are also committed to the political system and because it is for the welfare of all citizens is not going to result in forming a sound society unless people find a way of communication with 'otherness'. In a world where demographic and economic conditions are changing constantly common culture is becoming an irrelevant factor. However, for harmony it has to develop a mechanism for taking common culture out of the equation for people to form a social group. Interaction between people and between groups is not contingent on who they are but on what they can offer to group harmony and how people accommodate to social structure. Mutual dependency, and the desire for the welfare of every individual who shares the society, are the important factors on which society is basically formed (whether in Hobbesian terms or Aristotelian interpretation) Stressing that point and accepting that aspect can bring about the recognition of the value of every member. No amount of laws and recognition of otherness as a norm is going to work, as Parekh suggests, to bring about a political community which can treat its each and every member with due respect and every culture with regard. Allowing society to see other

individuals as contributors can only develop with social interaction and understanding. Social coherence and hence, political coherence can only ensue from such a condition.

Conclusion

Liberal nationalism acts on the premise that cultural identities and national identities are synonymous. Shared culture promotes mutual understanding and trust and it facilitates redistributive justice within the liberal state as members are intrinsically committed to the welfare of other members.

However, the conception that national identity is a political identity appears to be ill-conceived. One has to agree with Parekh's convincing argument that cultural identity and political identity are two different aspects of human life and hence they have to be treated as such. He offers a robust argument to distinguish cultural identity and political identity and the distinct role they play in one's life. It is a persuading argument that cultural identity is socially very important for every individual but it is not relevant for political membership. Hence, one can say, there is no need for enveloping identity to bring people together within political structure.

One can also accept Parekh's argument that nationalism is not logically justifiable as instrumental for social and political harmony either. It is a misconceived idea that redistributive justice is easily achieved within single culture community because people share the obligations willingly since they share a sense of in-built fraternity. The

examples highlighted above in this chapter show that there is not much truth in such an assumption.

Also, his argument that territory and culture are two independent aspects and hence they should be treated as such is very persuasive. Once again, we see through historical evidence that we carry our culture with us whenever we uproot ourselves but culture does not necessarily become involved in territorial/political identity, whereas one can observe that political identity is necessarily anchored in territory.

However, it has to be accepted that nationalism in every context has been used as a force to bring communities together, albeit in their own imagined way. Different nations may have used different 'logic and thrust' but the purpose of nationalism has been to create a coherent political community, a unified state and that has been a common factor of nationalism. What one can reject is the content of nationalism as perceived in the western vision. What one can find objectionable is the divisive innuendo it is susceptible to by arguing for common culture. What is unacceptable within the idea of western nationalism is the reluctance of allowing 'otherness' in a positive aspect. One cannot deny the fact that political community has two different aspects, that is, politics and community.

Collectivity has to exist for politics to establish itself. Parekh himself makes a case for national identity, however minimal in its construction, as a necessity. Common political identity is an essential component of the state for stability. The only way in which a political community can achieve political stability, Parekh argues, is by placing its faith in an accepted structure of authority, establishing the common good, and recognizing that

loyalty and commitment to authority is not dependent on common culture or historical inheritance and so on but on varying social and political factors.

His argument is very convincing as far as distinguishing cultural identity and political identity and the distinct role they play in one's life go. Cultural identity is socially very important for individuals but it is politically not relevant for members. There is no need for enveloping identity to bring people together in a political structure. No political structure can envelop a socially divided community. For example, political structure offers equality whereas equal respect can only be derived from society. No amount of law in any political structure is going to ensure against discrimination where a social structure does not accept 'otherness', be it religious as in many Middle Eastern states, caste based as in India or cultural as in Europe, as an artificially created social barrier. To transcend such barriers, one has to envisage a new way of looking at social relations.

In the next chapter, I shall elaborate on another misconceived idea that national identities can be arranged for people by the state, and that such shared identity irons out 'differences' between communities as liberal nationalists believe. I shall argue that arranged shared identity does not necessarily dissolve differences which exist in society: not only that 'difference' is maintained even if shared culture is imposed, but that trying to do so also has the potential to lead to a situation where non-recognition of assimilation itself becomes a source of discontent and thus becomes instrumental for resisting the authority. I shall refer to the analysis provided by Bhabha to expound on this argument.

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5. The Anglo-American Conception of Nationalism and Its Problems

i. Can Political Identity Be Arranged?

It is indisputable that togetherness is a necessary factor for the maintenance of a coherent political community. However, an argument was outlined in the last chapter that cultural identity and national/territorial identity could not be seen as one and the same. Nor does shared culture, as liberal nationalists assume, necessarily deliver social justice within a political community. Even if it did, shared political identity is not about re-distributive justice alone and togetherness does not necessarily ensue if re-distribution of material wealth and social welfare of the people was taken care of. It can also be argued that togetherness develops where social relationships are shared. Nevertheless, this is not the only limitation of nationalism as a political ideology. It will be argued further in this chapter that the validity of the liberal nationalists' political idea that common culture provides an important ingredient for generating unity and for maintaining political coherence can be queried from many other aspects.

A significant reservation about liberal nationalists' support for shared culture relates to their assumption that within any given society common culture naturally exists and that shared culture is necessary for political harmony. If one were to accept such assumptions of cultural nationalists, it would lead one to the position that the community has to nurture a shared societal culture for the sake of maintaining political solidarity and coherence. However, in a contemporary society where the influx of different cultures occurs for various reasons like immigration, asylum seeking, and exchange of labour

force for skills necessary in the technology-based job-market in the globalized economy and so on it is not realistic to hope for the existence of culturally homogeneous political communities ubiquitously, and at all times. This logically leads to the position that if cultural homogeneity does not naturally exist the onus is on the incoming members to adapt to the majority culture either by assimilation (as suggested by liberals like Miller) or by sharing societal culture in public and adhering to their own cultures in their private lives (as advocated by liberal nationalist Kymlicka). It falls on the state to facilitate the construction of such common culture through public institutions like schools, courts etc. so that political stability prevails.

Such an argument can be contested. Though nations might have been 'imagined' in the west around shared culture, this chapter will query whether all political communities can be viewed as 'holistic cultural entities' that exist naturally and whether every political community can normatively 'arrange' shared culture for its peoples for achieving political coherence. It is not feasible, I shall argue, to think that identities can be constructed by the state to secure the envisaged result of shared societal culture.

Articulating identities as suggested by Kymlicka and Miller is not possible because identities cannot be fixed in order to establish shared societal culture. Secondly, even though one were to assume such homogeneous and bounded societal culture can be arranged through political machinery identity thus created, is not sufficient for social coherence because constructed identity does not necessarily amount to treating people with equal status, a value which liberals consider to be of ultimate importance for political theory. Structured cultural identity does not dissolve the difference between the

'original' and the 'adopted' members. The dominant culture still maintains the superior position by retaining the status of an authentic cultural group as against the assimilated group. Some differences and prejudices cannot be dissolved easily. Thirdly, it can also be argued that the sentiment of togetherness between members is 'imagined' by the members themselves and hence the structure of the 'imagined community' of the 18th century in the west cannot be relevant to political communities outside the specific region and time. Moreover, one can argue that political unity is not necessarily located in shared culture only. Every community 'imagines' its own social and political identity and togetherness out of the experiences of its own members at any given time in history. The experiences themselves are heavily affected by social and cultural influences which they carry within themselves.

The argument of social theorist Homi Bhabha contends that identities cannot be fixed arbitrarily because of the varying dynamics involved in the formation of identity. He provides a plausible theory through a detailed psychoanalytical account of the dynamics involved in the formation of political identity and substantiates his argument with historical evidence from colonial India. I shall expand on his theory with historical evidence of India of the 19th and early 20th century under the British rule to show how imperialists attempted to construct a common identity for Indians through political arrangement by introducing Christianity as the shared religion, English as the shared language, and education and public institutions based on the western system. Nevertheless, history proves that they did not manage to generate a culturally homogeneous community. Secondly, I shall follow his argument to show that arranged

shared identities do not necessarily iron out 'differences' that exist within the social structure because the hierarchical position of the dominant cultural group does not dissolve difference by such construction. It only highlights 'difference' in a subtle way by allotting the positions of 'the originator' and 'the imitator'. Cultural hegemony still prevails. I shall pursue his argument further to emphasise that constructing shared identity is a politically dangerous manoeuvre because instead of erasing the possibility of resistance, cultural homogeneity created without actually offering equality leads to discontent amongst citizens, which in turn leads to resistance from the minority group. Minorities resist the acceptance of culture if it happens to be imposed by the state. Hence, it exposes itself to the threat of their refusal to accept the superiority of the majority group in spite of sharing identity and contributing equally to the welfare of the group. Constructed shared culture, thus, does not necessarily bring about unity and equality but possesses the possibility of division and revolt against authority.

It will be argued in the second section of this chapter that nationalism cannot be seen as an optimal political ideology for ubiquitous application. Shared culture cannot be the only component through which people see the unity necessary for political coherence. Nationalism was one such response to the changes which occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries in the west. However, such a structure cannot be adopted successfully universally. Every community imagines togetherness in its own vision. Togetherness they seek ensues from prevalent social and economic situations. The argument of Partha Chatterjee that togetherness within multi-faith, multi-racial, and multi-lingual India was not located on shared culture illustrates this view. Indian sense of political harmony was

envisaged by Indian nationalists of 1900s through seeking social harmony by celebrating difference and by addressing the issues which multicultural Indian society faced at the time. I shall also argue that it was not only in India that togetherness was envisaged differently from the western concept but unity has been located in different aspects of life by different communities. I shall refer to other forms of nationalism as discussed by Parekh to conclude that political coherence is not necessarily dependent on shared culture.

Whether common cultural identity is seen as an 'essential' factor, or as a 'social construct', it is too deterministic to be accommodated in any political structure, particularly in liberal states where principles of individualism and rationalism are expected to be privileged. I shall argue that people make their own choices and control their own destinies by the voluntary acceptance of social and political norms and by imagining togetherness in the community in their own vision.

Bhabha

Bhabha questions the very importance recent western political philosophers attach to the 'historical certainty and settled nature of the term' of 'nation'. In his opinion, the term 'nation' is far too ambiguous to fit the description of the political community it tries to convey. He says, "the term (nation) is an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the locality of culture. This locality is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity; a form of living that is more complex than community; more symbolic than society; more

connotative than country; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; more collective than the subject; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.”¹ He particularly denies the impression given by nationalist historicism that ‘nation’, ‘national culture’ and ‘a people’ are an empirical social category or ‘holistic cultural entity’ even though nation or national culture as we see them today can only be traced back to the Enlightenment era.² He argues that cultural groups are not a-historic, prearranged, static entities. They are actually created and recreated in every community constantly. Hybridity is a social process through which different cultures blend through exposure over time.

Though Bhabha puts a strong case forward for the argument that cultural identities cannot be seen as a-historic, prearranged, static fixtures, he does not believe that they can be manoeuvred easily in a certain direction to create a congenial identity for a political agenda. The strategy of generating communities with supposedly homogeneous cultures, he says, does not succeed because identities, cultural or political, follow the trajectory decided by various existent and emergent social, economic and political factors.

Secondly, he sets out to illustrate that an appropriated hybrid culture does not necessarily iron out cultural hegemony and create culturally homogeneous and socially harmonious communities, as cultural nationalists maintain. It does not lead to the generation of a sentiment of togetherness between cultures because articulation and imposition of culture does not assimilate subject groups into the dominant group on equal terms. More

importantly, he observes, articulated cultural identity is not generally intended to create a culturally homogeneous community. Such an assigned identity is invariably intended to maintain power-hierarchy within its structure. Thirdly, and as a consequence, such an attempt does not always lead to a coherent political community. It results in minority groups resisting assimilation because shared culture does not necessarily translate into equal status, recognition and equal respect for the subject group. This leads to political and social unrest. Bhabha elucidates his claim with the example of India under British rule in the 19th and 20th centuries and analyses how and why the ideology of shared culture was introduced in India and how it failed to deliver the desired outcome.

Creating homogeneous identity

Analysing the attempt to construct a common culture, Bhabha observes that fixing the identities, by applying western social constructionist dogma through spreading homogenous culture, has been seen as a dominant feature in arranging a political and social structure for governing the masses through the 19th century history of colonial rule of India. 'Customary norms', the colonisers believed, were signs of 'culturally cohesive 'civil' communities'.³ Because it was only in such communities, they thought, that common laws could effectively be administered. Hence, it was an essential task, in their opinion to arrange such cohesive culture. He revisits the social and political situation existent in India at the time of colonial administration and says that the social scene in India of the 19th century was a hotchpotch of different insulated, socially disjointed communities from each other with different religions and languages, and with no overall

coherent social structure. Also, people were ridden with religion-dictated superstitions and lacked the scientific advancement which the western hemisphere had accomplished. For the colonisers, who were exposed to a culture and social structure to which they could not relate, he says, India appeared a land of uncivilised mass. It was their *mission*, they believed, to introduce Indians to a *superior way of life* with a sophisticated religion, language and education that would instil much needed pragmatism into their daily life and a political system in their own vision. They envisaged creating a systemic culture, to which all citizens would subscribe and narrate between themselves, as it had happened in the west in the wake of industrialization. In the absence of any tangible common cultural homogeneity in the land, they took it upon themselves to introduce a common culture and assign an identity that would be accepted by Indians as their own cultural and national identity. Shared culture had brought about social and political coherence in the west, they thought, and it could work in the colonies.

The Intended function of such identity

Nevertheless, Bhabha does not believe that the real purpose of arranging such common culture is always intended for seeking political harmony, as liberal nationalists argue. He thinks that it is a political strategy. Articulated commonality, he says, is not necessarily aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and dissolving difference between the two groups; it is often intended to control the difference between the dominant and the oppressed group. It is aimed at establishing a hierarchical power; it is aimed at establishing a political community, which would maintain its cultural superiority and

authority. He illustrates this point with the example of colonial India, again. Bhabha says that the intended purpose of social structuring of common culture in India was to enable the coloniser to fulfil two purposes. Firstly, the masses could get rid of difference-ridden incompatible social structures and develop a new assigned identity created by the coloniser. They could relate to each other with a sense of shared life. And, secondly, and more strategically, by equipping the masses with the new identity compatible with the rulers, they could spread their own brand of nationalism which they understood and thought would succeed in manipulating the masses and maintain political harmony in the colony. This, they thought, would benefit the administration of this vast land politically.

This was the reason for establishing a shared culture in colonial India. They wanted the social structure to be manipulated in such a way that culture and race need not be *seen* as signifying elements of national identity, yet played a significant part in consequence. They would change the social structure in such a way that if the colonial status was to be lost and India had to be imagined as an independent nation, it would be born out of the *coloniser's* imagination. If national identity were to be constructed, it would be the *colonisers'* idea of what Indian identity should be and what would serve *their* purpose of maintaining *their* superior status in the colonies to the optimum. By establishing the identity in the image of the coloniser, they would preserve their economic domination, that is, ruling the colony by proxy.

It was crucial, argues Bhabha, for this newly formed culture to be similar to that of the coloniser because only then could there be a perceived sense of compatibility between the

colonised and the coloniser. It was important that the coloniser must share the ultimate goal of the colonised in order to be a part of the emergent 'imagined community'. Hence, such identity, they knew, had to be their identity, for only then would this allow them to be an authentic part of the whole. To establish such an agreeable entity it was necessary to dissolve the cultural and racial difference that existed between themselves and the natives. This perceived participation of Indians in the formation of their identity, Bhabha believes, was presumed to be achievable by the coloniser through the banner of social reform. Their idea was to create an elite group of Indians who would be infused with enough Englishness to spread the culture to the masses in their name. These mimic men would appear and exist (as depicted in the literary characters such as E.M.Forster's Dr. Aziz in *A Passage to India* and Naipal's Ralph Singh in *The Mimic Men*) as hybrid men who would be *English but not quite*. Their character would be constructed in such a way that they would be English without being recognised as English by the coloniser, and Indians without being perceived as English by the colonised, as Bhabha puts it, as '(an) effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicised is *emphatically* not to be English'.⁴ A nation constructed with such citizens could be, they thought, ruled by the coloniser by proxy, and forever.⁵

The idea of the coloniser was to give such hybrid people an identity like that of the coloniser but maintaining the 'difference' without ever accepting them as one of their own. The 'difference' in colonial discourse, Bhabha says, was an apparatus of power. The strategy was to create a space for a 'subject people' by creating the difference. The manipulated hybrid identity, says Bhabha, was not intended to offer political or social

equality. It was to produce the colonised as ‘a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible’.⁶ The space their identity occupied was not to liberate them from domination. It was not to offer real representation for the colonised in spite of occupying the space of the coloniser. There was no equality, neither economic nor political, and no freedom, in any real sense, for the colonised in deciding their own destiny. The colonised still took their dictates from the superior ‘white man’. The formation of the nation on those lines still maintained the superiority of imperialists’ own culture by establishing political hegemony, by maintaining the difference between the ‘originators’ and ‘imitators’.

The ensuing result

As intended, Bhabha says, shared culture did not give citizens an equal playing field. Equality and freedom were not for free distribution in the colonised world but remained a privilege of the ‘white man’. The colonised were not trained and treated on equal terms with the colonizers, as ‘white men in black skins’ trained to spread the gospel of equality and freedom and so on but were only small accessories in the larger machinery of imperial authority. They were going to be used merely as go-betweens to keep colonial power going and to promote white supremacy. They were going to be treated as instruments, as pawns in a bigger game of clandestinely arranged slavery of black people. The very hybrid group, as Bhabha says, which the coloniser groomed to take over the reins on their behalf became more aware of the injustice and inequality of the regime than the rest of the population who were oblivious to the dynamics of power and individual

rights and dignity. They knew then that cultural nationalism was not about equality but about power. They knew then that the civilizing mission was not about improving the common man but imposing a common culture that was alien to them, which would then permanently enslave the population to the white man. The Western ideology of nationalism was not really an ideology about organising a society based on equality but it was only a façade to hide their real intention of protecting their own class and economic power and ruling the colonies forever.

The challenge to the British rule gained strength from the hybridised elite who refused to accept the hegemonic power created by the imperialists within the homogenous culture. Prominent Indian intellectuals like Surindranath Banerjee, Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru, Ghosh *et al*, were all recipients of English education. With their exposure to British political structure, they became the enthusiasts for the developed political systems and political philosophies of the west, both liberal and communist, mainly through appreciation for the ethical principles like equality, freedom, justice and rationalism that they professed to uphold for plebeians. However, they soon realised that nationalism was not an ideology which offered equality, justice, respect and power etc. to all its citizens. This resulted in the very 'Macaulay's men', instead of turning into mere translators, found themselves to be lawyers, teachers, economists etc of high calibre committed to the values of genuine liberty, equality and justice advocated by liberal philosophy and engaged in its pursuit.

This is when, Bhabha says, the very people they had trained to be their torch-bearers returned their gaze on the coloniser. Indian nationalism was born to oppose such assigned identity, such arranged common culture. Resistance was born out of, and as a reaction to, the split the coloniser had so carefully created within the select few. The image of 'almost but not quite' intended by the colonised was rejected by the Anglicised. They wanted to know what it was to be English and in what respect did the mimics differ from the mimicked. What made them 'almost but not quite'? Resistance was born when mimic men felt the very people who were responsible for creating them were showing signs of cracks in their civilization. They wanted to point out to the coloniser that the very ideals the western culture projected as valuable were not actually followed by them. This is when the observer became the observed. The 'observed' started analysing the inadequate principles on which the 'observer' based his superiority. Indian nationalism was born to discredit the identity given by the coloniser and to query the ethics of the principles on which the colonisers based their superiority. They did so, importantly, he says, by using the very identity given by the coloniser and by turning mimicry into mockery, by rejecting the idea that the imperialists' version of nationalism was a universal project that would kindly teach the rest of the world a superior existence that is, to be civilised, developed and progressive.⁷

Instead of accepting the *status quo* position of 'almost but not quite' they used the hybridised identity to point out the inadequacy of the coloniser's culture and bring forth their own answer to national identity. They fought the imposed superiority of European culture by pointing out the inconsistency of its ideology by exposing the cracks, the

discrepancies between its principles and its practice. They argued that giving equal status regardless of one's social position is an acculturated thing to do. Looking after everyone, not just the people who share one's way of life, is an essential characteristic of every human being. These qualities were not the unique contribution of the west towards humanity but the foundation on which every culture worth its name is built. Recognising otherness, they argued, was a sign of progress and not a factor by which to draw boundaries. The very contents and the reasons for nationalism in western style were queried. Once they realised that the principles of equality, freedom and justice were not really adhered to universally, the requirement of common culture for political coherence became devoid of moral influence.

Resistance to cultural hegemony was organised in the very fashion in which the cultural dominance had been. They used the characteristics on which the west wanted to establish its superiority to resist the colonial authority. The very qualities that did not allow the total acceptance of the colonised into the coloniser's identity were the points which were queried by the leadership. For example, the very people who had been trained to teach the common public the value of equality, freedom and justice as an act of reforming mission turned their training to query the legitimacy of the coloniser in suppressing the freedom of press in India. They turned their fire on the authority by highlighting the injustice imparted by levying taxes on poor, helpless people. Gandhi, a political visionary who led the fight against the colonial authority in India, cited the very teachings of Hindu culture not necessarily to establish its moral superiority and bring out the fundamental difference between the two cultures but to highlight that whether a society was technically advanced

or not it was bound by the same ethical principles that were basic to human nature. Humanity, freedom, equal status and respect for every individual, and non-violence were not solely inventions of western culture but they could be found in every religion, and in every social structure. He argued that they were principles which Christianity, the religion of the coloniser, promoted, yet they were not followed in their own political ideology.⁸ Gandhi's version of nationalism was articulated on a grander picture of civilization as opposed to the narrowness of the western vision which aimed and directed moral/ethical principles at a selected group. (I shall forward his argument in chapter 7.)

Do Bhabha's views refute the claims of nationalists?

Bhabha makes a very robust argument against the western thought that common identities are necessary for realising liberal values, that such homogeneous identities necessarily bring about social harmony, and that shared culture can be articulated. Though his argument centres on explaining the colonialists' strategy for controlling the colonies, it can be applied to show the impracticality and undesirability of accommodating cultural nationalism within a liberal state. The opposition to liberal nationalism, as we saw earlier, has been on difficulties that it faces, like ethically and logically justifying its principle of favouring certain groups over and above others. However, Bhabha approaches the subject from a psychoanalytical point of view and presents convincingly the reasons for the failure of nationalism to bring about togetherness within the political community. He outlines his account of what is involved in arranging common culture and how it leads to cultural hegemony with a valid example of India.

A significant point he makes against the claim of nationalists is the way in which they present nations as a-historic pre-arranged communities and that holistic cultural communities exist distinctively. It is such false assumption that leads them to argue that pre-political communities are necessary for harmonious political community. However, he shows clearly that cultures are no fixtures but they are characteristically ever changing, and fluid. Hybridity is a normal result of exposure. They are always in the making and evolve in their own time at their own pace. However, Bhabha is right to argue that construction of identities does not work. Though people adapt to and learn a new way of life with a common language, religion and so on, whether socially constructed identities necessarily merge within the host culture harmoniously or whether they only camouflage their existence with the image of merging is arguable.⁹ Because one cannot say for sure how such constructed identity is going to be taken aboard by the individuals whose identities are being manoeuvred. As we saw from Anthony Cohen's argument, in chapter three, social identities are cognitively produced and subjectively perceived and hence each individual receives and interprets cultural signposting in her or his own way. People do not just learn the external signs of behaviour but evaluate the context of choice provided by other interacting cultures for leading their life before they accept and internalise the values. Assuming, for sure, that such given markers make one behave in a certain way is misunderstanding and undermining individuality to a great extent.¹⁰

Moreover, his detailed analysis of what was involved in the creation of shared identities shows that manipulation of common culture through assimilation, as Miller suggests, would not work because the assimilated group would always be isolated from the indigenous group on the point of authenticity; they would always remain the group 'of almost but not quite'. This would not deliver equality as it sets out to do because the assimilated group would never get the same status as the indigenous group. This is, for example, manifest particularly in the job market where, in spite of every other qualification being equal, bias towards national group always plays a part. The assimilated group is not treated as having the same status as the majority group. Cultural hegemony is still maintained. Oppression of minority cultures, in this case, is not necessarily through subjugation but by giving them the status of 'white but not quite'.

Also, one can make a strong case against arranging shared societal culture with shared language, public customs and institutions, as Kymlicka proposes, for public life and allowing minority cultures to be actively pursued in private based on Bhabha's analysis of political and social identity. Reducing the practice of minority cultures to the private arena of life and expecting its members to accept shared societal culture in the public arena, which is bound to be biased towards majority culture, leads to the creation of ambivalence within the individual. Private life and public life are dichotomised leaving individuals disorientated. This leads to the 'process of splitting'. One has to remain a member of a minority culture to adhere to the cultural guidelines on which one depends for leading a meaningful life, and at the same time, one has to accept the societal norm, which is heavily predisposed to the majority culture in order to belong to the wider

system. This leads to a confused and conflicting sense of belonging. This is quite unsettling for the minority group as well as for the political community to which it belongs.

Moreover, one can agree with Bhabha when he argues that it is the people who constantly make and unmake their identities, and that the reality is that peoples' identities are not permanent fixtures of any time and space. They are not monolithic, pre-given categories. Also, identities are formed and assigned at the point of negotiation and hence it is an on-going process. In any society, it is a matter of constant negotiation between two interacting individuals or groups. Cohesion evolves, similarities are found, and loyalty to other members of the group ensues from sharing. Hybrid identities are constantly produced. They always take their shape and character depending on the impact they experience through existent political and social systems. This argument of his, as Paul Gilbert observes,¹¹ undermines the assumption of Charles Taylor who thinks, as we saw earlier, that there exist clearly bounded, homogeneous cultures which need to be protected through state intervention. Cultures do not exist and prosper in isolation; they only continue to survive through constant exchange of cultural performances. The borders are routinely criss-crossed and cultural contexts regularly expanded.

Bhabha very effectively analyses how the discontent of minority cultural groups is not necessarily focussed on the demand for recognition and acknowledgement of difference alone; the demand is for equality. The argument centres on the demand for equality of opportunity and the fight against discrimination in public institutions and non-recognition

of qualifications even when the ability to hold the responsibility has been equivalent to that of members of majority culture. The struggle has been directed towards the unacceptable fact that conceptually the liberal principle has been committed to equality to all citizens, and yet, contrary to this self-professed principle, the system creates and nurtures difference through the argument for shared culture. The creation of such subjects who are 'almost but not quite' and 'split-identity' leads to resistance from the subject group. This point, again, can be seen in contemporary political communities of the west. Alienation of certain communities through discrimination has been a point of distrust and disturbance in the recent history of some nation-states.

Bhabha's analysis raises a few further points. Can shared culture alone be seen as that linchpin which holds communities together? One can argue that the positioning of shared political identity differs from one political community to the other. One can argue that the kind of shared political identity chosen, or deemed as appropriate, is very much dependent on social factors which are held to be crucial to the feeling of togetherness within the group, on where and how that sense of unity is perceived and located within the social structure. More importantly, the factors themselves which originate within the group are influenced by varying circumstances. The political structure of any region usually develops from the historical events and social structure of the region. Prior to the rise of populist governments in the west, social structure was predominantly dictated by the monarchs and their religion, and the power-hierarchy set between the aristocrats and the plebeians was carved out of the economic status that each group held in western society. Cultural homogeneity emerged to accommodate the changing perception of the

social world of 18th century Europe. However, the social and economic situation of non-western nations was not similar to that of the west.

To quote the example of India again, historical experiences were not shared in the way in which people shared them in the west prior to democratic government being established. The experiences of historical events of different political units differed greatly in their content, and often the experiences were diagonally opposite to each other, for example Marathas, Moguls and the Deccan states all had their own political identities. However, in spite of the communities' exposure to many political rulers from within the region and from outside with different religions, languages, and customs etc. taking over the political reigns, social life for them for many centuries remained independent of the political rule of the region. Though this may have affected the political aspect of peoples' lives it did not change their social life directly as a result of the ruling monarch. For instance, though the ruling monarchs in India have many times been from a Muslim dynasty this never affected the social structure which predominantly revolved round Hindu culture. At times, the rulers have been Hindu Rajputs but other religious groups have maintained their faith and blended into the social structure and lifestyle without major upheavals in their social life. Even during the Raj, though political dominance of the British rule was resented, admirable social values of western culture like regard for the equality of citizens and individual freedom were recognised, celebrated and imbued within the social structure of India. Nevertheless, recognising the valuable contribution to civilization did not amount to accepting western political philosophy in its entirety nor did it amount to

nationalism being adopted to unite a multi-cultural community within a single political structure.

Conclusion

Cultural nationalists assume the position that neat consistent cultural systems secure harmony within the community more naturally than within communities where no common communication initiated by common culture exists and hence, for this purpose, it is desirable to endeavour to establish common culture if it does not exist naturally because common culture leads to a just political community. Their assumption is debatable on two accounts. Neither can identities be arranged nor can it be proven that arranged homogeneity ascertain equality by getting rid of power-hegemony where different cultures interact in every day life. Hence, it is an un-viable idealism for a contemporary world to argue for cultural nationalism where multi-cultural communities are getting more and more common and the social tapestry is changing constantly. Hybrid identities are constantly made and remade within any political community. New identities are always accommodated in the community. It is not unimaginable to think that, to quote Trevor Phillips, chairman of the Commission for Racial equality, 'unsuitable outsiders' of today possibly could become the flag-bearers of the same nation of the future.¹² History bears witness to this reality.

Secondly, imposing identities leads to resistance from the oppressed community and leads to unrest within it. Bhabha's argument highlights this point very convincingly. This

is mainly the case because imposed culture does not necessarily iron out the differences that exist within the community. Opposition to British rule was articulated to oppose the inequality it brought about between the coloniser and the colonised and even within the colonised between English-speaking westernised Indians and the rest. Moreover, the imposition of cultural nationalism within the culturally diverse Indian structure where communities had coexisted with relative harmony for centuries disturbed the existent social coherence.

Thirdly, the western conception nationalism does not suit political communities ubiquitously. Introducing western style of nationalism had dire effects and India still suffers from the consequences. Before the initiation of British colonial rule and the introduction of British-style nationalism, various communities with diverse cultures coexisted in India without much strife. Conflicts were restricted to social problems and revolved round social issues like inter-caste marriages and property rights, for example. Shared identities were conceived on culturally diverse communal identity. There is no specific historical reference to civil war between communities for political control. One can quote many examples of shared political identity emerging from different perspectives. I shall allude to these examples in the next section to argue that shared culture is one of the many ways through which political identity can ensue. Each community chooses its own sense of social/political identity on their its terms.

References

1. Homi Bhabha, 'Dissemination' in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.141.
2. *ibid.*, p.141.
3. Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken Wonders' in *The Location of Culture*, p.106.
4. Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man' in *The Location of Culture*, p.87.
5. He cites the historical evidence of Macaulay's proposed reforms and the aim of creating a bunch of translators who would act as mediators between the uncivilised mass and the coloniser's proposed reforms. Though Macaulay had expressed his opinion of Indians as 'un-reformable' he changed his view once he saw the possibility of using them for promoting the political control of the region and perpetuating colonial rule through this class of people. He compromised to the idea of using their ability as 'a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' and nothing more.
6. Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question' in *The Location of Culture*, p.70-71.
7. Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken For Wonders' in *The Location of Culture*, p.110.
8. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.49.
9. Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken For Wonders' in *The Location of Culture*, p.121.

10. Bhabha gives a very interesting account of this in his essay *Signs taken For Wonders* how conversion of Hindus to Christianity was observed by the missionaries in India. Indians asked for bibles and bibles were received from England and the books were collected by the Indians; but this did not necessarily lead to mass conversion. Bibles, as '*Missionary Review*' reported, were collected for many convoluted reasons, for example, to store up as a curiosity, or for selling them in the market, or to use as waste paper but not always for the intended reasons. (p.121-122)
11. P. Gilbert, *Peoples, Cultures, and Nations in Political Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p.138.
12. T. Phillips, *The Guardian*, 28th May 04

ii. Is Shared Culture the Only Pivotal Element for Conceiving Shared Identity?

Civic voluntarism bases its argument on the premise that each individual is and should be free to choose the membership of a political community without being restricted by social factors like religion, race, and so on. However, in spite of this commitment to the ideology liberal nationalists still argue that shared culture is necessary for shared political identity. Though it is possible to think that communication is easier within shared group and that the ‘outsiders’ of one time do develop hybrid identities over the time and merge within the extant culture to cohere with their adopted group, one can also argue that shared culture need not necessarily be the only basis for sharing coherent social life, anyway. Historically, shared culture may have been a politically significant factor for seeking shared identity at some stage in some parts of the world but that need not lead us to believe that such shared culture has been the pivotal point for shared identities in every community. It is conceivable to think that political communities can imagine and have imagined shared social and political identities and their own sense of togetherness in different aspects of life under different social and political conditions. Every political community shares the idea that social coherence and political coherence are interconnected but each community differs in its vision as to which factors contribute to social harmony and how political coherence is achieved within the community. Different communities seek expression of unity, loyalty, social harmony and so on in their own way, and on their own terms. The way in which social and political issues are intertwined is viewed differently in every political setting.

Different political communities see different visions of unity. Hence, even when a political community calls itself a nation it does not necessarily mean that it bases its ideology on the same foundation as western conceptions of nationalism. Political identity and cultural identity are seen in many parts of the world as two independent facets of individuals and hence, it is argued, one should not believe that a 'distinctive sense of shared political life' necessarily means a 'shared way of life' in the sense of shared language, religion or customs and so on ubiquitously. There is no single factor, it can be argued, no *a priori* stipulation which determines the political identity of its members.¹

Nevertheless, the term 'nation' and 'nationalism' have been used extensively in political context in many parts of the world. In this section, I shall argue that though the word "nationalism" is used in political discourses in many parts of the world it has not necessarily been employed to bring about political togetherness as it has been in the Anglo-American conception. No two nationalisms can be seen as identical in nature because no two groups share the same political, social, economic, and geographical history. Though different communities have used the concept of nationalism in order to invoke togetherness they have not always employed it to bring about political unity. The prevailing conditions in every political community are different, the sense of unity experienced is different and hence, they could not possibly follow, as is generally assumed, the template set up by the west.

Different conceptions of nationalism

Though from the outset it appears that all nations followed the prototype set out by 19th century Europe (as Benedict Anderson claims), in reality no two nationalisms can be claimed to be alike. Each political community anchors its sense of national identity in its own vision. Each nation decides the elements which lead to its shared identity. Hence, it is not right to assume that nationalism as a political dogma was adapted from the west by most evolving states in the post-colonial era for the purpose of creating politically coherent communities. For that matter, as Bhikhu Parekh observes, the pattern of nationalism cannot be generalized even within Europe. Historically, the model that France followed to become a nation-state is different to the one followed by Germany and Poland. Germany and Poland are the examples where pre-political communities formed the nation-states based on shared ethnicity and culture whereas France is an example of a nation-state where people were brought together with the vision of building a nation by concocting a common culture. Historically, Britain has developed a shared political culture by accommodating distinct Scottish, Welsh, and Irish cultures in its political structure.²

Thus, it appears as though the concept of nationalism has many applications and seeking political unity is one of them. One can argue that the word 'nationalism' is used to refer to the generic dogma of seeking social/political togetherness without necessarily involving either shared ethnicity, race, religion or shared culture as the basis of a sign of shared life. Such a view of nationalism as shared culture has no relevance to any non-

western nationalist discourse which ensued in the 19-20th century pre/post colonial world. Each political community has sought political unity in their own vision. Parekh says, “[i]n each case nationalism has a different structure and texture, and the nation-state has a different logic and thrust.”. He says, “it is a grave methodological mistake to talk of nationalism ‘taking’ different ‘forms’ in different countries as if it had an identical ‘essence’ relentlessly unfolding its ‘potentialities’ in different places.” He explains the phenomenon as: “different countries come under the influence of a specific manner of thinking about the state. They then deconstruct the conceptual package, select its specific components, add new ones of their own, and generate distinct ideas and movements that at best bear only family resemblance to each other, and that too of an extended rather than nuclear family.”³

For example, as Parekh says, Arab countries could not see political community based on western criteria of shared race, ethnicity, religion or language as the demarcating character for separate states because most Arab countries share all the criteria. The concept of nation was irrelevant to their identity because of the constant movement of their population within Arabia. There is no historical continuity in Arab states such as one can spot in the case of western countries. Because of these reasons, he writes, the very language of nationalism has found it difficult to find a place in Arabic countries. Loyalty, to them, is directed at their political as well as religious community in broader terms. They may live in different countries but they are obliged to pledge their loyalty to their Islamic community.⁴

Moreover, not everybody sees the need for nationalism, that is, arousal of national consciousness, in political terms only. For instance, the Indian nationalist movement of 1900s: Gopal Krishna Gokhale, one of the early founder member of the Indian nationalist party, used nationalism not to secure political independence from the British but as a benevolent force which could unite an existent community by spreading the concept of equality, equal respect for all members of a group to a socially divided society of 19th century India where caste and religion and male domination had excluded the majority of citizens from access to decent independent life with dignity.⁵ Tilak, another prominent revolutionary nationalist in early 20th century India, saw the revival of cultural nationalism as a strategy for building a mass following which would lead to independence from the imperial rule.⁶ By adapting nationalism as a weapon to unite the Indians, he waged effective opposition to the colonizer to achieve self-rule. Aurobindo Ghosh, a political activist of the time, saw it as a social evolutionary process which brought communities together with a sense of brotherhood and nurtured a moral society that would ultimately lead to a moral world-society.⁷

Though Mahatma Gandhi also uses the term 'nationalism' in his writings, he does not refer to the same idea of political nationalism as that in the western conception. He saw nationalism more as a social force rather than a political dogma. He refers to civilization as a relevant political force to hold the community together and not shared culture. His idea of nationalism was anchored in reviving an impressive Indian civilization which accommodated cultural difference as a matter of fact and developed a civic society where members of every community could publicly live their lives according to their preferred

ways of life and yet prosper from all angles into a shared moral society. He applied it for bringing about a moral society where care was not restricted to one's own group. He saw no boundaries or demarcations, and where ethical behaviour ensued towards others regardless of which group they belonged to and how loose their connection was to the groups. The Indian vision of political community was to build, as Parekh expresses, a 'body of people sharing loyalty to the constitution, subscribing to the legal and political values embodied in it, and developing the public spirit and civic virtues of responsible citizenship.'⁸ (I shall elucidate the views of Indian political thinkers in the following chapters.)

The reason why the western concept of nationalism cannot be accepted universally is mainly that not all communities share a sense of togetherness in a shared culture. Culture, for some communities, as we saw earlier, is only a part of their social/political life. Partha Chatterjee, another prominent contemporary Indian political philosopher, singles out this aspect of political identity and argues that shared identity has not necessarily been seen in shared culture only as it is often seen in the western political context. He rejects somewhat Euro-centric assumption of Anderson's that once nationalism as a concept took its root in the west it was picked up as a model for nations by the rest of the world. If nations are imagined communities, he suggests, it is absurd to think that the imagining of shared identity can be done on the model provided by some other community. He says that, "[i]f nationalism in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?"⁹ Any populist state which emerged in the

aftermath of colonial rule, he rightly observes, had to accommodate the specificity of extant social and political life.

Chatterjee explains nationalism as it is projected and pursued within non-western discourse with its own distinct imagination for a political community. Expanding on the shared identity as experienced in the Indian context, he draws a clear distinction between political coherence as located in shared culture in the western conception, and the 'inner spirit' as perceived in Indian political context.¹⁰ A peculiarity of Indian society, he says, is that in Indian society both social/political and private/public identities are viewed as two interdependent yet independent aspects of human society; and social identity is seen as the overriding identity. Throughout history, one can observe, solidarity in India is located in the social and ideological spheres. The public, political and material domains of life have accommodated social life and not *vice versa*. A distinct Indian identity and sense of togetherness, Chatterjee argues, is experienced in shared traditional, spiritual life. It is located in social ethics. The adhesive force in India has been placed in constructive adjustment to other cultures and their ideologies.

Hence, Chatterjee says that one cannot talk of nationalism as though there is only one authentic version, and that happens to be western, and the rest of the uniting forces in the political arena as variations of the same genre. "[a] simple comparison with the historical models of transition in Europe will no longer be adequate, for this will always highlight the incompleteness, the fragmentation, indeed the in-authenticity of the transition in the non-western world. This is precisely the point brought out both by the liberal debate

about nationalism and by the Marxist debate on the “Indian renaissance”. And yet, the need to undertake an analysis of the nationalist thought not in terms of its *differences* with the paradigmatic European forms, but in its own constitutive terms, is perhaps emphasised more clearly than elsewhere in the case of India.”¹¹ He argues that there are certain aspects of western nationalism incorporated and adapted in organising political nationalism in India for which it can be called, as Anderson says, ‘a derivative of western imagination’.¹² However, that does not amount to other political communities accepting nationalism as perceived by the western view.

Referring to the development of the concept of nationalism in the Indian political discourse Chatterjee says that real life in India revolved around shared social life regardless of changes in its political and economic facets. Togetherness in India was not seen in the context of political loyalty but in terms of a social community, and allegiance in terms of commitment to members in human relationships. There was no common culture and shared behaviour in India; there was no common vision of the ‘good life’. For that matter, in a vast land where multicultural communities occupied the land for centuries it was not anticipated either. Unity was seen as belonging to a shared community. The nation was seen as a social community rather than a political community. India as a political community was steered on the ideology of liberalism but India as a social community was brought into focus and subjected to adjust to the changes in the political and economic system by accommodating the existent social system. Hence, to say that Indian nationalism took its shape to form resistance in order to oppose the power-hegemony involved in western identity formation, as Homi Bhabha assumes,

is to think that Indian resistance was mainly concerned with political sovereignty.

Demand for political sovereignty from the British, Chatterjee believes, was only a part of the struggle. Nationalism which developed in the 19th century India took its shape mainly to bring forward and celebrate the sense of unity which people cherished through the ages as a social group. The important aspect of Indian nationalism was to rekindle the spirit of togetherness that existed through the ages. It was to revive national consciousness located in spirit; it was to restore the sense of togetherness away from materialistically placed in politics and the economy and place it back in social ethics.¹³

Tracing the historical development of Indian nationalism Chatterjee says that politically Indians had accepted British rule as they had accepted Moghul rule or Maratha rule but social life for them was their private life. Sovereignty of Indians in social arena was never surrendered. It is here that nationalism took its roots in India. Nationalism that developed in India to reinforce and reenergize the socio-cultural consciousness of Indians as a group was a different chapter in India's social history to that of its political history. Chatterjee says, "[i]n fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a 'modern' national culture that is nevertheless not western. If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamic of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power."¹⁴

The difference between different conceptions of shared identity mainly lay in the way social togetherness was conceived at a time when there was a major shift in the social, political and economic scene of the region. The western model of 'nation' was chiefly seen as a political community and society was manipulated to hold the changing political and economic realities of the region at the time. This was done by the west through kneading political, economical and social consciousness into one identity by, as Bhabha puts it, turning 'scraps, patches and rags of daily life...repeatedly... into the signs of a coherent national culture'¹⁵ and separating 'private' social lives and 'public' political lives. Such a distinction between private and public, Chatterjee suggests, would not have been conducive to Indian politics because shared Indian identity was basically a shared social identity. Hence, 'private', in Indians' life, could not be isolated from 'public'. The vision of political structure that developed in India was more centred on seeing society as a whole and political side only as a facet of it. Indian nationalism took its shape to emphasise this aspect of public life.

The Indian leadership focused on creating such a nation where political life and social life corresponded and were not separated into material 'public' and spiritual 'private' lives. The distinguishing point between western and Indian nationalism, Chatterjee says, is the perception of 'political' and 'social' arenas of life. The western idea of political structure as 'public' life was accepted because the system had its own administrative merits, and it was already settled in India and it would be unwise to unsettle the whole set-up. The system equipped them, technically, to cope with material progress. Sovereignty sought in this area could only be imagined on western terms. But, national solidarity, for Indians,

lay in the 'private' domain of national culture which was located in belonging to shared community. It lay in shared social life. The real difference they tried to locate was in the way their life was guided. As a result of this, changes in the social system could only follow their own agenda and not the agenda set by the west. Indians set their agenda of togetherness on an internal conviction. It is because of this difference that Indians with diverse lifestyles could bond together to oppose the empire. This was peculiar to Indian culture. This 'oriental exceptionalism', he says, is as much a form of conceptualisation of nationalism, as rich and diverse as the western conception of an imagined political community.¹⁶

The liberal idea of 'private life' includes the family and their cultural group and, they believe, political community, that is, 'public life' is where one pursues the aspired good life as dictated by their culture. As long as people work towards the welfare of their community, that is, in their public life, how they lead their private life is irrelevant to the national narration. However, for Indians, says Chatterjee, there is no distinction between 'private life' and 'public political life'. There are no two sets of principles which guide one's life. Group and civic life, duty to 'others' regardless of their cultural and social commitment is public. There is no unity without civic duty arising out of common principles involved in both the spheres. People always have their own conception of worthwhile life, values and sense of right and wrong, and their allegiance to the society of which they are a part of even within a specific culture, for that matter. They are all a part of individual life. Politics is only a part of that ethical civilized life and not a separate domain. Nationalism, for India, is not manifest in holding the political community

together. It is in holding an ethically justifiable social structure together. Chatterjee says that Gandhi brought in this 'undivided concept of popular sovereignty, where the community is self-regulating and political power is dissolved into the collective moral will'¹⁷ as opposed to western nationalism based on representative government. Chatterjee emphasises that this was the point of moving away from the western concept of nationalism for Indians.

This strategic move was followed by the stage of arrival where 'nationalist discourse reconstitutes itself into a legitimate state ideology' after independence. "The specific form of passive revolution in India is an *etatisme*, explicitly recognising a central, autonomous and directing role of the state and legitimising it by a specifically nationalist marriage between the ideas of progress and social justice. It is an ideology of which the central organising principle is the autonomy of the state. The legitimising principle is a conception of social justice", Chatterjee says.¹⁸ This, for him, is a mature ideological form of nationalist thought that was established in India. Nationalism has become a state ideology where 'the world of the concrete, of difference, of conflict, of the struggle between classes, of history and politics, now finds its unity in the life of the state', in a sense, a true civic republican state.¹⁹

Chatterjee is not alone in spotting this major difference between western and Indian concepts of shared identity. Ashis Nandy, another contemporary political writer, also makes a very interesting point about the connection between politics and culture within the Indian context which is remarkably distinct from the western perspective. He says: "A

society has not only a unique organisation of power, but also a unique concept of power.”²⁰ Traditionally, he observes, ‘Indian society is organised more around its culture than around politics.’ Political life, for Indians, he says, has been a limited aspect of a whole life. The concept of sovereignty for them has always revolved round the ‘private’ arena, that is, control over one’s own life. Following one’s faith, deciding one’s desired way of life, and the authority to do so was seen as an individual prerogative, he adds, rather than accepting social values as determined by the group. Such an observation suggests that collective identity is traditionally more loosely constructed within Indian society than it is in western societies. India, he says, has never accommodated ‘indigenous, central, public authority exercising political power’ but has always maintained power in the ‘private’ arena of life. For this reason, whenever India has undergone major changes in the political field like Muslim rule and colonial rule and so on this has not led to changes in social identity. If and when social changes have come, they have been as a result of a perceived need for social changes rather than as accommodating political changes. (These peculiarities of Indian society appear to have heavily influenced Gandhi’s critique of western political theory and his philosophical outlook on polity in the Indian context which I shall expand in chapter 7)

In support of Chatterjee’s argument, one can observe the peculiarity of Indian society as manifest on the subcontinent. There was no homogeneity of culture in colonial Indian society nor is there now. As Shashi Tharoor writes, everyone is a minority in India. In a land of umpteen languages, various religions and other social differences, the difficulty of finding another Indian who shares one’s language, religion, caste, ethnicity and so on and

so forth reduces everyone to minority status in the Indian community. Nevertheless, it was never pretended to be there nor was there any effort by the Indian nationalists to homogenise it because it was strongly believed that the idea of Indian nationhood could not be envisaged round common culture. This was so because they did not believe that political unity should be sought through homogenising various rich and diverse cultures. Plurality and heterogeneity was always celebrated as a remarkable characteristic of Indian civilization. “Indian nationalism”, Tharoor says, “is the nationalism of idea, the idea of an ever-ever land that is greater than the sum of its contradictions.”²¹ There are no set characteristics that one can subscribe to Indians *per se*. Nationalism on western terms was never seen as a way forward for non-western nations. Politics in the pattern set by the coloniser was accepted as an organising force for the administration of public welfare and law and order but it could never organise people’s identities. So, the struggle for social independence from the unifying mission of the British itself became the initial aim of the leaders. The struggle for political sovereignty in India succeeded the struggle to preserve and strengthen the social system which was conceived so very differently from the way in which it had been by coloniser. There was a massive effort to improve the social consciousness of the community which existed predominantly at subliminal level.

Chattarjee’s analysis of Indian nationalism and its difference with western ideology is compelling. One cannot claim ubiquitous application of nationalism if they are seen as imagined communities. He analyses effectively how existent social structure leads to the type of political structure each political community adopts in order to secure social/political coherence. However, his argument that Indian identity is located in the

private domain of spirit is difficult to grasp. Where does he locate this 'domain of spirit'? Such mystification of 'inner spirit' can be rightly queried. Chatterjee does not elaborate on where and how this inner identity is positioned. Does he resort to essentialism? If so, does not his argument run the same problem as that of ethnic nationalists? Can such assumptions be ethically justified? If civic citizenship is argued to be voluntary, then one cannot resort to determinism, be it ethnic or social.

Spivak

Gayatri Spivak, another contemporary political writer, for example, rejects the idea of Chatterjee that there was another face of nationalism in India and that such nationalism based on 'essential Indian-ness' manifest in spirit was a prominent sentiment in the creation of their national identity. She believes that nationalism is neither an ideological political concept nor grounded in biological or social essentialism. She thinks nationalism is a strategic exploitation of a sentiment of social belonging used for unnaturally creating a sense of unity and uniformity that is otherwise elusive. It is through this false sense of identity that politicians buy the obedience of common men and women to gather power for themselves. It is purely a political concept, she argues, with its roots anchored in history. "The question of essence", she says, "is one of the players on this catachrestic chessboard."²² The reason for evoking the sentiment of nationalism is that historically it has proven to be an effective emotive weapon to manoeuvre people into accepting a given identity and creating a sense of unity and uniformity which is hard to get hold of.

Hence, she says, nationalism can be seen as a political strategy and not as a political ideology.

Tracing the historical roots of nationalism she argues that it originated in the west when the capitalists deployed the concepts like 'essence of nation', 'culture' etc. for the political management of capital. She says that though it is true that nationalism in the western style was adopted in India to build a political community it was neither embraced as a weapon to confront the colonisers with their own ideology and point out its inadequacy (as Bhabha suggests) nor as an inevitability of accepting a system that was already established in India by the west (as Chatterjee suggests) but it was purely used as a strategy for organising a reactive front against imperialism, a form of resistance to the colonial power, in their own cause of achieving the goal of securing political power. If essentialism was implied in the construction of nationalism in India, she thinks, it was merely used as a tactic to harness the agitation of various groups who were resisting a kind of slavery.²³ Their support was seen to be essential for creating a united front for demanding the transfer of power. Thus, she claims, nationalism in India was used by the elite as an effective instrument for politically manipulating the masses to win the support of the common man. It was used because they knew it worked. India never had any nationalistic ambitions nor did it have the necessary characteristics to make itself a nation in the western vision.

She makes two claims. One is that India never worked for a common identity, be it territorial or political or spiritual. It did not have common identity in the western sense

not because it was impossible on account of sheer size and diversity of the place involved but there was no common frame of reference under which Indians could assimilate. It was not desired because the creation of such an identity was seen as an artificial construct. India could never accept nationalism as an ideology on her soil because the situation in India was different. Indian people have always lived with the complexity of multiple identities. They have always had different lifestyles, different languages with their own mature literature, different faiths, and different visions of the 'good life' yet, that did not stop them from interacting socially to lead mutually fulfilling lives. Hence, people in India never saw any need to create such a common identity. Individualism was always maintained in the form of encouraging different languages and religions and so forth to flourish alongside each other even when nationalism based on common political identity was being forged.

Spivak's approach of viewing the idea of nationalism only as a strategy and not an ideology for the ensuing political community is conceivable. It gives a more convincing picture of Indian nationalism and why it differs from that of the western concept than the one painted by Chatterjee. It emphasises the fact that there are no single identities for people in any community and India has accommodated this aspect of individualism more open-heartedly than the western concept of nationalism. India has always been a multi-cultural society. People have adapted to social changes on their own terms and not as dictated by the politicians. Social identity has been kept separate from political identity. It was this kind of individualism that was supported by India. The Indian concept of political community is forward looking and more suited to future political communities.

Also, as Spivak argues, to lay claims to national identity in western terms, whether that identity is based on essentialism or as a social construct, is too deterministic. Privileging the social construct in identity formation only moves away from biological essentialism and locates it in social structuring. It fails to allow for individual 'difference' and constructive contribution towards society. Such determinism undermines agency. It is inconsistent with the principle of voluntarism entailed in civic society. People are capable of making choices for leading their desired lives without restricting themselves to a given identity and a vision of meaningful life. It ignores the fact that people can make their own choices out of individual will without being cornered into accepting a given social or political identity. When a choice is made from individual will and agency it is more likely to be accountable to reason than if identity is accepted as destiny. Agency also invokes responsibility. She quotes Sahgal in *Transgression* who says that 'we will take up the right to determine our own destinies, not limited by religion, culture or nationality'.²⁴

However, like Chatterjee she also does not locate where political togetherness is positioned. Her argument of privileging agency is arguable. Though it cannot be argued that unity in society is totally dependent on social construction, it cannot be contended that it is compellingly dependent on individualism. There is no unencumbered individual. Every individual act is a result of the familial, social and economic factors involved in that individual's upbringing. Every man's group behaviour is dependent on how he narrates himself to other members of the group. Political community is also a significant part of group formation and is dependent on individualism as well as indoctrination.

Group identity is neither an intentional construct nor an essential trait but it is the will of individuals which is influenced by other prominent factors that decide both social and political identity. This factor has to be recognised in locating national identity.

Conclusion

Nationalism as perceived by the west cannot be accepted as the norm for arranging political communities universally because each community sees unity between members in its own vision. The history of the place, the culture and life experiences influence the factors which lead to the conception of togetherness, be it social or political. Parekh picks many examples from the contemporary world to show why unity cannot be based on shared culture alone. He distinguishes between cultural identity and national identity and robustly argues that they cannot be seen as one and the same. He also queries the rationalism involved in assuming that re-distributive justice can easily be pursued if people share a societal culture. He argues that cosmopolitanism is not as hard as it is made out to be because people adapt to other cultures without ever alienating themselves from their own. Homi Bhabha puts forward a plausible analysis to argue that arranging political identities does not work because arranged identities do not necessarily even out difference. Moreover, he says, if shared identities do not lead to equal status they run the risk of discontent and resistance which unsettles political harmony rather than unite different communities. Partha Chatterjee gives a very detailed account of how nationalism can be adapted for political purposes without ever accepting its basic assumption that collective identity exists in shared culture. With the example of India, it

can be seen that political structure may resemble the western pattern but political togetherness can be located in different aspects of life. Gayatri Spivak sees nationalism more as a political strategy rather than an ideology because it shows the potential to herd the people together under one umbrella and, at the same time, isolate strategically constructed 'others' from inclusion.

Nationalism as an ideology has not resolved tension within many political communities no matter what form it has been applied. At times, the introduction of cultural nationalism where historically shared culture has not been a sociological category has led to the breaking-up of communities which previously had lived a fairly harmonious life. The introduction of nationalism in the Indian context, for example, did damage the social structure which had dominated the region with fairly coherent communal life. It led to the split up of communities on religious lines and the ultimate partition of the subcontinent. The repercussions of introducing cultural nationalism in the region are still felt by the communities living in the area. This leads to the argument whether cultural nationalism is a congenial ideology for any political community at all.

Most contemporary Indian writers, as seen above, have criticised the concept of nationalism on the basis that it is not a congenial ideology for the modern world. As a theory, it is ethically indefensible, and as a political programme, it is impractical. They suggest that western nationalism developed within a limited experience of social structure where shared culture of some form existed. Hence, it cannot be seen as a paradigm for communities where cultural diversity has been the norm. The very uniting attribute

nationalists see in the ideology of nationalism, they contend, works as a dividing force within a land where different cultures have historically coexisted with relative peace and harmony. Secondly, neither can shared culture be arranged for the people nor can it be seen as a force which brings about togetherness as a matter of fact. Moreover, they see it as a solution developed to contain industrialisation and colonisation rather than a theory based on philosophically justifiable tenets.

The problems raised by these authors are not recent observations about the shortcomings of the theory in the Indian discourse. Many of the disconcerting aspects they have highlighted can be traced back to early 20th century Indian political thinkers who have raised serious misgivings about nationalism as a political ideology. For example, Gandhi and Tagore, two prominent political thinkers of the time, took a very strong objection to nationalism as an ideology for India which at the time was struggling to gain its sovereignty from colonial rule, and was in need of a shared national identity to fight the British rule with a single voice. I shall explore the arguments of these two eminent Indian philosophers in the next two chapters to argue that nationalism does not, and for that matter, has not been intended as a way forward for accommodating liberal tenets of equality, liberty and individualism. The political arrangement of contemporary communities has to recognise multicultural, multiethnic structure and ensure that every member is respected for what he or she is and what he or she can contribute to the community for its harmony and stability.

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9. P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.5.
10. *ibid.*, p.6.
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12. As history bears witness the political sovereignty of Indians was comprehensively lost to foreign power. Imposed social change in the form of introducing different religions and languages did have its own effect of damaging social coherence in Indian society. Nevertheless, even when materialistic public economic and political life underwent changes and people accommodated such momentous changes in their own way and at their own pace, the underlying common Indian identity was never compromised, sovereignty in this field was never surrendered. It always lay in private social sphere where superior traditional, spiritual life dictated their sense of belonging. As such, the dominance of the British Raj, he thinks, was never total. Political sovereignty was lost to the coloniser but private lives of peoples were never 'occupied' by the coloniser. The unity of Indians lay in this private sphere. Membership of national community was envisaged as multifaceted. One could belong to a Hindu or Muslim cultural community and yet be a member of other wider public life like, for example, a member of chamber of commerce, or a president of predominantly Hindu Congress without their loyalty to wider community being questioned. Multi-community membership was a norm in colonial India and loyalty was offered to the community and not directed towards primordial clan or shared life. With this fact in

place, Indian nationalism was aimed at creating a political framework for a community for whom togetherness always existed in essence. It was this factor which brought the cross sections of society together to establish political India.)

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6. The Critique of Nationalism in Early 20th century Indian Political Discourse

Nationalism has been seen in the west as a political ideology, a force which promotes political coherence. However, the concept of nationalism itself has not received such approbation universally. It has been argued very robustly by many contemporary political theorists, as presented earlier, that nationalism as a political theory is neither a morally justifiable and logically consistent ideology nor a coherent doctrine that can address the problems of contemporary civic societies which are mostly multicultural in their structure. They have convincingly expressed the difficulty of applying the ideology of nationalism as a political programme to the multicultural communities of 21st century. Their reservation about accepting nationalism as a doctrine stems from the arguments put forward by the great political thinkers of the 20th century India who were sceptical about the relevance of nationalism as a universal political doctrine.

This chapter will explore how the ideology of nationalism has been viewed in the post-colonial world, particularly in India, and argue that, though the word 'nationalism' was often used at a time in history when India was 'in-the-making' as a strategy for gathering peoples under one flag, the ideology of nationalism itself, as presented by the west, has never been accepted wholeheartedly as a tenable doctrine for universal application in its present structure. Though the positive side of nationalism was seen by some philosophers like Aurobindo Ghosh, many saw it as a doctrine which mainly harbours exclusivist and hence divisive ideas in its structure. I shall look at the arguments of the prominent political thinker of the time, Rabindranath Tagore (and Gandhi in the next chapter) who

took a very different view of nationalism from that of the western understanding of the ideology. I shall evaluate whether there are any positive points that nationalism can offer which can be adapted for political arrangement or whether it is a menace, as Tagore advocates, which deserves to be buried in history as an aberration.

Nationalism in Indian political discourse

Indian nationalism developed in the shadow of the western concept of nationalism. It was influenced by some consequential factors after the total take-over of political power by the colonizers in 1857. It became apparent that the British rule in India was in for a long spell. The only way in which Indians were going to have any influence in the administration of their country, it was perceived, was to learn the ways of the colonizer. The elite of India sent their children to Britain for their education so that one day they might hold influential positions in running the affairs of the country. This group was exposed to the ideals promoted by liberal philosophy. They learnt and appreciated the value that liberalism attached to freedom, individualism and equality of each member. However, the very group which was taught liberal values realized that those values were offered only to the coloniser's people as the ideology of nationalism advocated and not to other groups outside their political community. This ultimately led to the formation of Indian resistance to the colonial rule in India. (One can cite many earlier attempts also to oppose the British imperialism led by, for example, Ranjit Singh, Baba Ram Singh and others.) Indian nationalism was born to fulfil the agenda of mustering the support of the common man to win political sovereignty from the colonizer. Nevertheless, though it

appears as though Indian nationalism followed the footsteps of western nationalism, this is not an accurate narration of Indian nationalism. It was at times strategically employed but it was never embraced wholeheartedly by the leaders of the resistance. This was mainly because they never thought nationalism was a coherent doctrine which would suit Indian conditions, nor, for that matter, deliver a harmonious political community to any political group.

Many influential Indian political thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries advanced their contrasting views of how they viewed the potential of nationalism as a universal political theory. For example, Shri Aurobindo Ghosh, (1872-1950) a revered philosopher of India, viewed nationalism not as a political dogma but as a divine force, an *avatar*, an incarnation, which has taken its form in order to evolve human society and to unite mankind into a coherent community of the future.¹ However, he thought that the western obsession with providing material happiness for its members has hindered the natural progress of human society which would otherwise arrive at a moral world at large through pursuing the ideology of nationalism. There were other prominent nationalists like Ranade, Subhash Chandra Bose and Dadabhai Navroji who firmly believed in the power of nationalism as envisioned by the west.

Not all political thinkers share Aurobindo Ghosh's understanding of the metaphysical underpinnings of nationalism. They do not see the objective of nationalism as a benevolent force which could one day be accounted as a first step towards the development of internationalism, a 'religion of humanity' which will recognize the

distinction between races yet respect the 'human individual and the natural human grouping', and that one day it will lead to the creation of 'psychological oneness' which will dismiss 'outward uniformity' and oneness brought about by 'mechanical means of unification' as Aurobindo Ghosh believes.² Tagore, a prominent political thinker, (1861-1941) who again shared a similar exposure to western culture to that of Aurobindo Ghosh in his formative years, accepts that nationalism holds the power to collect peoples together and raise a passion for 'oneness'. Nevertheless, he thinks that nationalism as an ideology neither has the potential to lift human society to a new evolutionary level nor is it intended to bring communities together and lead towards humanitarian goals universally. He acknowledges western influence on the development of individualism and rationalism and the tremendous contribution the west has made to industrial and scientific advancement but he thinks its vision of nationalism, an upshot of industrialization, is an aberration that the world could do without. He totally rejects the ideology of nationalism. He describes nationalism as a '*bhougolik apadevata*', a geographical demon, which has raised its head to break up the communities.³ He argues that nationalism in any form is unacceptable to any political community because its tenets are basically aimed at exclusivism. It is invoked, he argues, in order to maintain economic and political power and hence it does not have the attributes to unite the communities. It is not the western desire to keep material superiority which has stopped the progress of human society which the ideology of nationalism would otherwise have achieved, he thinks, but the dogma itself is conceived to fulfil the materialistic agenda of industrially advanced nations and hence it is only designed to serve that purpose wherever it is adopted. For that matter he does not even accept nationalism as an

ideology, but a strategy which took its shape particularly to ensure the economic superiority and political power of the 19th century west.

Tagore

Tagore makes four significant points drawing attention to the shortcomings of nationalism as a political theory. Firstly, he rejects the idea that social cohesiveness is, as a norm, generated by common culture. Different communities locate the basis of social harmony in different aspects of social life. What factors are seen as relevant for harmony, he reckons, is mainly dependent on their existent social network and their historical and geographical conditions. The idea of togetherness cannot be borrowed from one community and instilled into another where a distinct community structure prevails.

Secondly, Tagore says, nationalists argue that common culture is necessary for togetherness because they suppose social and political identity to be one and the same. They do so because western theories fail to distinguish between political association and social community. Association and community are not one and the same. Nation, according to him, is an association where people unite for organizing their political and economic lives, where they claim their rights against their duties so that they can lead their individual lives without hindrance whereas society, for him, is an end in itself. This is where individuals create and realize their dreams of worthwhile life. Nationalism kneads the two together. The concept of nationalism, he thinks, only gained its currency because of its inherent confusion.

Thirdly, though Tagore appreciates the fact that western society recognizes the need to defend individuals' rights to freedom, equality and dignity he does not believe that nationalism is the right ideology with the potential to deliver any of these to individuals. Nationalism curtails individuals' freedom to choose their affiliations. It strongly recommends favouring certain groups against others and it does so in spite of moral obligations dictating the actions of fair-minded peoples to act otherwise. Drawing boundaries in order to offer brotherhood is against the spirit of mankind, he thinks because man's world is a moral world, and the world cannot be divided into convenient compartments for its preservation.⁴ The paradox harboured in the theory of nationalism is that its very tenets designed to promote equality and fraternity are paradoxically based on advancing exclusiveness and self-interest.

Fourthly, and very importantly, he says that every social structure has to base its principles on moral/ethical tenets. However, western concepts of nationalism, which guide social structuring, have their roots in economically guided political doctrine. They concentrate on offering material happiness to their members, and hence, they do not really strive for fraternity in an idealistic way. By creating a structure where people see their group identity through political membership they generate a system where loyalty of members is offered only through political structure and its laws which aim to provide equality and liberty to every member. This naturally leads to an amoral political structure where, regardless of one's needs, everyone is treated as an equal member. In establishing an amoral political structure where individuals' ethical values are ruled by the laws, they

take away the moral initiative away from individuals and thus restrict their autonomy to choose their own stance on ethical issues. Morality is relegated to private life whereas public life is dictated by political machinery. This does not promote, he argues, the principle of universal ethics. Hence, nationalism cannot be regarded as a civilized political theory which should be adopted universally. Generally, Tagore believes that nationalism is an evil force, which divides communities, and instils ill-will amongst their members.

Coherence in the community

Tagore says that it is possible that the ideology of the nation-state as a political unit based on an homogenous culture suited western conditions because it combined political nationalism with social nationalism and established a social unity that was much needed for the emergence of a coherent society. “Man’s history has been shaped according to the difficulties it encounters. These have offered us problems and claimed their solutions from us”, he claims.⁵ The problem western societies of the 18th century faced was securing unity in a society that was being torn apart in a changing economic and political scene. Their solution lay in bringing about a sense of brotherhood which accommodated these changes. Social conditions of the era in the west were such that there was a sense of perceived common culture with common race, language, and religion. The concept of nation suited their extant social conditions and thus offered a solution to bringing about that social unity within which political nationalism operated. However, the main anchor for social structure was political and economic power brought on by the industrial

revolution. It was because of this connection, Tagore believes, that political community overlapped social community and resulted in the spread of nationalism.

Nevertheless, social, political and economic situations are not similar in all regions of the world. No nation can imitate other people's solution to promote togetherness in an ever-changing world with differing history, geographical spread and social makeup. Giving the example of India, Tagore says that, unlike western nation-states, India is a vast land with diverse races, many religions, customs and traditions. Indian history is not grounded in military power and aggression, but is one of constant social adjustment to changing social conditions. Its main problem in securing social harmony and focusing on common identity has been the influx of different races, religions, languages and customs. He says: "We have to recognize that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but to a process of creation to which various races of the world contributed - the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and Persians, the Mohammedans of the west and those of central Asia. Now, at last, has come the turn of the English to become true to this history and bring to it the tribute of their life, and we neither have the right nor the power to exclude these people from the building of the destiny of India."⁶ India has found its own solution in the past. It will have to find its own solution to suit its present conditions. Accepting Western solutions to their problems cannot be envisaged as appropriate as a solution to Indian problems. "India", he says, "has all along been trying experiments in evolving social unity within which all the different peoples could be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own difference. The tie has been as loose as possible, yet as close as the circumstances permitted."⁷ It cannot blindly follow

nationalism as an answer, not because it is western, but because the basis of its ideology based on homogeneous culture does not suit Indian conditions of the time. Instead of uniting India, it can lead to total disarray. Tagore says that India should aim for that higher ground of civilization, as it has done before, and organize itself into a political community where co-operation rules and real harmony prevails, and where diversity is celebrated and unity secured.

Political community and society

In the western conceptions of nationalism, social and political identities are seen as one and the same. As seen in an earlier chapter, Will Kymlicka and David Miller equate cultural identity with national identity and social life organized through political life. This is because the western concepts of nationalism misunderstand or misrepresent the very composition and function of social community and political association. They are, in fact, very different in their construction and purpose. In his book *Nationalism*, Tagore places the nation merely as a political organization. He says, “[a] nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose.” However, politics and economy, he argues, are only an aspect of human activity, an instrument engaged only to fulfil the function of organizing the political and economic lives of people, whereas society is an end in itself.⁸ Social community is not about establishing economic prosperity or gaining power to rule over others. It is about the harmonious life of love and care and co-operation. It is about humanity, about the human ideal of goodness. Placing politics and thus power and

economy at the centre of human activity, treating society as political community in entirety, he believes, has pushed the natural development of co-operation to the fringes. Nationalism assumes that individual self-realization is achieved through politics. But, in reality, politics is only an instrument which supports an aspect of society which, in turn, promotes social harmony through which individuals realize their fulfilling life. Thus, Tagore draws a clear distinction between the two different categories of groups, that is, community and association. Confusing one with the other, he believes, leads to problems in society and disturbs harmony.

Distinction between community and association

However, what is a community and how does one distinguish community from an association? How is confusing one with the other problematic? The distinction between 'community' and 'association' is clearly spelt out by Ferdinand Tonnies in his book *Community and Association*. He defines social community, *Gemeinschaft*, as a group where people's group identity originates from common roots they share, be it common descent, neighbourhood, or by mutual dependency for maintaining peace and security. They share the importance of co-operation, develop 'common determinative will', and mutual understanding. However, the main thrust of relationship is unity and concord. People in the community 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors'.⁹ The norms of relationship are dictated by natural as well as rational will within such community. Whereas, he says, in the *Gesellschaft* (that is, association) the relationship between human beings is artificially constructed. Though it superficially resembles

Gemeinschaft (that is, community), in so far as the individuals peacefully live and dwell together, in *Gesellschaft*, he says, they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors'. In *Gesellschaft* "everybody is by himself and isolated and there exists a condition of tension against all others. Their spheres of activity and power are sharply separated, so that everybody refuses to everyone else contacts with and admittance to his sphere; nobody wants to grant and produce anything for other individuals, nor will he be inclined to give ungrudgingly to another individual, if it be not in exchange for a gift or labour equivalent that he considers at least equal to what he has given."¹⁰ In such an association, every activity is a transaction and rights and duties are nothing more than value and ability to honour the deal.

The main trouble with the western style of political community, one can say, is that it privileges political association and calls it political community whereas Tagore stresses the importance of a social community dictated by social ethics. This is very clear from his writings about his vision of socio/political life. Tagore sees political community in terms of Ferdinand Tonnies's vision of the *Gemeinschaft* whereas liberal nationalists, in conjunction with individualism, see political community as *Gesellschaft*. Social community, for Tagore, is about cooperation and mutual help, and internal accord. But the main function of a political community is to facilitate the well-being of individuals in the face of conflicting individual interests and ambitions. Hence, he says, they are two sorts of arrangement with contrasting functions. No doubt, Tagore says, it is in the interest of every individual even in *Gesellschaft* to hope for group interest because it indirectly advances self-interest. Individuals clearly benefit by living within a group

which is coherent, peaceful and harmonious. But creating social harmony and concord is not the function of political association. Political association necessarily revolves round economic success and concentrates on providing conditions for individuals to acquire material prosperity without hindrance. It endeavours to offer individuals' rights to individual freedom, security, and equality to access, accumulate, and enjoy the common social goods, and the wealth one owns. Tagore says that the social unit established around these aspects of life concentrates on individual economic prosperity and success as their end. Success essentially involves proving superiority over others. It sets one individual against the other, one group against the other for success and greed. The ideology of co-operation and sharing is lost through individualism because it concentrates on how to win and control people and not on how to accommodate people. It takes away the ethical basis of society that creation of wealth should be for the betterment of everyone. Ideology based on 'fierce self-idolatry of nation worship', he says, takes away the moral shift from social co-operation to competition. Instead of politics and commerce remaining only an aspect of human society, which should help self-preservation, it becomes the sole purpose of individuals. Production and consumption are the two major activities promoted by industrial society and the political nation strives to safeguard that interest. The concept not only encourages pursuing this end but also convinces people to view it as a morally worthwhile end to achieve and thus makes them greedy and self-regarding in the name of nation. People get so obsessed with their success and the feel-good-factor that they move away from their human duty. Community spirit is lost for personal gain. Groups only think about power and possession and not about human ideals. Regulation of society through political organization is not the answer for striving to build a congenial world

befitting the moral nature of man and spiritual recognition of unity.¹¹ Hence, replacing social community with political association and treating community as association, though it appears to promote group integrity and protect sovereignty, in reality, breaks the social groups and damages the very structure it hopes to build. This, Tagore says, is the outcome of merging political association with social community and replacing social spirit with nationalism.

Individual freedom and nationalism

Moreover, Tagore argues, nationalism does not even uphold the political principles of freedom and justice in any real sense. The promise of freedom and justice it postulates, he says, are deceptive because the concept of nation does not offer real freedom to members to choose to exercise their moral commitments. The freedom offered in nationalists sense is not a moral freedom but freedom to enjoy economic prosperity. The whole machinery of political power works towards bending the minds of people through orchestrated euphoria when they follow the diktats of nationalism as though they are devoted to them. He calls 'the idea of nation the most powerful 'anaesthetic' that man has ever invented.'¹² People are brainwashed from birth over to whom they will offer their allegiance, and whom they want to protect through its 'power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging'¹³ and convincing them that they are pursuing what is moral and worthwhile even when they are defending them through immoral acts. People are diverted from following social ideals in the name of political group interest. Out of this sense of duty of protecting the nation begins the chain

of justified and sanctioned unethical behaviour. He says, “[i]t is the continual and stupendous dead pressure of this inhuman upon the living human under which modern world is groaning. Not merely the subject races but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are everyday sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetish of nationalism, living in the dense, poisonous atmosphere of worldwide suspicion of greed and panic.”¹⁴ Real freedom, for him, is in attaining moral and spiritual freedom.

Otherness in nationalism

Tagore says that nationalism erects otherness. One can see how ‘otherness’ can be created by the very process of describing the five elements which constitute individuating national identity, that is, distinguishing one who is accepted as one of ‘us’ from one of ‘them’. ‘Difference’ is intentionally nourished and ‘otherness’ is sceptically treated and socially segregated. Members are discouraged from accepting otherness with open-mind, thus, losing any opportunity to establish a cohesive understanding of other groups. True facts about others are misrepresented at times for sustaining difference. Tagore adds, “where the spirit of the western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatred and ambitions by all kinds of means – by the manufacture of half-truths and untruths in history, by persistent misrepresentation of other races and the culture of unfavourable sentiments towards them, by setting up memorials of events, very often false, which for the sake of humanity should be speedily forgotten, thus continually brewing evil menace towards neighbours and nations other than their own. This is poisoning the very fountainhead of humanity..... It is holding up gigantic

selfishness as one universal religion for all nations of the world.”¹⁵ It only promotes erecting immovable walls. Such boundaries only give ‘negative benefit of peace and order but not positive opportunity of expression and movement.’ It does not promote global justice, he says, but leads the way to creating self-centred communities and greater chasms between the communities of the world.

Morality in politics

Tagore addresses the evil unleashed by the spread of nationalism, which has led to the development of politics without moral/ethical grounding and the stronghold it is taking in evolving amoral political consciousness. Political life of the West, he believes, has taken the ethical and moral initiative away from the community and tethered it to an amoral liberal political structure. Since people see their identity through political identity, political identity dominates the lives of its members. Members owe their loyalties to the state in return for their security and freedom. The initiative which natural sentiment provides for generating the general welfare of members is taken away from society. Instead, it is anchored to the state as its responsibility. It treats members as individuals first and then political/social members. Liberal political thought concentrates its tenets on rationality and the capacity of individuals to decide for themselves the life they want to lead. It is the duty of the political organization, they argue, to provide the right set-up for realizing this dream. Their ideology, Tagore says, shifts the initiative of human society from mutual co-operation to dependency on the government for arranging its social/political and economic life. However, political power cannot overtake social

organization of a community and replace it with political organization. Social identity cannot be tethered to national identity. Individualism has taken away the significance of social network and replaced it with individualism controlled by political power. The only connection that people have with each other today is their identity established through nationality. People rule their lives on establishing their rights, rather than on relating to others as fully rounded individuals or groups. The moral and ethical duty to others has shifted from the community-sense to self-fulfilling individuals. In a nation-state the government concentrates on the issues of seeing even-handed treatment of people without due attention to the ethical side of a particular problem. The initiative has been taken away from individuals as social beings and handed over to individuals as political beings. Such arrangement affects the very cultural selfhood by interfering with natural human relationship. Brotherhood is something that develops with social interaction and not by political indoctrination.

Tagore not only highlights the inconsistencies lurking in the concept of nationalism, a dogma which western political discourse reckons as a force that brings about unity and political harmony but, and more significantly, he also traces the rationale for promoting such an ideology. He says that western culture's preoccupation with the idea that everything in nature can be measured and observed and conclusions drawn and applied in order to arrive at desired results, has led them to the assumption that social groups can also be arranged in order to establish a harmonious life for their members. This desire for 'scientification' of society, which again is a development ensuing from the industrial revolution, is the basic foundation on which the concept of nationalism dwells. It is their

attempt to reduce social and political norms to the level of applied science which is pulling them in wrong direction. He says that the problem political communities subscribing to the tenets of liberal philosophy encounter does not lie so much within its political and economic aspect but that it lies within its encroachment of the socio-cultural sphere. Today, he says, politics and economy dictate group relationships and inter-group assimilation. The underlying reason for this total take-over is, according to him, their over-reliance on the '*scientisation*' of society. The west wants to create a purely technically perfect amoral public sphere engineered by social scientists and relegate morality to the private sphere only. Norms and standards of ethics, which should generally be established in the socio-political arena, he says, are dictated by political, and economic realities and not by what people really need or approve. He observes that the dependency of politics on technology ignores the practical problems of society. By separating the private and public spheres of an individual's life, the connection between social issues and private achievement is lost, thus, losing the moral responsibility for the shortcomings. This, he says, should not be the case. It is because of this, Tagore says, "[g]overnment by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science".¹⁶ This over-reliance on science, prioritising rationalism and individualism over sentiment has led them to the aspiration of organising an amoral political structure whereby morality is pushed to the private realm. This is where Tagore finds nationalism the most unacceptable.

Tagore's arguments against nationalism are very convincing. Applying nationalism to political communities which are changing their social makeup due to changed historical

circumstance appears absurd, as Tagore quotes the example of India of the 1900s. One can see the applicability of his argument to the political situation of the west in the 21st century. Historical reality has pointed to the fact that the ideology was constructed to isolate the very communities that have become a part of the national community. They have also been contributory to the economic, political and aesthetic development of communities. Their involvement is irreversible. The communities need harmonious blending without undermining their achievements and contributions to shared society.

Tagore also gives us a rationally justifiable account of the distinction between association and community to persuade us to believe that social communities cannot be built on the ethos of political associations because they are ideologically different and serve different aspects of human society. Politics, he convincingly argues, has to be accommodated within the social community. He also analyses the concepts of freedom and morality that nationalism employs within its structure to facilitate the control of economic possessions and reap the benefits of them. It does not, in any real sense, guide us towards unity and harmony. Tagore's attack on nationalism is mainly concerned with the control that political structure exerts on individuals, which leads to an illiberal construction of society.

Tagore touches the darkest points of nationalism and eloquently exposes the implications of harbouring nationalism within any political arrangement. One can argue that Tagore refers to the thicker concept of nationalism of the early 20th century which led to two world wars being fought. The concept as it is seen today is different in many ways and

more flexible in its application. As seen earlier, nationalism as envisioned by Herder and Fichte is much more rigid than the watered down version viewed by liberal nationalists like Kymlicka and Miller *et al.* Kymlicka envisages togetherness in ‘shared societal culture’, which according to him can be inclusive of polyethnic cultures. Miller alludes to “nationality” rather than using the term “nationalism” in his political discourse. However, it can be observed that the ideology itself does not move away from the basic position. By the very act of treating political arrangement as a community it implies ‘inclusiveness’ in its structure by definition. Inclusiveness always holds ‘exclusivity’ within its expression. Community does not allow itself any leeway for accommodating ‘otherness’. If otherness is accommodated at all, it is done with a sense of abnormality and special obligation for which the included community is expected to be grateful. That is detrimental to social and political harmony. Political arrangements in the contemporary world have to revolve round the polity as an association. It is only then that it can accommodate every member with equality and offer her freedom. A political association can sustain many communities within its structure without disturbing unity within the association.

Tagore makes a strong case against highlighting nationalism as an anchor for individual identity and thus replacing social identity with national identity. This takes away the connection people have within society, and thus, a natural sense of cooperation is replaced by the laws imposed by the state. Such a situation is unhealthy for social harmony. Tagore is not alone in arguing that in their anxiety to promote national identity as social identity, western political thought has taken the initiative away from society and

tethered it to political structure. Habermas, a German philosopher, explains why merging national identity with social identity does not work. He says, the Aristotelian concept of politics as a facet that promotes the idea of the just and good life which society naturally pursues has shifted its basis, under the influence of rationally motivated political community, from the moral bias which is natural to human society, to the control and manipulation of the general public. If real democracy is to be achieved, people must get to grips with their whole life, that is, social, political and economic and decide for themselves the rights and wrongs. Habermas argues that the moral structure of society should be based on 'practico-political discourse' and not by technocratic domination. The socio-political field of human society should be released from the clutches of 'technocrats of political power'. The real voices of people should be heard as clearly as possible. Politics, he says, must adhere to ethics rather than 'possessive individualist values'. For that, it is essential that moral political truth should be guided by consensual and communitarian conceptions. Regardless of scientific finding people should think together how social issues could be better arranged. They have to discuss what the norm should be for caring and sharing issues in society. There is no truth that can be established beyond doubt when it comes to deciding conflicting ideas of different sections of groups. The solution to arranging social order is or should be the will of group members themselves and not that of a handful of politicians who depend on social scientists for their moral decisions.¹⁷

Tagore's vision of the nation

Tagore's argument recognizes significant difficulties in the way political community is viewed in contemporary society. The argument, for him, it appears, is not about whether nationalism in the present form is the right answer to harmonizing citizens' lives or whether some changes should be made to accommodate the changing world. Rather, he thinks, the question would be whether nationalism could be seen as an ideology at all. He sees it as an aberration arising out of a sudden change in the world caused by the application of empiricism to social science and wants to move away from nationalism altogether as a concept which should be avoided in order to achieve a morally acceptable social community. It is time to recognize, he says, that the end product of nationalism is social segregation, control of people's minds in order to protect self-interest and economic superiority in the name of political unity and political power and think afresh to herald the real unity by accommodating changing social climate.

Tagore sees national unity in a coherent, moral society where individuals are respected regardless of who they are and where they belong. He sees people's identities embedded in the community where they share their social lives rather than associating it with a shared culture. His political and social vision has been captured by E. P. Thomson very accurately in the introduction to a new edition of his famous book *Nationalism*. He says, "(m)ore than any other thinker of his time, Tagore has a clear conception of civil society, as something distinct from and of stronger and more personal structure than political and economic structures".¹⁸ His vision is to move away from parochialism promoted by nationalism. Tagore believes that it is not in the spirit of human society to adhere to sectional interest. He does not believe that one's duty ends when one's safety is secured

and prosperity safeguarded. Political community, he thinks, should be based on moral codes and humanist values, and not on securing the interest of one community, particularly its economic prosperity, at the cost of other communities. One's duty is to humanity and every community should aim at securing the welfare of every human being.

Tagore emphasizes another significant characteristic of Indian society and argues that merely accepting that nature produces diversity is also not sufficient to achieve cultural richness within one's life. Merely tolerating otherness does not produce a harmonious society. Without accepting otherness as the norm and appreciating the contribution different cultures can offer to enhance the richness of one's life there is no social cohesion in real terms. It is necessary to develop social ethos to recognize the real value and recognize the need of every member so that every member and every community can offer freely their potential to the political group in a wider context. It is only then that the beauty created by the tapestry of cultures can flourish, and freedom and equality can have real meaning in individuals' lives. Nationalism does not see the naturalness of such mixing and deprives humanity of real evolution. Hence, it cannot be conducive to cohesive socio/political community.

Tagore also draws a clear distinction between nationalism and patriotism and favours the sentiment of patriotism on which to base the political structure against divisive nationalism. Nationalism advocates the welfare of one's own distinctive group members whereas patriotism is not restricted to ethnic and cultural commonality. It is not the common culture or commonality of behaviour, he argues, that binds the group; it is bound

by common commitment to all members. A sense of belonging develops where members share the community and not from the common identity given by political structure. The sentiment of nationalism, he believes, does not reflect this reality. Hence, he says, nationalism is narrow-minded. It promotes exclusivity whereas patriotism, he says, is a fellowship that extends its boundaries to include everyone who belongs to the land. Patriotism, in the wider context, he thinks, has the potential to transcend and extend to encompass humanity as a whole. Patriotism stands for equality, freedom and dignity for all citizens. Love of one's community, he says, does not necessarily demand cultural homogeneity. One can love one's motherland without sharing common values as nationalism assumes. For him, the basis of harmonious social life is in a moral civic society. It depends on ethical commitment to other members. The trust and care of every member is the basis of society where ethical codes dictate harmony. Politics can only oversee that equality and freedom are distributed fairly to all members. Adhering to such moral values, he believes, can get rid of parochialism and transcend national boundaries for creating better human society. He argues that the western concept of nationalism exploits the sentiment of patriotism to engage the support of the public for its political agenda, for reinforcing its grip on power and wealth.

Tagore's ideology of patriotism as a binding force for a civic society shares the conviction of Giuseppe Mazzini, a 19th century Italian visionary. Mazzini believed that however important it is to emphasize national culture, culture could not supersede in the political arena at the cost of the republic.¹⁹ Summarizing the arguments of Mazzini, Maurizio Viroli says that, "for Mazzini *patria* is not an organism composed of different

parts hierarchically ordained, as the nation was for Herder, but a democratic association of free and equal citizens.” He quotes: “A country is a fellowship of free and equal men bound together in a brotherly concord of labour towards a single end... . A country is not an aggregation, it is an association. There is no country without a uniform right. There is no true country where the uniformity of that right is violated by the existence of caste, privilege and inequality.”²⁰ This is what Tagore argues for, as a basis for the nation.

Patriotism, thus envisaged, mainly advocates equality, freedom and respect extended to every member of society, whereas stressing national culture at the centre of civic society narrows its scope to one’s own kind and categorizes people into groups of ‘us’ and ‘them’. That runs, he thinks, contrary to the spirit of patriotism. One must be able to respect and cherish one’s own culture but one must also understand the culture of others and extend the values of civilized society to members of other cultures equally and unequivocally. True love of country, he says, cannot sustain prejudice to rule within one’s own boundaries. It should inspire unity and peace. When all the members work together towards one cause, he thinks, that is freedom; that is where one can see dignity and equality. Patriotism, thus developed, can transcend the narrowness of ‘us’ and ‘ours’ to stand against injustice, inequality and slavery wherever they happen to be present.

In reality, Tagore thinks, Western societies have nationalized patriotism in order to keep their exclusiveness. The sentiment of patriotism is exploited by nationalists for keeping their grip on power. One can see the truth of his belief by tracing the history of nationalism back to the political changes which took place in the 19th century in the west. This is when, one can observe, patriotism lost its spiritual principle to the spread of

nationalism in the west. The issue of changing nationalism for patriotism can be spotted in western societies through the 19th century history. Viroli analyses how the sentiment of patriotism helped Britain to attain a common national identity in the early 19th century. Tracing the development of conversion of patriotism to nationalism in the west, he writes that in Britain patriotism was used to unite the warring religious factions. By using the language of patriotism, he says, they brought together the sectionalised society as a united nation within its borders. They brought together every class of community by condemning the privileges certain sections of society enjoyed within its limits and offering civil equality status to all its citizens. To quote Viroli: "In both the campaigns, for the Catholic Emancipation Act and for the Reform Bill, the language of patriotism worked as a powerful language of unity, and specifically of political unity. It helped to unite individuals who differed on social, cultural, and religious grounds in the common struggle for emancipation and the extension of citizenship."²¹ It was projected in such a way that the values of patriotism were the values of citizenship and, as such, each individual was equal in every social aspect. Social values like poverty and exploitation were unpatriotic and hence they were not to be pursued to treat their citizens. However, this sentiment of extending equality, freedom and dignity was not necessarily restricted to one's cultural brotherhood. Any one who resided in the area was a member with equal status; but misrepresentation of patriotism as nationalism began in the 1860s. The idea of the nation as a political organization committed to the protection of the nation's culture won over the idea of morality and commitment to ethical values. France, Germany, Italy fell prey to the same sentiment and this led to patriotism being transformed into

nationalism. The spiritual principle on which patriotism was based was lost to the narrowness of nationalism.²²

Tagore envisaged reviving the true spirit of patriotism. He thought it was vital that it was separated from nationalism, which instilled parochialism. When he spoke of nationalism, he appealed to the lost spirit of patriotism. He dreamt of reviving it to establish a different kind of nationalism based on Indian civilization. India is a land of multi-race, multi-culture, multi-faith – a melting pot. This land, he urged, would follow a political structure where people would acknowledge, and not try to deny, the real differences between them yet seek some basis of unity beyond the community where differences inevitably exist. Moreover, he anticipated, the situation that exists in India is not going to remain unique to India. The situation of multicultural groups sharing common nation-statehood would be the face of the rest of the future world, he prophesied. Most geographic areas would be accommodating different cultural groups within their territory due to changing demographic activity. Hence, to preserve social harmony it would not be wise to resort to cultural homogeneity as the desired condition. If it were to be adhered to, then somehow common culture has to be manufactured and instilled. He believes that one ‘can never coerce nature into narrow limits of convenience without paying one day very dearly for it.’ The answer may lie in taking lessons from a place where people have been dealing with it for centuries. It would be a great contribution to humanity, he says, if India, through its experience of accommodating different cultures, could offer a solution to providing a basis for political unity which is not anchored to political structure.²³ He tries

to untangle social, political and cultural identities that were seen in the west as synonymous and restore them to their respective functions.

Tagore locates Indian consciousness in shared social life. He anchors it to the community spirit which is natural for human society. For him, togetherness, the sentiment of 'us-ness' is situated in society significant relationship and, according to him, it generates not because of the non-societal relationship people have between them, that is, shared objective commonalities but it is firmly based on societal relationship, that is, by way of sharing the social space. We interact with others, he believes, as human beings and we share our life with others as people who share the land, no matter who 'other' people are. His approach is totally humanist in this sense and he stresses strongly that Indians have correctly placed the sentiment of 'us-ness' where it should belong. He thinks it is the power-hungry politicians who misguide people and bring in the break in the community through artificial division of shared culture, shared ethnicity, and so on. Sharing in the world dominated by western culture, he argues, means sharing material wealth, it means controlling nature, natural resources and distribution. India, according to him, is better equipped to distinguish between individualism dominated by economic prosperity and a humanistic approach to shared prosperity. Developing such view of 'Indian-ness', for him, is a way forward. For this, he feels, one has to replace the misguided approach of nationalism to hold the community together and revert back to the true spirit of patriotism.

Tagore's view of nationalism and patriotism and the emphasis he places on patriotism for achieving unity in a land of diversity, in the true spirit of India, is very well expressed in the political novels he wrote during the early 1900s. He spells out very clearly his anxieties about exploiting the sentiment of patriotism in order to gain political freedom and the adoption of the western concept of nationalism for constructing national identity. His visions of the future are a clear message to the public and the politicians of India alike, awakening them to the dangers of treading the path of nationalism in the process of making-of-the-nation. This message comes out expressly in his book *Gora*, a novel in which he draws on the attraction of nationalism, which is seen as a successful strategy to congregate people by sporting cultural exclusivism. Nevertheless, he sees the pitfalls of placing culture at the heart of political community by reverting to the bygone, out of context past at the cost of isolating certain sections of present day society and thus heading the way for breaking social harmony and transgressing ethical responsibility. He also emphasizes the reality that mere cultural affiliation and cultural homogeneity is ostensible only externally; the real test of culture is manifest in showing whether our behaviour and actions are morally justifiable. He stresses the fact that our duty cannot necessarily be directed at members sharing our culture but it is vital that we recognise that we owe it to people with whom we share our community life. He painstakingly emphasizes the point that Indian community is rooted more in the moral conduct it has developed towards its neighbourhood community than in common culture, and that going back to one's irrelevant past at the cost of today's social reality is a dangerous, and morally an indefensible move.

“I have been living here all my life... and I have got attached to all the neighbours, besides there is hardly another man left in the village, and if I went away the women would die of fright”,²⁴ says a Hindu barber, in *Gora*, when asked why he has chosen to stay on in a predominantly Muslim village with an adopted Muslim boy (whose parents had been subjected to atrocities because they refused to hand over the tenancy of their land to *sahibs*) from where every man has gone away in order to escape the ruthless exploitation of English factory owners and the corrupt high-class Brahmin rent collector. It is not Gora, a well-read member of a high-class Brahmin family, who is ardently promoting Hindu nationalism by recognizing the moral principle involved behind the community life but the lowly born and bred, uneducated barber who lives the ethical community life. He highlights the pitfalls of narrow nationalism which hinders the glory of the real identity created by a rich civilization. The real moral issues for the barber are: firstly, the moral universe is more valuable and precious than cultural purity. We are naturally emotionally involved with neighbours with whom we share our day-to-day life, and depend on them for mutual psychological and social comfort, no matter who they are. Secondly, we owe it to them and we are morally obliged to take care of them at times of their needs. True moral life is contained in the constant social adjustment and care we offer to the needy and not in exogenous national identity. The real fight, and the real face of the freedom movement, for the barber, is not a fight between Hindus and Muslims or Christians who have shared the community with their own sets of social rules and regulations. It was a struggle between the rights and wrongs of moral ownership. It is between sovereignty and dictatorship; it is about protecting the lives and livelihood of our neighbours and the community we are a part of, no matter whether we share common

cultural identity or not. These are the issues which Tagore addresses in arguing for a political structure befitting the social culture existent in India.

The hero of the novel, *Gora*, is a fiery young political activist involved in the Indian independence movement of the early 20th century. He is an erudite, eloquent, and charming young man whose vision is to fight the imperial power and gain political sovereignty, and to create an Indian identity which will be capable of sustaining the post-colonial political community. He is committed to the idea that it is essential to infuse a homogeneous society with a shared social identity to build a united India, as seen in the vision of the colonizer, so that people can gather as one national community. For the creation of such a land, he is given to believe by the nationalists who were influenced by the west, that it is necessary to create a community with shared culture. For this, it was assumed, reverting to the cultural roots of bygone days was imperative. He takes it as his mission to achieve this by observing a life dictated by Hindu culture and spreading the ethos to the whole nation. His journey of political life as an activist takes him through his own commitment to India as a patriot and rebel against colonial rule, to the eventual awareness that his own brand of patriotism itself is wrongly founded on the sentiment that moral duty to other citizens is contingent on their belonging to his own kind, and becoming conscious of the fact that such patriotism is not compatible with the very Hindu civilization he is so ardently trying to invoke and defend. He wrestles with the psychological conflict, a predicament of the Indian intelligentsia of the early 19th century, hoping to adhere to old traditions and shun western culture, yet in the process, inadvertently imitating western political and social dogmas, which advocate political

power for security and aggression.²⁵ It humbles him when he realizes that he himself is the orphaned child of an Irish couple, abandoned during the 1857 mutiny and reared by Anandmayi who is committed, in her own way, to a moral universe not dictated by religious tradition but by pragmatic commitment to the Indian tradition of sacrificing her own religious purity in order to stand by universal moral principles and who can deal with situations with commitment to such principles in her own capacity as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother. It makes Gora see the superior value of morally dictated common identity. He sees national identity true to human nature in Anandmoyi; he sees it in the lowly born barber; he sees it the doctrine of *Arya samaj* he paints in the novel who do not talk of and about culture but live it. He becomes conscious of the fact that Indian-ism is not about identity gained through birth but it is about believing in humanism. Patriotism is not about supporting one's own kind but securing the welfare of everyone who shares one's social community.

One can clearly see how Tagore was disillusioned by the narrow sense of nationalism and painted a grander picture of an Indian civilization which can offer its own answer to bring about the unity aspired for political coherence. Could he be criticising Gandhi, a leader of the Indian independence movement, who advanced the concept of Indian nationalism by a return to Hindu culture and the old way of Hindu life in order to create a shared identity for Indians? He raises vital points as to what is actually involved in the sentiment of togetherness, freedom, and equality and shows that western political discourse does not deliver any of those to its members. He argues convincingly that if moral society is the aim of a culturally advanced group it cannot be achieved by accumulating data from

society and finding an equation, which will lead to a resultant happy community, because applied science is not the right formula for building a moral community. Social co-operation, he rightly argues, is involved in the mutual interest one has in community members. The sense of belonging is situated in a shared life and not in shared space. Nationalism is not a force which brings the community together: it is patriotism, the aspiration to respect, freedom and equality for oneself and all other members who share the community. Politics does not deliver fraternity but it is the individual members who guarantee it by sharing humanist ideals. As Nandy comments, Tagore very effectively emphasizes that unity within the community is a social fact and not a political agenda.²⁶ His argument is very convincing when one sees the problems nationalism brings in by isolating communities on the basis of 'difference', and how artificial and illogical those divisions are.

However, is his conception of viewing political communities with no boundaries a viable option? Can a transcending social/political identity be envisaged as we see the world today? Shared identities have always been at the basis of social identity, though they have shifted their bias as mankind has progressed in time. Communities are sustained in such identities. Nationalism is also one such historical avatar. If this is the case, how can it be accommodated in the changing world which is at the cross-roads again? Can one move away from such shared identities and see political community in a different light in order to accommodate multicultural societies within one political fold or does one go back and shelter the 'origins' which give us a sense of security?

Conclusion

Nationalism has been viewed by some philosophers like Shri Aurobindo Ghosh as an evolutionary process guiding the human race towards a greater level of civilization. However, such a spiritual brand of the ideology of nationalism does not correspond, it is observed, to the material brand of western nationalism with its roots firmly in economics and political power. Tagore exposes the latter's narrow philosophy convincingly. His anxieties about nationalism are well-expressed and justifiable from more than one line of reasoning. Though liberal philosophical tenets emphasize individual freedom they do not deliver it because it adheres to the ideology of nationalism. Whether it is the democratic government following the tenets protecting individualism or theocracy dictating social order or aristocracy ruling over its subjects, the real power to dictate where one's duty lies is determined by the power structure. Individuals do not have the freedom to choose where their duty lies and how they protect their individualism. However, nationalism only strives to secure economic and territorial security and not the individual's moral freedom to lead a fulfilling co-operative social life out of her own free will. Also, the individual sense of morality itself is twisted by overstressing individual happiness at the cost of social values which should be grounded in community life. Tagore does not reject the political and economic aspects of community life being ruled by laws and rules but he does not accept that individuals can be seen as little pockets living within a community for individually fulfilling lives. Because of this misrepresentation of human nature, nationalism appears not to be an ideology equipped to bring about harmony within communities. Its tenets do not steer towards a community where inequality is condoned

but it actively promotes discrimination and divides the communities in order to retain economic prosperity and political power within the favoured community. He argues very effectively that political morality and personal morality cannot be seen in isolation. Caring for the welfare of a group member is an ethically guided duty regardless of his/her origin. One cannot be coerced into caring for such a member purely because he/she shares the social/cultural group. Moral duty is guided by right and wrongs of human action towards other members; it is guided by the natural disposition to the welfare of human society and hence cannot be dictated by political pragmatism. Social cohesion can only exist where people interact and co-operate with and understand other members, where they have developed a sense of trust and interest regardless of their differences, be they of race, religion or culture, in an ethically acceptable way, and, where every member is respected, offered equality and freedom as a primary requirement of a civilized society. This can only be done with open dialogue between members. They have to envisage the moral parameters and the ways of achieving those ideals.

He clearly places 'Indian-ness' in the true spirit of patriotism. According to him, we love our land and the people we share our community with as a natural sentiment. It is not, and cannot be seen as a group where each member is competing for the goods, but as a social group genuinely interested in humanist values worthy of human society. This evidently means sharing one's society as cooperating members regardless of who they happen to be. Any kind of distinction drawn within the society sets one community against the other.

Though his attack on nationalism is quite convincing, the arguments against Tagore have been directed at his vehement and total denial of nationalism as an evil force. Is nationalism, as an ideology itself is evil or is it that the premises have been applied within western ideology wrongly? If so, can it be accommodated within political structure for its attribute to bring the community together without it bringing inter-group tension? Can one envisage nations without boundaries? If boundaries are essential, where does one anchor political identity?

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7. Gandhi's Vision of Nationalism

Rabindranath Tagore, as we saw in the last chapter, rejects nationalism as a conceptually malevolent dogma. It potentially destroys social harmony, he believes, and hence he says, it is unsuitable for the civilized world. He locates togetherness in humanism, in the broader sense of common identity where citizens develop a common interest in the community through a shared sense of recognition and responsibility towards each other and not in the narrowness of tribalism or race, religion and common culture. Unity, for him, is in the inner spirit which is capable of a relationship on equal terms with otherness; it is a spirit which is more concerned with pragmatic morality, as he depicts in the character of Anandmoyi and the village barber and other characters he portrays in his political novels like *Gora*, rather than in race, shared culture, or a common way of life. He also argues that social interaction is not a matter of necessity for leading a fulfilling individual life but, in a very Aristotelian way he argues that people co-operate with each other, respond to each other, and empathize with each other because that is where the pleasure of human life is positioned. He does not accept that political nationalism, where a community is brought together under the umbrella of the state, is a civilized way of organizing human society. Human society, he says, has to base its tenets on moral values, on social co-operation and on offering liberty and equality to its members in real terms. Nationalism, he argues, leads to impersonal, *scientific*, amoral political life whereas, he says, to construct a coherent political ideology one has to locate unity within the framework of ethical community life.

Mahatma Gandhi, another great political thinker of the time, agrees with Tagore on many of the misgivings he holds against nationalism. They both think that the western concept of nationalism is a materially motivated doctrine and hence cannot be seen as an ideology which can bring about social unity. They both advocate a shift from nationalism to patriotism as the unifying force for multicultural communities who share common political space. They both argue that western political philosophy, influenced by the advancement in industrial and economic progress does not give recognition to ethical significance for human society. They both believe very strongly that we live in a moral universe and hence that all social and political ideologies have to ensue from within moral parameters.¹ They both reject the ideology of nationalism centred round a shared culture. They present a plausible, moral alternative vision of the nation where people's sense of belonging, loyalty, and identity are naturally tethered to their social community and anchored in patriotism rather than constructed on political identity. Such identity, they both believe, would be a forward-looking one in the world where cultural barriers are constantly being broken due to changing the economic and social scene. They envisaged that India, a land where various cultures have emerged and mixed, and lived a relatively peaceful and civilized life, would pave the way for a new vision of ethically coherent political community. Both dreamt, as Ashis Nandy puts it, "that India's national self-definition would some day provide a critique of western nationalism, that Indian civilization with its demonstrated capacity to live with and creatively use contradictions and inconsistencies would produce a 'national' ideology that would transcend nationalism."²

This chapter will mainly concentrate on discussing the argument Gandhi puts forward for rejecting nationalism as promoted by the west. I shall also point out that though Gandhi and Tagore agree on many points, there are some aspects of nationalism which Gandhi accepted, be it with different slant on it. It will follow his argument that the ideology of nationalism is not structured to deliver liberal ideals of individualism, freedom and equality, and hence his disillusionment with the western concept of nationalism and its political doctrines. It will examine his idea of political and social identity and expand on his vision of Indian political community, based on the traditional structure that India originally had in the land and see whether he offers a kind of nationalism more suited to multicultural nations than the vision of liberal nationalism.

Gandhi

Gandhi is one of the great 20th century thinkers who influenced the political discourse of pre- and post-colonial India. Like Tagore, he argues that it is not only that the western concept of nation is unsuitable to Indian conditions but also that it is a fundamentally flawed doctrine in its construction. He spent his youth exposed to western culture when he arrived there to study law in England. As a law student, he took a keen interest in British and European law and politics. Later, he moved to South Africa to practise law. His disillusionment with western political ideology took its shape in South Africa. His unpleasant experiences as a black person in a country which adhered to apartheid system led him to oppose the degrading and unethical political system of apartheid which advocated exclusivism and oppression. It was here that he realised that the real thrust of

western liberal philosophy guided by nationalism was not capable of living up to the true spirit of the principles it advocated. While facing the apartheid system he recognized that liberalism as practiced by the west was not meant to lead the community towards genuine unity nor was it designed to work towards freedom, equality and dignity to all but it was restricted to distribution within their own ethnic community. The concept of nationalism was not intended to spread the ideology of love of *patria* and sovereignty in any real sense but it was to safeguard the privileges for the select few. He moved to India later to take up the mission of leading the country to achieve *swaraj*, i.e. sovereignty in a real sense. Colonial rule, he felt, had destroyed the spirit of Indian identity and political structure. There was a need for a clear outlook on the path they needed to follow, he thought, in order to bring the communities together. His search for a suitable political system for India led him to take a critical look at the western system and its merits and demerits. This is where he developed his critique of nationalism.

Gandhi's critique of the western ideology of nationalism

Every political theory endeavours to ensure a balance between offering rights to individuals as moral agents and political authority which acts to secure the interests of the wider community. Nationalism as developed in the west was no exception. Theoretically, it privileged the rights of individuals to their freedom to exercise their individuality, and defined the authority of the state in terms of assuring such conditions on equal terms for every citizen. Gandhi accepts nationalism as a political theory as far as these tenets are concerned. However, he has reservations about its interpretation of the values it intends

to promote. He raises two fundamental problems with accepting the western concept of nationalism as a universally applicable ideology. Firstly, he says that every political ideology ensues in accordance with existent social and economic conditions and hence, an ideology developed under different social and political conditions cannot be adopted by other political communities in their entirety nor can it be successfully imposed on them. Each community develops a political structure which suits its own existent social circumstances. This does not mean, he contends, that there are no fundamental principles on which each political community should function and operate. He accepts comprehensively the basic principle of privileging the equality, liberty and individualism of every member in western political discourse. However, this is where his second difficulty with nationalism lies. He believes that the very meaning of liberty, equality and individualism is misconceived in western political discourse. He does not believe that nationalism as perceived by the west is the right vehicle to realise liberal tenets in their true sense. The reason for its inability to deliver, he thinks, lies in the socio/political conditions under which it developed. It privileged materialism as the basis for seeking harmony rather than spiritual harmony.

Gandhi's observations about how historical facts have influenced the rise of nationalism based materialism, as experienced in the west today

Gandhi traces the development of nationalism as a political theory and observes that historical circumstances involved in the development of western civilization of the 18th century are responsible for the shape it has taken in the world today.³ The changes

initiated by industrial revolution in social and economic conditions, he says, determined the shape of political ideologies which took shape in the west during that time. The main function of the emergent political theories apparently was to integrate the production and distribution of wealth created by industrialised nations. Hence, the economic aspect of life took over other aspects. Each stage of the conceptualisation of the nation-state developed as an upshot of the previous development in social, political and economic changes that occurred as a direct result of the industrial revolution.

A significant consequence of industrialization, Gandhi believed, was the development of disjointed communities uprooted from their familiar surroundings of interdependent, close-knit social units. Rationalism, another influencing factor of the era, which had influenced people's self-respect and worth, led people to view themselves as self-focused individuals with ends-in-themselves attitudes. People became obsessed with individual rights to pursue their individual happiness. Materialistically driven, self-conscious individuals faced with dismantled communities looked up to the political structure to arrange their social lives. The emergent Western political ideologies that developed at the time had to provide a structure which would oversee that the rights of their individuals were not compromised in the process of sharing their material resources and, at the same time, bring self-conscious individuals under the umbrella of one community, so that there was harmony within it. They concentrated on creating a political community where individuals could lead the life they desired and reach their set goals without any political or social interference. Since the set aims of the individuals of the era were materialistically motivated, the political structures which took their shape at the time also

incorporated the material outlook of individuals. The main aim of the newly emerged political doctrines became, thus, an instrument to ensure individualism and promote creation, protection and distribution of the wealth generated by industrialization so that people could realize their own visions of a fulfilling life.⁴

Also, the advance in mechanical science meant that it became possible for people to control nature in such a way that they could produce goods which helped the enjoyment of physically comfortable life. They could mass-produce goods of comfort and people could avail themselves such comfort by the wealth they could create by selling their labour. The whole ethos of society revolved round gaining comfort, brought about by the control of harsh nature, and leading a materially enriched life. The sign of the good life itself became a materially rich life. Privileges of physical comfort of the body were taken care of more keenly and every invention was guided towards providing for material pleasure. Each exercise was directed towards gaining material wealth by whatever means one could. Instead of using human ability for superior thinking in order to enhance harmony in the world, it led humanity towards exploitation, greed, and power.⁵ As an upshot of such a perception of life, sharing wealth by individuals and by the community became a major issue of political significance. The responsibility of the state, at such a time in history, was to recognize the rights of the peoples to the riches they had created and their entitlement to enjoy the wealth exclusively as they pleased and as the community pleased.

The political structures ensuing from materialism and individualism had to negotiate another problem. They had to ensure that each individual is offered freedom and equality so that she/he can lead her/his private life in search of her/his envisaged good life. In their eagerness to provide such requirement, western political philosophies dichotomised private/public aspects of social life and prioritised amoral political structure instead of idealizing ethically justifiable humanism. They concentrated on producing, securing, and distributing the wealth produced between the group which they felt was entitled to share. Liberal political philosophy, taking shape under these circumstances, tried to develop a system whereby 'each individual could be used as a means for another to achieve his ends without undue coercion and to his own distinct advantage'.⁶ The state became the vehicle through which such ends could be achieved.

The resultant doctrine through which the state could arrange political community took shape in the form of nationalism. Nationalism, which took its shape at the time, appeared to have the potential to deliver the demands made on the political community for advancing, safeguarding, and protecting the wealth produced so that its members could sustain their right to individuality, enjoy the wealth they had created in a way they choose to, and make sure that it was distributed only to the group members who they decided were entitled to receive the benefits of their labour. Nationalism and national identity, thus, were translated into creating the narrow sentiment of 'us-ness'. It helped to restrict the claim to wealth by introducing exclusivism. Also, it seemed to deliver much coveted individual freedom, equality and dignity to its members to live their vision of the good life.

However, the main thrust of Gandhi's argument against nationalism is set against the very tenets liberal nationalists aim to deliver. Though they claim to offer individualism, freedom, and equality, he says, they are offered in a negative sense. He analyses these values with metaphysical slant and advocates a political structure which can deliver them in real sense.

Individualism

Gandhi sees individualism, in a Kantian way, as a sacred aspect of life. Society, he believes, is nothing more than an aggregate of individuals who strive for self-realisation. Every individual, hence, should be able to lead a moral life of his choice in a free and secure environment. This also naturally entails that people have to strive to work towards the welfare of other members and respect their claim to their individuality. As such, it necessitates that the political structure, he says, offer every individual a free environment to develop and enjoy her independence over her moral self-hood and offer the community the protection to live without coercion or aggression from any outside force.

This argument appears to be very similar to that of civic republicans. A defining feature of individualism in western discourses is also that individuals are seen as ends-in-themselves. Civic republicans see each person as a separate moral unit. They also recognise that the individuality and dignity of each person has to be acknowledged and hence, they argue that the state has to ensure the conditions wherein one can develop

one's moral being for one's own welfare and that of one's community. Both seem to hold the view that people should be offered individual sovereignty, the freedom to live the life of their choice, and promote the accomplishment of their vision of the good life. In both the arguments, the state is built on, and built by, the general will of citizens for the common good. They both argue that common good is so vital for a harmonious society that individual will should take a second place in order to facilitate social harmony.

However, there is a great difference between Gandhi's conception of an individual's right to one's sovereignty and the liberal expression of it. A liberal constitution places individuals directly responsible to the state to offer their obligations in return for the assurance that their rights are secured. It is a fact, they concede, that group interests, at times, are not congenial to individual interests. On such occasions, individuals need to be nudged into sacrificing their interests for the sake of group interests. In liberalism, citizens are expected to accept the dictation of the state. Moral boundaries are set by the state and the laws ensure that those parameters are adhered to by its members. National interests are prioritised over and above individual interests. Gandhi does not accept the liberal argument that the state needs to secure the political climate through laws where individuals can develop and exercise their sovereignty without hindrance. He does not believe that the welfare of the community can be generated by the state through statute books. For him, one does not exercise individualism if one carries out the dictates of the state in order to live a sovereign life. Individual sovereignty attained at the cost of focusing our obligations on the seat of political power in return for securing our rights is not in the real sense, Gandhi argues, respecting individualism. By invoking laws one may

only protect one's material sovereignty, he says, but not one's spiritual independence. Individuality is compromised in liberal nationalism, Gandhi argues, because it becomes susceptible for state coercion and interferes with individual judgement in life. He advocates that to exercise individuality in a real sense individuals should accept and offer their allegiance out of their free will. If duties are not willingly accepted, and instead enforced by the state, it amounts to individuality surrendered and not exercised.⁷

Gandhi explains sovereignty in a very different sense. *Swaraj*, that is, the individual's sovereignty, to him, is twofold, individual self-rule and self-rule for the community. For him, individual self-rule does not exist in political power. Exercising individualism is not, he says, securing a position to seek one's own vision of the good life in society: it consists in developing a moral self who is capable of exercising her free will in the interest of realising the good life of the community. Sovereignty over oneself or a certain territory does not mean that one is free to act independently from other individuals and groups in order to lead one's desired life without breaking the state laws. It is having a moral choice to decide whether one wants to share the obligations to the community without being dictated to by the state. Freedom of choice, in the real sense, is realization of individualism. Asserting individualism does not consist in having the right to protect our possessions or to lead life the way we want to but it is in leading it in the way that it is conducive to nature. One has to recognise that men have the ability to raise themselves above self-love and self-interest and self-community interest and look for broader social aspect of life. Realising the desired individual life and pursuit of happiness is not positioned in cultivating greed and accumulation of wealth. It does not consist in

cultivating asocial values. He says it consists in constraint. It consists in leading a moral life dictated by truth, trust and performance of duty towards other members of the community. For this, political life has to be practised within the framework of *dharma*, i.e., religion. Often the word '*dharma*' is used with reference to religion but *dharma* in Sanskrit also means duty. "To him", says Judith Brown, "*swaraj*, had never been mere political freedom from imperial rule: it lay rather in the self-reliance of the people who would work together to create a harmonious society in which all were safe, whatever their faith, and in which all had a sufficiency." ⁸

Freedom

For liberal nationalists, freedom to choose one's options for leading the good life is of prime significance. However, it is also essential that those choices are available within the community to which one belongs and that one is free to choose the life of one's choice. For this, they argue, it is the duty of the state to ensure that such condition is fulfilled by supporting a shared societal culture. The state is expected to offer one the freedom to choose the options of one's choice in return for one's commitment to accepting the rights of others to their freedom. However, Gandhi says, the freedom offered by liberals' conception is a negative freedom. When freedom is set in national politics, it does not aim at real freedom but it is contingent on others offering it to us for the fear of law. It is offered, he says, at the cost of forgoing one's own judgement, one's own wish so that one follows the dictates of the state in order to enjoy one's freedom to

one's rights. One is not free, he says, to do whatever one's moral commitment would want one to do because members of the community are restricted by the laws of the land.

For Gandhi, living a life in a political community where social, moral and economic life are structured by the state does not allow one to act according to one's own individual will. He says our freedom does not consist in our actions performed because some one else says it is the right thing to do, as is the case in democracy. (State dictated laws, in democracy, are set on by the will of the majority). "*Swaraj* is an absurdity", he says, "if individuals have to surrender to the judgement of the majority."⁹ For Gandhi, real freedom lies in being able to be truthful to oneself and explore and develop as an integrated individual. He mainly believes in individual freedom as a right to moral agency and not necessarily to living one's vision of the personal good life. Even when Gandhi was in the thick of the freedom movement for India, he believed that freedom was worthwhile only when people within the community lived a moral life harmoniously. Everyone, he believes, has to act true to one's conscience and not take the dictates of political imposition in the name of protecting freedom. That alone, he argues, is real freedom. Only a free man, he truly believes, can find real self and his unique individuality.

Moreover, societal culture, (as Kymlicka argues) may provide us with the choices and the freedom to make those choices. However, this kind of availability of choices and the freedom is not good enough for Gandhi because, he says, freedom has no meaning if the moral choice one wants to make is not available in the society one lives, and if one is not

free to make that choice. Speaking of Gandhi's idea of freedom, Bhikhu Parekh says, "it did not consist in choice *per se*, as some liberals would argue, nor in making choices considered to be *higher*, as the idealists would argue, but in making choices that were in harmony with and capable of being integrated into one's way of life. It had nothing to do with the *number* of alternatives available to the agent either. If these alternatives did not include what one needed, they had no significance. And if what one needed was the only choice available, the absence of others in no way diminishes one's freedom."¹⁰ (It is like a vegetarian person entering a restaurant for a meal. She may get a vast a la carte menu with varieties of meat and fish dishes. However, such choice is irrelevant to the person since it offers her no choice.)

Equality

The liberal nationalists' concept of equality is also shallow, thinks Gandhi. He believes that the western concept of equality is based so much on materialism that they see equality only in material terms. Our equality, Gandhi believes, is not comparing what others have, striving to have what others have, or socially arranging goods so that we all get them. Real equality consists in each member 'enjoying full access to his community's economic, political, moral and cultural resources in order to realise *his* unique potential, not an abstract human potential as determined by a philosophical conception of human nature or by an arbitrary moral standard, but his potential as a *uniquely constituted being*.' For this, he argues, equality has to be defined in 'non-competitive, non-comparative, and non-atomistic terms'.¹¹ Equality consists in being given the chance to

offer one's best to society. It consists in recognising individuality in real terms and respecting it. For collective pursuit of truth and happiness, it is essential that all members are seen as people equally engaged in seeking the truth in their own way, according to their own abilities and hence they are given equal status in the community.¹² Moreover, one has to recognise a significant aspect of human life, Gandhi says, and that is, that we all inherit a moral soul which is universal. Along with the duty to our individuality, physical and mental, we also have a duty to cherish the nourishment of the natural cosmic spirit which we all share between each of us, which is common in all of us. Equality in real terms is in treating each and every member of the community with equal respect, as we would treat ourselves and our loved ones and not in sharing social goods alone.

Otherness

Nationalism in western discourse emerged as a political dogma not because it has the ability to unite its members but mainly, he reckons, to divert other people from joining the privileged group. Creating exclusiveness helped the ideal of protecting the produced material wealth from wider distribution. Secondly, and more significantly, Gandhi observes that western communities were so little exposed to foreign cultures that entertaining the very idea of accommodating different ways of life may have been a daunting prospect. For 'a dreary middle class horizon' of the early 1900s,' to put it in Nandy's words, 'it was beyond their imagination to think that an alternative, cosmopolitan, multicultural living' was remotely possible.¹³ Whereas, for India, accommodating otherness has been a reality for centuries. Indians have adapted otherness

in their social structure with a matter-of-fact attitude. Negotiating, adapting, accommodating, and assimilating different cultures has been an appreciable quality which has helped the survival of Indian civilization. With the influx of every culture India has enriched its tradition by accepting it as a culture with meaningful contribution to offer. Gandhi writes in *Hind Swaraj* that, “the introduction of foreigners did not automatically break Indian society.”¹⁴ (As Herder assumes!) Their cultures merely merged in it. He further suggests that a country can only be seen as one nation when it attains such maturity of dealing with otherness and benefiting by it. He genuinely believes that accommodating multi-cultural, multi-ethnic communities within a single political structure gave India ‘moral and cultural depth’. Hence, he believes, the attempt to homogenise society is unnecessary and detrimental to progress. To the contrary, and more dangerously, non-recognition of other cultures destabilises the communities with strong cultural heritage with a sense of uprooting and hopelessness. It even has the potential to evoke resistance and social disturbance.¹⁵ Seeking unity in diversity was a very valuable concept for a civilized contemporary world and Gandhi believes that Indians should make that contribution with its own example to the political ideology of modern world.

Thus, when we see Gandhi’s reservations about nationalism we realise that the ideals of liberalism themselves are not ill-founded, but it is just that they are misplaced. They anchor individualism, freedom, equality, and accommodating otherness to material welfare; their commitment concentrates on equal distribution of wealth, freedom to own and enjoy wealth and develop individuals to realise their own potential to lead their

individual lives and depend on the state to provide the structure so that they can exercise their rights. Referring back to Kymlicka's argument, liberal nationalists believe that liberal goals of protecting individual autonomy, freedom and equality (the values which are central to liberal tenets) can only be achieved in a liberalized societal culture and hence, Will Kymlicka says, ... "it is a legitimate and essential task of government to protect the ongoing viability of national cultures, and, more generally, to express people's national identities"¹⁶ For Gandhi, however, liberal values are not political values but social values and they can only be realised in social life. Nationalism, Gandhi says, takes the initiative away from society and tethers it to polity. By tethering the values of the good life to political life, he argues that liberty, equality, and individualism are stripped of their spiritual and ethical values and reduced to the requirements of material comforts. This sets one member against the other and scrambling to grab as much as they can for their personal comfort. In an ideal world where society acts as a community, he says, individuals take into account what is good for the community and accept it as their duty to sacrifice their individual interests for the benefit of the community.

Gandhi's vision of nationalism

Contrary to the western conception, Gandhi accepted nationalism more as a political programme than a political theory which should guide citizens towards an ethical community. He fully takes into account the historical background of political and social conditions under which nationalism developed and argues that the straitjacket of nationalism will not fit the democratic aspirations of Indian people. Though Gandhi also

believes that pre-political attachment between members is necessary, he rejects the kind of vital elements like shared history and shared culture which liberal nationalists like David Miller and Will Kymlicka promote as the necessary chief ingredients for securing political integrity. He argues that since nationalism defines its limits in terms of specific time and geographical area and coherent historical narrative, history and culture become an important factor for such construction. But, for Gandhi history and shared culture are irrelevant factors for shared identity. His view of nationalism very much takes its root in India's perception of society, culture and political authority. He projects India's deep-rooted religion-induced sense of duty, its appreciation of interdependent social life, and its sense of ethical politics in his political ideology. He envisages Indian nationalism where politics develops to accommodate social structure rather than politics arranging societal culture (as argued by some liberal nationalists like Kymlicka and Miller).

In his book *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi sets out to offer an alternative version of ethical nationalism in the pursuit of inner happiness to replace the worldly vision of nationalism as pursued by the western conception. For him, political unity is sought through recognition of humanism, and individual life adheres more closely to social life than political life, to ethical society than amoral polity. Gandhi's political philosophy revolves round three significant points. Firstly, he says, reciprocation of obligation is not at the basis of group formation nor does it hold the group together. Citizens are guided by their conscience and carry on their duty regardless of others reciprocating. Political structure, he believes, has to recognise this factor and instil a sense of civic duty rather than stress individual rights.

Secondly, contrary to liberal nationalism, he argues that neither consent nor will nor fear of the law should form the basis of allegiance to the state but the binding force between members has to be co-operation aimed at securing happiness for all. The state has to be formed by individuals in the format of an institutionalised cooperative.¹⁷ Independence can only be secured if one acknowledges the interdependence of human society. For this, Gandhi believes, it is vital that social values and the significance of interdependency are recognised and celebrated.

Thirdly, Gandhi says, the dichotomy of the public/private divide of morality, that is, between amoral political structure and moral social life which predominantly exists in western liberalism has to give way to privileging morality in both public and private life and accommodating the political aspect of life for leading an ethical life. He does not accept the western view that the political community has to adhere to an amoral structure in order to secure equality, freedom, and individualism. He argues that politics has to, and can, accommodate morality in its structure because men are intrinsically moral beings.

Duty verses Rights

Contrary to Western thinking, Gandhi stresses that there is more to relationship between members of a community than nationality can deliver, and obligations directed towards other members are more than the law-enforced nuisance which one has to accept so that one can enjoy one's rights. He thinks that we have a duty to serve the community because it is only in serving the community within which we seek dignity and a stake in the

community that we are a part and parcel. It is through performing our duty that we pursue our rights. Gandhi uses Sanskrit word '*dharma*' in polysemic terms.¹⁸ Religion in Hindu scripture does not mean one's duty to God only but it also means '*manav dharma*', that is, 'duty to humanity', towards nature, charity, duty to other beings with whom we share our world, and recognising moral rights and wrongs and acting according to conscience. In fact, Gandhi believes that individual rights and responsibilities are not just two faces of the same coin, as generally described; they are one and the same. In seeking individual happiness, one is seeking group happiness because it is an observed fact that one cannot be happy within a community where other members are experiencing misery. If some members of a community are suffering materially or spiritually, the rest of the community cannot live a comfortable and safe life. Hence, by performing our duty in seeking the happiness of other members of the community and of other communities, we are seeking our own harmony and pleasure in life. For Gandhi, as Parekh puts it, "since every human action was both a right and a duty and had an individual and a social dimension, rights had to be defined and exercised in a socially responsible manner, and duties defined and discharged in a way that took account of the agent's uniqueness and claims."¹⁹

Our rights are derived from the community, says Gandhi, and hence our duties are directed towards the community we share our life with. Every aspect of our life is a story of what we are given and what we give back in return. Gandhi feels the individual right we expect should more naturally be seen in terms of individual duties. We owe it to people who have constantly looked after us. We must realise we benefit from others and

since we cannot actually return the favour to the actual people who obliged us, our goal should be to return the good deed towards those who need it. State-sponsored rights and obligations become burdensome, whereas duties and rights become more meaningful if they are personally motivated towards people with whom one shares the community.

One can see the driving force of his argument in one's daily life. It is in-keeping with human nature to seek to help others in difficulty. The act of helping others itself gives one pleasure in life. One gets a certain pleasure in relieving the pain of others if one can. However, one has to accept that not everybody can serve the community in a uniform way. How one strives to serve the community is individually determined. One may wish to serve through service; another may contribute through art; and yet another may even serve the community by taking a stance against an objectionable moral position taken inadvertently. It is only when people are free and equal to exercise individuality and serve the community to the best of their capacity, acting out their conscience, that a community can live a peaceful life.

Interdependence

One can observe that the western conception of political community can be attributed to Lockean political discourse. As Uday Mehta observes, the Lockean liberal tradition locates political identity primarily in 'individual consent and presumed priority of rational, individual self-interest in consensually and contractually establishing political community'.²⁰ For liberals, aim of the state is facilitating 'the live and let live' principle

within the territory. It is recognising the rights of citizens to their individual lives. The problem with this is that it does not account for the existent sentimental attachment that people develop through shared social space. It does not recognise the fact that people 'live and interact together in a world that is commonly held' and that communal sentiments and shared identities arise out of shared locality, and functional interdependency. It takes away the importance of collective life, collective experience, and collective responsibility on which human society thrives. Burke very strongly points this out as a major problem in the western concept of political community. Summarising the Burkian opinion of political identity Mehta says, "location and territory has a special salience, but only because, in his view, it captured an emotional attachment or sense of belonging that he deemed central to collective and political identity"²¹ as contrasted with the liberal tradition of locating it in the right to private life. A significant aspect of shared identity is derived from such sense of sharing the territory to which people are emotionally attached. The shared Indian political identity, thus, he believes, was constituted by long-standing locational attachment and historical association and Gandhi clearly anchors shared identity in such concepts. However, the Indian concept of shared political community is not positioned just in 'live and let live' but that of 'let us live together'. Gandhi takes a very Burkian view of community when he argues that the sense of belonging is located in shared life. One's identity is entangled with one's immediate society, one's contributions are to one's immediate social group; and the interactions that matter most are with one's immediate group. Common identity, Gandhi believes, develops through such interaction. It is the immediate society, which, he thinks, is important to human beings, and hence one's loyalty has to be to the welfare of that group.

One's rights are derived from that group and hence the duties have to be directed towards it. Failure to recognise this leads to stress in social structuring. It isolates difference, fails to recognise and gain from the valuable contribution that individuals can make to the community and leads to loss of trust between members.

In contrast to the western concept of national identity, Gandhi locates political identity neither in shared political arrangements nor in culture or history, nor in shared national character but he places it necessarily in shared social community, as it was prior to industrialisation. The tenets of nationalism as developed in the post-industrial era, he argues, do not recognize the full implication and relevance of interdependent community life. The common identity that one seeks in a community cannot be through political structure, he argues, where members are connected through contractual terms between members who share the community, the contract being that the state guarantees the rights through state laws and members honour the rights of other members and obey the laws for securing harmonious life; one has to revert back to the structure of shared community where people are involved in the welfare of its other members because we share an interdependent life and our pains and pleasures are derived from sharing such life.

One has to negotiate social life in order to lead a fulfilling individual life because fulfilling community life is equally as essential a requirement of leading a contented life as leading an autonomous individual life is. Individuals do not necessarily live in a community because it is the community which shapes their vision of the good life and life outside their own culture does not make much sense (as communitarians argue). They

share the community because, thinks Gandhi, community is an 'organised environment vital for their orderly growth, a ready network of supportive relationships, a body of institutions and practices essential for structuring their otherwise chaotic selves, foci for sentiments and loyalties without which no moral life was possible.....'²² People are dependent on each other for harmonious and fulfilling individual lives. For him, 'man is essentially a social being who has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirement of social progress.'²³ With all our individuality we live in a community because it is through a harmonious community that we derive our individual freedom. However much one thinks of one's individual self, according to him, it is the support one gets from other members of one's society, be it parents, siblings, relatives friends, colleagues and so on that makes life worthwhile living. We all draw energy from each other. It is within the immediate social group that one becomes aware of the individuality of each person with whom one interacts. It is of little relevance to which cultural group the dependent persons belong. We accept their individuality just as we claim ours because of this interdependency. Individuality and interdependency inherently coexist and they cannot be viewed in isolation.

It is not that the notion of interdependency is rejected by Western political discourse: it is that Gandhi's view of interdependency is different from that of liberal philosophers of the West. Liberals see community life as instrumental, as something one has to negotiate in order to fulfil individual desires and ensure security. For liberal ideology, living the life one wishes to live is the goal of every individual and the state should ensure that he/she achieves that goal. It is also the state's duty, they think, to regulate it with legal

arrangements so that they can ensure that every individual gets an equal and fair opportunity to achieve the individually chosen 'good life', whereas for Gandhi interdependence is as vital for individual development as independence. He says, "interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency." He does not say so because it is instrumental for benefiting materially and individually but because, he sees it from a metaphysical outlook. "Man is a social being", he says, "without inter-relation with society, he cannot realise his oneness with the universe or suppress egotism. His social interdependence enables him to test his faith and prove himself on the touchstone of reality. Dependence on society teaches him the lesson of humility."²⁴

Gandhi believes that community and community life is non-instrumental. Like Tagore, he also argues that life within a community is one of cooperation and mutual benefit. The very origin of social community is in shared roots. Whether that sense of shared roots happens to be in shared culture or neighbourhood or mutual dependency is irrelevant. Members draw comfort from the very awareness of social belonging. Relationship within the community is natural as well as rational and is directed at unity and harmony. Though dependency is involved in community life, it is more of a feeling of gratitude towards other members on whom we depend rather than treating people who depend on us as a little inconvenience that we all have to accommodate in order to lead a fulfilling individual good life. To Gandhi, the existence of community life is itself a great arena of fulfilment. Dependency is the essence of life. It is an asset that only higher beings can use for improving the quality of life. He believes that there is no individual 'good life'

independent of group 'good life'. Hence, he argues, it is the social group which accommodates political association within its structure and it should not be seen as the other way round. Politics has to promote social harmony and a sense of belonging which every community nurtures within its structure. Each member of the group with all his peculiarity is an essential part of common life. His/her idea of the good life is a derivative of group life, and his/her identity is derived from social community and not from the membership of a political community.

Gandhi recognises human individuality with metaphysical underpinnings and argues that each one knows that every individual is different in his constitution, temperament, ambitions, and so on and hence one accommodates difference on the psychological level and as a matter of fact. However, he says that dealing with difference need not be seen as a difficult task because, as human beings, we constantly negotiate otherness in our daily life. Each member recognises that everyone is working towards the same goal regardless of her or his particularities. It is a matter of understanding that leads to harmony in society.

Gandhi's argument does not support the idea that individuals working towards their own achievement of happiness without treading on other's rights would consequently generate general happiness in the community. It is hard to think, he says, how self-obsessed individuals can develop a sense of community where they feel they are responsible for the welfare of other members.²⁵ Such individuals cannot claim (as liberal nationalists do) inbuilt loyalty to the part of a land where they are born nor can they say that they are

loyal to people because they share the same blood or social traits, or societal culture. The loyalty that one develops, Gandhi argues, is towards the community one shares with, and where individuals' dreams are entangled. Adhering to social values is more appealing within the communitarian framework where mutual care, respect, solidarity, concern for welfare and social responsibility flow directly and naturally. However, it is wrong to assume as liberal nationalists assume that such naturalness is pegged to shared culture.

Nationalism as envisaged by liberal nationalists does not really bring the community together but thinks Gandhi, an ethical community with social network makes politics easier to operate. Hence, his solution was to change the conventional view of the nature of amoral politics and widen its scope to involve social morality within its domain. He sought to resolve the tension between amoral political life and ethical private life.

Morality in politics

Like Tagore, Gandhi argues that liberal nationalists concentrate so much on a wrongly conceived individualism, freedom, and equality that they have demoted morality to the private sector and have adopted an amoral stance in politics. Adhering to amoral principles in order to deliver equality and freedom takes away the ethical initiative from society and tethers it to the state. He feels that taking away the moral initiative from the public sphere and anchoring it in the private arena destroys the basic structure of the community, hence making nationalism undesirable as a political ideology. For Gandhi, there is no need to adhere to the liberal stance of amoral principles in public structure and

leaving morality to private arena in order to privilege equality and freedom of choice.

Gandhi argues that one can and should accommodate ethical principles in the private as well as in the public sphere. One's dedication to moral principles, he feels, has to sustain the pressure in political arena. There are moral actions and there are immoral actions.

Whatever the context, personal, national or international, the value of action itself does not change. Ethics is not derived from nor can it be determined by the state. It is the virtues and vices of people that form the style of the political community in a free society. It is their commitment to fairness or otherwise that dictates the moral commitment of the state they belong. To expect a free and fair political community individuals have to be free and fair within themselves. Passing laws will not make people virtuous nor can morality be achieved by the state imposing the laws, that is, a virtuous state cannot produce virtuous citizens but virtuous citizens can create a virtuous state.

Miller recognises this point and locates this as one of the major reasons for supporting cultural nationalism. He says that values are determined by the society and the state authorizes them through legislation. However, the difference between Gandhi's and Miller's idea is that Gandhi's community lives the values whereas Miller's community obeys the laws. For Gandhi, laws are not required to live a morally justifiable life because, he believes that people necessarily choose to follow ethical life, since they see them as the values worthwhile pursuing.

No doubt, individualism pulls each of us towards self-preservation, and pleasure, Gandhi says. Regardless of the circumstances influencing self-consciousness, each person deserves respect for her or his persona, and the freedom to enjoy it. However,

individuality, Gandhi says, does not simply consist in material self and the need for protection of that self. There is another aspect of human life, unrecognised by western politics and that is the all-important spiritual side. Development of spiritual life is as vital as that of material life for leading a worthwhile life. This can only be achieved when one is surrounded by moral life in private as well as public. There is no reason, Gandhi says, to believe that there can be two separate laws, one for the family and one for the nation. One's external life is nothing but the extension of one's inner life. Hence, it is not fair to expect people to separate their lives into private and public with two sets of morality.

Gandhi locates the reason for such dichotomisation in over-reliance on materialistically based individualism and rationalism which the west pursues. He says that this attitude has shifted the initiative of human society in pursuit of peaceful society through mutual cooperation to dependency on the state to arrange the system so that individuals fulfil their materially motivated self-interest. In their eagerness to privilege individuals' choice, their freedom and right to protect their material possessions the west has created a society where the natural faculty of human beings as moral beings has been undermined. In their attempt to rearrange society, he observes, they have invented a form of government which displaces individual's community identity and intertwines the welfare of individuals and the community with political judgment. The inherent nature of collective identity, which is porous, has been made secure so that the distribution of material welfare is concentrated on specific community. The connection between public morality and private ethics has been deranged in the process. An artificial dichotomy has entered society. Social life has been reduced to two independent spheres of human life, the

political and the private based respectively on amoral and moral principles guiding the life. Individuals are expected to exercise their judgments in private whereas political decisions are taken in the public interest. Gandhi does not accept the existence of two kinds of morality, that is, private and public. It is wrong to assume, he says, that there is any distinction between personal good and public good. He does not accept the belief that it is hard to follow the morality adhered to in private lives in political decisions, and that it is sufficient to justify it on the grounds of morality of intentions. Explaining on Gandhi's view, Raghuvir Iyer says that, "Gandhi's notion of power and of the relation between politics and society, or between politics (in the narrow sense) and politics (in the broad sense), [that] accounts for his tenacity in holding the view that politics and religion.....are inseparable, and in challenging the common contention that there are two levels or types or standards of morality, one for the individual in his private life and in his immediate surroundings, the other for political life and collective conduct."²⁶ It is true that the expectations of every human being are multifarious and, at times, these conflict with others' interests. However, he did not believe that in politics morality should be treated more leniently than in personal life because of this. It is because, Iyer says, "Gandhi took very seriously and regarded as highly complex and dilemma ridden, the process of moral growth, choice and decision for the sensitive individual that he regarded politics as altering the sphere, but not the moral value or validity or culpability, of human action."²⁷ Politicians should have the ability to make decisions which always conform to what is right and necessary. For Gandhi 'political integrity is as sacred as personal integrity.... Political and personal morality must coincide and extend to all human beings in all walks of life. The purification of politics requires the removal of the

taint of double standards by men of courage and integrity.’²⁸ He did not accept that politics, by virtue of the job it is expected to perform is necessarily sinful and cannot be purified.

Patriotism as seen by Gandhi

If liberal nationalism gives synonymous status to ‘nation’ and ‘culture’, like Tagore Gandhi interchanges nationalism with patriotism and redefines humanism in terms of democratic citizenship. He envisages the nation as a political community where every individual is recognised and respected regardless of caste, creed and colour. Greatly influenced by the great Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini’s writings, (he quotes him a great deal in his writings) he shares his thoughts that the nation is a ‘democratic association of free and equal individuals’. Patriotism, for Gandhi, is not an exclusive thing as it often translates in the western conception but it is all-embracing. If one is committed to the love of liberty, then one can transcend solidarity beyond one’s own community, beyond one’s own nation. “By patriotism”, he claims, “I mean the welfare of the whole people.”²⁹ It is not sought ‘to mount upon the distress or the exploitation of other nationalities.’ For him, love of country, as for Mazzini, lay in love of liberty. Love of country is love of respect for the rights of every individual for social justice. Gandhi locates a strong connection between ‘*swaraj*’ and love of ‘*swadesh*’, between self-rule and patriotism. He believes that ‘if *swaraj* is the end *swadesh* is the only legitimate vehicle’ for reaching that end.³⁰ Individual self-rule, he believes, can only be possible if one recognises the love and duty to other members of the community, no matter which

community we share. As Mazzini says, 'our nation deserves our love as long as it remains an instrument for 'the good and the progress of all. History, tradition, language, customs are not sufficient for a nation to be worthy of love. All that needs to be illuminated by a superior moral light that comes from the commitment to liberty and justice for all.'³¹ Gandhi truly shares his vision of patriotism.

Gandhi's views as compared to the views of Tagore

Gandhi and Tagore share similar thoughts on many aspects of the political ideology of nationalism. They both agreed that nationalism was an inadequate ideology because it fails to deliver equality, freedom and members' right to their individuality. They both equate nationalism with patriotism. They emphasize patriotism not to isolate one community from another, not to see them as competitors for providing the best material comfort for their own community at the cost of other communities. They picture patriotism in a wider context humanist context. They believed that patriotism in its right sense would pave the way for internationalism in wider aspect. They both were zealous guardians of moral values in society. They saw materialism and mechanisation in its extreme as detrimental to the development of ethical society and social integrity. However, Tagore was a visionary, a dreamer, whereas Gandhi was practical in the application of his ideology. This difference led to some major disagreements between them. Though Gandhi also, like Tagore, saw that nationalism, as conceived by the west, did not uphold the liberal tenets of equality, freedom and respect for individualism as it proposes to do; and that it used 'otherness' to promote the distribution of material wealth,

he did not reject nationalism as “*bhougolik apadevata*”, a geographical demon, as Tagore did. This is because he does not think that there is anything wrong with the ideology of nationalism itself. For Gandhi, unlike Tagore, political life is a significant part of individual life in a contemporary society. Political boundaries are necessary for the sake of effective administration. Togetherness within the political community can ensue easily within coherent society. Nationalism, he thinks, appears to have the potential to achieve this objective. He believes that one cannot advocate internationalism, a position which Tagore also favours, without understanding one’s own roots and commitments. It is essential that a political community act with a common voice while interacting with other national groups. “Internationalism is possible only”, he believes, “when nationalism becomes a fact, that is, when people belonging to different countries have organised themselves and are able to act as one man.”³² Nevertheless, he does not promote the ideology of nationalism as envisaged by the west. He thinks that western nationalism tends to favouritism, promoting the welfare of one community, at times, even at the cost of the welfare of other communities. It is for this, he says, “(i)t is not nationalism that is evil, but it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil.”³³ He basically proposes nations without using the western concept of nationalism.

Another major difference between Gandhi and Tagore is that Gandhi favoured reverting to ancient Hindu culture in order to instil a sense of togetherness between people of India who had lost their bearings under the influence of different rulers over many centuries, whereas Tagore strongly objected to such a move. Togetherness in India could be

achieved, Gandhi believed, if people were made aware of a spiritually led ethical community which ancient tradition of Hinduism promoted, instead of accepting western culture dominated by material superiority achieved by advance in the scientific field. He campaigned for a return to the virtues and wisdom of Hindu culture which promoted humane society where tolerance, sacrifice and selfless dedication dominated. He also believed that by creatively using the cultural values of ancient religion it was possible to rebut the stereotyping of Indians invented by the west, and revive their lost positive self-image. However, Tagore opposed such a move categorically for two reasons. Firstly, he believed that rejecting western civilization to the level Gandhi promoted was unrealistic and detrimental to genuine progress of Indian society. Material welfare was as important for future India, he argued, as spiritual happiness. He strongly argued for blending of Indian and western cultures which, he believed, could pave the way for a new kind of political system which heralded universalism within its stride. He believed that India should absorb appreciable qualities of western culture as it had done other cultures which were introduced through historical events, and benefit by them. He promoted the view that though proper control of scientifically advanced technology was essential, one should appreciate what western technology could do to improve human life and civilization at large. Secondly, though Gandhi and Tagore both shared the secular view of religion in a wider ideological sense, invoking Hindu scripture to base Indian society on was acceptable to Gandhi, for understanding oneself and regain self-respect. Tagore thought it would threaten unity and social integrity within communities. He believed that reviving Hindu culture would break India even further by isolating other communities which have shared the territory for generations. It exposed Indian society to the risk of

loosing harmony instead of building unity. He believed that it was unrealistic and unethical to strive for a Hindu nation when people of India had shared their lives for so long, and had developed a kind of social coherence by sharing a way of life without sharing a certain culture.

Assessment

The main thrust of Gandhi's argument against the western construction of the concept of nation is that it does not understand human nature in its right light. However valued the contribution of the prevalent western political philosophy was in recognising the importance of individual freedom and equality, their tenets were materially based and they did not recognise that human beings were intrinsically spiritual. He also rejects the Marxist interpretation (another western political philosophy of the 19th century) of history which assumes that our ideologies, ethical standards and values are altogether a product of our material environment. He believes that the power of the spirit of man had the ability to shape its environment to some extent and thus affect the course of history. The main reason for grounding liberal political theory in materialism is that western thinkers basically view human nature as particularly selfish. They believe that human beings can only accommodate others in society through fear of losing their right to their possessions whereas Gandhi does not accept this conception of human nature. (The influence of Locke and Hobbes has been significant in the construction of liberal philosophy.) "Liberal political thought", says Pantham writing about Gandhi's political theory, "is based on a pessimistic, one dimensional conception of man as a brutish and selfish being."

It is this conception of man that lies behind the preoccupation of the pre-democratic and democratic liberal thinkers with political devices or machinery rather than with techniques for the resolution of social conflicts. The reified and objectified state is their answer to man's brutishness and selfishness. Their reasoning is that because men are brutish and selfish, social order can be secured, not through any action by individuals, but through the structure of political machinery."³⁴ Gandhi did not believe that people were inherently immoral and hence needed to be disciplined. People live in communities not just for functional purposes but they do so by preference, by choice, he argued. They are not naturally so made that they care for their individual well-being over and above everything. On the contrary, he thinks, human beings are naturally moral and hence their ideals will only be realised by developing a society where people are not just law-abiding so that they can claim their rights, but one where they act according to what is morally right. The development of materially based modern civilisation leads them to be self-centred and immoral and needs laws to enforce morality. It serves as a 'positive menace to the moral growth of man'. Gandhi could not accept a political structure that was devoid of moral values. Nor did he accept the argument that material progress leads to enhanced moral society. He says that, modern civilization makes people materialistic but does not in any way whatsoever conduce to moral growth.³⁵ On the contrary, he says, history suggests that the rise and fall of civilisations is directly associated with material affluence and moral degradation.³⁶

Gandhi, with his philosophical outlook on politics, also maintains that the importance of communitarian values can be established in the moral consciousness of the people. He

does not accept that one should shift to the practico-political approach in one's anxiety to accommodate political organisation in modern liberal thought. He firmly believes that there is no need to separate public morality from private morality and argued that politics can be guided by the same moral principles which guide our social ideology. He describes the ideal society as "the square of *swaraj*" whose four inseparable or integrated sides are political, economic, social, and religious.³⁷ We should work, he says, relentlessly for the welfare and happiness of our body as well as for our soul. One cannot aspire to establish such social atmosphere in a society where an amoral public sphere is created with the help of social scientists and morality is treated as a private affair. Private and public morality have to ensue from only one source and that is human conscience, regard for truth and the welfare of all whether they are our own kith and kin, fellow citizens, followers of the same faith or share our resources or not.

Gandhi also puts sentiment back into human relationship which has been delegated to second position by western philosophy in the process of privileging individualism, rationalism and treating human behaviour as a material science. Human beings are essentially social beings. Community is a social network where people live together, enjoy their lives in relation to each other and feel the pleasure and pain of the community together. Hence, individual happiness is relative and dependent on the community of which we are a part. No individual can enjoy his/her good fortune surrounded by deprived community.

One can accept his vision that individual sovereignty should begin with the individual and his soul as the guiding force at the centre and expand its association in the same spirit to her or his immediate community, neighbours and world at large in an 'oceanic pattern' of political and economic activity. Sovereignty should begin from individual sovereignty over oneself extending to claiming community/political sovereignty. The same moral code should be the guiding force whether it is for oneself or for social community or political community. The ideals of political community should be such that they encourage *swaraj*, a peaceful satisfied, cooperative lifestyle. This, he believes, can only be achieved in smaller groups and not in big cities. The urbanisation of 20th century has led, he believes, to the communalisation of politics.³⁸ If one aspires for a coherent community, he says, over-centralised and bureaucratic system of government should give way to smaller groups where people recognise the real needs of fellow members. He sees nations as conglomerates of smaller social units where people recognise the real needs and learn to live a self-sufficient life with other members. Village life is where he sees future communities develop, where each individual contributes his share of duty, where every individual works for whatever is necessary to make the community a happy one and not in civic societies where disconnected individuals work and are expected to sacrifice their individual self-rule in favour of collective self-rule. "The village of my dreams is still in my mindMy ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world..... Everyone will contribute one's quota of manual labour. It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph offices (that is, modern facilities). For me it is material to obtain the real article."³⁹ (means to the end of achieving moral society) To

him, this is where the real *swaraj* exists. This is where he sees freedom, equality, and individuality expressed in their real terms. This is where he sees real social harmony and coherent political community.

In order to achieve the ideal community of his dream, he reverts to Hinduism in his writings. Many objections have been raised to Gandhi's idea of reviving cultural nationalism in the Indian political context while opposing nationalism as a concept in western vision, as pointed out earlier, Tagore being the most passionate of all. But, one can say in Gandhi's defence that reverting to Hinduism was done by him not to establish exclusivism nor was it done with the intention of creating a homogeneous culture. He makes it explicitly clear in his writings and says, "[n]othing can be farther from my thoughts than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his conception of religion itself was unique. He had a pluralistic vision of religion. He did not find any difficulty in acknowledging and praising the teachings of other religions. Religion in his reckoning was how one lived and sought the truth rather than what one believed in. For him, all religions develop a distinct vision of moral and spiritual ethos and hence, at the core they did not differ in their message. His reliance on cultural nationalism was to revive Hinduism, which he almost equated with Indian-ism, so that Indian people knew the value of their own culture before they could judge the aspects of newly introduced dominant western cultures. (However, his misrepresentation of equating Hinduism with Indian-ism led to major problems and controversies in the Indian politics of the time. It

appeared to run the risk of falling into the ideology of nationalism which he set out to reject. Because returning to Hinduism also meant maintaining some of the practices of Hindu religion, for example, the caste system, which were against the equality and freedom to every individual, regardless of where one was born, he tried to invoke. I shall return to this criticism in the following page.)

Gandhi draws a major distinction between acceptance of other cultures and cultural assimilation. Acceptance can, at times, lead to an unequal relationship if it is not done with the full understanding of the values involved in the respective cultures. There is a great risk of a disadvantaged culture being undermined by the dominant culture, and people forming a distorted view of themselves and their culture.⁴¹ It also leads to blind imitation without analysing the ethically attractive aspect of the culture adopted.

However, Gandhi thinks, 'learning from others involved discrimination, deciding what to reject and resist as well as what to accept and assimilate assimilating *some* of (its) the values and practices *because* they were *freely* judged by people (Indians) to be in their best *interest* was very different. Such an assimilation was an act of free choice and did not compromise people's (India's) moral autonomy.'⁴² He believed that merging cultures could only be moral if both the cultures merge from the stronger position of understanding one's own culture, knowing the values on which it is based and what moral values the other culture can offer to make one's own culture even richer. If merging of cultures is done by coercion, or for material gain, or for the fear of discrimination it amounts to giving up on one's moral autonomy, forgoing the moral values of one's own culture and submitting to political and social pressure for survival.⁴³

Another criticism of Gandhi which is often levelled at his approach is his inability and unwillingness to act against an unfair caste system which runs contrary to his ideals of fair society. In spite of fighting for equality for untouchables, Gandhi did not confront the ideology of caste system nor did he support the idea of positive discrimination suggested by other compatriots like Ambedker to even out the age-old differences and redistribution of power and wealth. His commitment arising out of his adherence to Hinduism, which in its ideology promoted caste system as a way of organising society, played a major part in gaining the support of upper class Brahmins and powerful landlords who were unwilling to give up hereditary powers determined by birth. Though, for Gandhi, reinforcing faith in Hinduism was meant to serve as a way of renewing a sense of belonging and denounce imperialism, it did not resolve the issue of power difference within the community. Moreover, in not taking any positive stand against hierarchical power structure, institutionalised discrimination, and the categorisation of certain groups by birth, while he directed his fight against hierarchical power structure of the British Raj in India, Gandhi appears to be contradicting his own principles. However, one could defend him against this objection. Gandhi made absolutely clear, in support of his secular vision of society, that no group should be given preference or special concessions. If one is looking for a consensual, organic society, Gandhi believed, it is essential that sense of equality arise out of fair-minded citizens. This will not arise if it is imposed on them by passing the laws. He made utmost effort to make sure that every section of society was brought into view and that political and cultural presence was given to every group. Gandhi saw this as a vital move for achieving integration and prosperity. Developing social

conscience, he saw, was vital for inculcating a shared sense of belonging and responsible citizenship.

Gandhi's discourse on nationalism, thus, is by no means without its problems. However, I believe that it provides, as with Tagore, an analysis of western conception of nationalism which highlights the problems it encounters in delivering the very tenets like liberty, equality and the right to cherish individuality, it assumes it delivers. He also shows very clearly the pitfalls of promoting nationalism under different circumstances, in different communities, and at different times in history away from its origins. His efforts to offer a new doctrine may be subject to many shortcomings due to his own conception of human nature and so on. But his critique of nationalism explains very effectively why nationalism in its present form is unacceptable and dangerous. However, to Gandhi refusing nationalism altogether, as Tagore advocates, is dismissing a doctrine which can have a positive contribution to make. He presents a forward looking glimpse of political communities where liberal values are recognised in their real terms and are implemented within the communities and where people are guided by their conscience towards other members, no matter what their cultural affiliation is.

Moreover, Gandhi and, to a great extent, Tagore's, critiques of nationalism present thought-provoking arguments particularly valuable at a time when the revival of nationalism is promoted in many parts of the world. Multiculturalism is how political communities are structured these days and that position cannot possibly be undone in contemporary states. The way forward could be to see the issue of togetherness itself as

located in interdependency and moral responsibility and duty towards other members rather than getting entrenched in age-old concepts of pre-political communities placed in shared history, shared culture and so on. If we understand nationalism of Gandhi in the right sense, one can also see how without its narrowness it can make a great contribution towards social/political harmony.

Conclusion

Gandhi does accept that national identity is an essential part of civilized life. His vision of nationalism is mainly ethical and incidentally political, and hence his belief that nationalism should not narrow its sight to protecting the material wealth of a section of the people, and its culture, but he applies it to general welfare of citizens. He sees Indian nationalism as a vision which should organise itself and find its full self-expression for the benefit of humanity at large. To achieve this, nationalism has to be outward looking one. One should not draw a boundary around oneself and act within that sphere. But one begins from inside with the individual at the centre and extends his identity outwards. The individual is, Gandhi believes, an individual first and foremost, and groups are nothing but collections of individuals.⁴⁴ Hence, he believes, as different individuals within group accept difference as the norm within the group, so should one accommodate difference between different groups. If one accepts this reality, there is no need to draw the line at any point for belonging. When one follows one's behaviour on ethical principles the decisions taken are always guided towards morally justifiable ones, regardless of who the beneficiary is. He was convinced that there would be no room for

conflict if people based their social identity on ethical principles and treated everyone as members regardless of difference. He follows the principle, as against the defence of Miller's ethical particularism, that, 'one should sacrifice oneself if it benefits the community, the community if it benefits the nation and nation if it benefits mankind'.⁴⁵

Nationalism in Gandhi's version is a forward-looking doctrine where people connect to each other as moral human beings. It is a constructive force armed with ethical principles treating humanity as a unit rather than different communities as groups one against the other. First of all, it highlights the problems of western nationalism and how it fails to guide its members to realise the tenets set by their own philosophy. Individualism, freedom, equality and justice are not presented to by them through following the ideology of nationalism. He unravels the mistake one can make in assuming that the nation-state is the only civilized way of arranging political communities. The West has created the political system for itself and assumes that the rest of the world has envisaged their political community in their vision as though there is no other way of imagining the community. Gandhi's vision dispels the myth that nationalism, in the western conception, leads to coherence in the contemporary world. In Gandhi's idea of nationalism, the individual is not the centrepiece who is connected to the nation directly. His sense of national community goes in decreasing circles. It radiates from nation to the part of the nation to a specific area and individual. It moves from a multitude of different groups to his own and to himself.⁴⁶ Thus, while accepting that difference naturally exists, he shows how one cannot afford to capitalise on difference and break communities into units with rigid boundaries for selfish intentions.

Secondly, his vision of nationalism though resembles communitarianism does not lead to exclusiveness as the western concept does. His community is not a group of people who sport a homogeneous lifestyle, or common ends and shared principles specific to their community and so on. They are a group who share their individual lives with each other. Gandhi's vision of nationalism advocates face-to-face community not because of any innate disposition to look after 'our own', but because members of the group can identify the needs more effectively. Their commitment to solving similar problems would not change if they had to offer help to a group with whom they did not share their life. Ethical principle will guide the action and not group membership. Community is not a dividing force as the western concept has been in the process of protecting their own kind. He sees it as a unifying force whereby the stress is moved away from protecting the rights of individuals and their control of resources as instrumental to seeking their individual pleasure to the distribution of the wealth and happiness without inconveniencing 'others' to the community members who are duty-bound to look after other members. In a land like India where different communities are well-embedded he resolves the issue of difference by highlighting the fact that individual differences are no different to group differences and that just as we negotiate individual differences within a community we can also negotiate and benefit from group differences. Conceptually the difference is open-ended. It is not difficult to see the problems it can cause. Difference has always played a part and it keeps playing a part whenever there is a power struggle, wherever there is struggle for control of resources, whether it is manifest in differing sexes, religions, or races. The consequences of creating and nurturing difference are

evident through history to this day. Creating difference and treating it as a threat is a dangerous game. Gandhi very effectively articulates his vision of nation where all such differences are defused at the onset. By arguing that bonding in society has to be developed when members belong to the group, and the fact of interdependency that we all recognise and trust rather than artificially created bonding, be it ethnic as in the family model or consensual or contractual as in the civic model or a combination of both the models for individual gain, he gives a vision of political communities where the individual can really aspire to a peaceful fulfilling life.

He also very effectively argues for private and public morality to be the same if we are to deliver civilized society in real sense. The result of advocating two sets of morality, or rather delegating morality to the private sphere and to one's immediate surroundings and having a different kind of attitude to the outside community cannot be justified for whatever reason if it does not adhere to universal ethical principles. One does not have to forgo other identities to fulfil the obligation to political identity. This only works if one's commitment to moral principles is the same as one's public morality, if one's duty to one's own people does not trample on the welfare of 'others'. Gandhi's contribution to the concept of freedom and equality give a new way of looking at the ideals.

Gandhi paints a grander picture of civic life than the one depicted by the western conception. He locates harmonious civic life in a wider framework of sharing political, social and economic life with different cultures. His contribution towards envisaging nationalism in eastern nations is not just an ideological discourse; he bases his arguments

on the actual experience of living the multicultural social life in India. He does not reject nationalism. He recognises the need for political boundaries but draws the boundary round an ethically shared community and a larger limit round humanity. He emphasises the importance of culture for every individual but he advocates keeping open every window which can bring a breath of fresh air from other cultures. He acknowledges the significance of the political aspect of life but does not accept the argument that politics guides social life. He appreciates that the political arena is a difficult arena in which to oversee the equality, and freedom of every individual yet he predicates a moral outlook for overseeing the task of the state rather than the amoral attitude privileged by the west. He shows us the right path to accommodating and assimilating ethical values other cultures have to offer, yet, understanding, nourishing, and celebrating one's own culture. With the example of the Indian community through history, he brings out various relevant aspects which can provide a logical alternative to the ideology of western nationalism.

Gandhi provides a concrete foundation for the arguments developed by many modern theorists and appears to conceal plausible counterarguments to the logic liberals offer for reviving nationalism under present conditions. Bhabha refers to cultural hybridity, to which Gandhi alludes in his discourse, and argues very strongly that shared identities are constantly in the making, and hence to isolate communities on a cultural basis is not a logical solution. This particularly queries the argument of Charles Taylor that there exist such holistic cultural communities and that they need to be protected through state support. Chatterjee picks on the distinction which Gandhi draws between public political

life and private social life and argues convincingly that such distinction need not necessarily be the part of a political organisation.

In his recent report, *The Future of Multi-ethnic Britain*, Parekh elaborates on a similar idea of political community to Gandhi's, and provides an alternative vision of accommodating multiculturalism within modern states. As discussed earlier, he recommends a minimalist state where moral sentiments are recognised. Citizens in such a state transcend differences like ethnicity, religion, and so on and accept the role of responsible membership of the political community.⁴⁷ Arguing for a shared societal culture is not an option for a multicultural state, as advocated by Miller and Kymlicka. But responsible citizenship can only be envisaged when a modern nation is seen as a community of communities. "In the language of political theory", Parekh says depicting the vision of Gandhi that, "the ideals and principles of both liberalism and communitarianism have to be pursued and realised" with equal stress.⁴⁸ One has to appreciate the validity of his argument for arranging contemporary political communities.

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41. This was almost a reality in most of the colonised world where it was instilled by the coloniser that their culture was superior because of their achievements in scientific field and their ability to control nature and provide material comfort to masses through industrialisation.
42. Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*, p.55.
43. *ibid.*, pp.54-55.
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45. Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu argues in a similar way: “If I knew something useful to myself and detrimental to my family, I would reject it from my mind. If I knew something useful to my family, but not my homeland, I would try to forget it. If I knew something useful to homeland and detrimental to Europe, or else useful to Europe and detrimental to mankind, I would consider it a crime”, as quoted by J. Kristeva in *Nations Without Nationalism*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press), pp.62-63.
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Conclusion

Though contemporary liberal polity has distanced itself from ethnic nationalism as an irrelevant ideology, some liberals believe that nationalism is a valuable sentiment which is instrumental for ensuring social and political coherence. They still think that nationalism has to be accommodated in some form for holding the political community together because they reckon 'constitutional patriotism' alone is not enough to anchor togetherness within the political community.¹ Belonging to a group only through political association, they believe, is not sufficient for citizens to accept their obligations voluntarily. A shared sense of belonging in some form, they say, is necessary for this purpose. Such shared identity, according to them, is already prevalent in shared community and hence, it is only rational, they argue, that shared public culture has to be promoted by the state in communities where more than one culture prevail.

Different liberal nationalists argue for different ways of accommodating minority cultures within the structure but they all argue that national culture has to be preserved because they believe that it is functionally and instrumentally significant for securing harmony within the nation-state. As I have summed up the arguments of the liberal nationalists, though Will Kymlicka believes that the state has to facilitate shared societal culture through its public institutions for functional purposes, he recognizes the importance of culture for every human being and argues for a polyethnic vision of society where minority culture groups should be allowed to adhere to their cultural norms and practices. He makes a special case for indigenous cultures which need protection by the state

whereas he believes immigrant groups should accept societal culture in their public lives and adhere to their cultures in their private lives. David Miller, another proponent of liberal nationalism, argues that shared culture is subjectively significant and rationally necessary for coherence and hence has to be promoted by the state. Coherence can only ensue, he believes, if people drive collectively to achieve shared objectives. His answer for structuring shared culture is through the assimilation of minority cultures into the majority culture through a 'give and take' process, whereas, Taylor reckons that minority cultures should be given access to their cultures by recognising them publicly, because denying access to someone's culture is not only against liberal principles but it is detrimental to assimilation within political space. He reckons that recognition of other cultures in the public arena is important also because it helps greater understanding of other cultures and thus helps to forge understanding and trust. This, he reckons, naturally leads to the formation of shared identity, and thus, leads to social and political harmony.

However, I have shown with examples that a shared culture does not necessarily bring about political harmony. It does not lead to the acceptance of obligations more enthusiastically than among citizens connected through 'constitutional patriotism' alone, as cultural nationalists assume. Also, it is debatable whether their argument for cultural nationalism is ethically and rationally justified. Even though one can accept that Miller may have a point when he argues that ethical universalism is not a viable option for delivering liberal values in terms of universalism because one cannot naturally relate oneself to the problems and the solutions of the communities to which one is not exposed even in the vaguest context, one can also wonder whether drawing a boundary around

one's own community and hold it as her prime duty to work for the welfare of such community can ethically be justified. One adheres to ethical values, and one behaves in an ethically justifiable way, whether in private or in public, and applies them to one's ethical life whether obligations are directed towards one's own community or outside it. This should be possible if ethical values themselves are derived from universal moral codes and observed in a broader sense than in terms of one's own community. As Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (as quoted by Julia Kristeva) argues, one has to take notice of the argument that, "the duty of the citizen is a crime when it makes one forget the duty of man."²

This brought me to the next conundrum: if the ideology of nationalism, as conceived in western political context, is ethically indefensible and logically debatable, can one explain why it has occupied such a pivotal role within western political discourse? I have explored the theories which Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, two prominent sociologists, developed to explain the involvement of nationalism in political discourse. Their theories convincingly elucidate the view that national identities are historically constructed to accommodate the sociological, economic and political changes which occurred as a result of the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century west. Though they differ in their views as to the involvement of culture in western political discourse, both argue that nationalism in the political context is neither a historically persistent component nor a socially inevitable element for coherence but it is an arrangement which served the need of the hour for industrialised society.

Such a narration of the historic development of nationalism casts strong doubt on the arguments of liberal nationalists that shared culture is an essential element for political coherence. If nationalism is a historical development responding to a certain social situation at a particular time in history, how can such political arrangement be appropriate to present day communities which are facing momentous changes, once again, due to changes in social, economic, and political conditions? Attempting to revive political arrangements which solved the problems at a particular time in history to address the problems of the new world situation, I observe, is not a philosophically defensible move. It will only give rise to the disorientation of minority cultures and increase mistrust between majority and minority cultures. It holds the possibility of creating more pronounced difference instead of erasing inequality between different cultures and the possibility of resistance to authority, dissent and in extreme cases subversion. Also, how can such a doctrine be envisaged as an ideology for universal application? It is not convincing, I believe, to think that social structure, perception of social/political life, perception of culture and identity and so on can be seen as the universal norm when they are constructed from the experiences of particular communities from a particular geographical region.

For this reason, an attempt to revert to nationalism to seek political harmony in the 21st century west has been very strongly critiqued by non-western political thinkers. I have particularly brought in the arguments of political thinkers from the Indian subcontinent, at this stage, because the solutions for which the west is looking to deal with the recent problem of accommodating multiculturalism has been a problem with them in their

political context for centuries. As Homi Bhabha suggests, “[t]he whole modern world is dealing with issues that colonial cultures had to deal with years ago. This complex mixture of cultures is a world-wide phenomenon that is setting new rules of cultural understanding.”³ For this reason it is possible, I observe, that their analysis of the situation and their solution to the problem may contribute some constructive ideas to tackling the social/political reality of multiculturalism. India has historically been exposed to multiculturalism and it has coped remarkably well with the situation.

Bhikhu Parekh, for example, argues convincingly that the western concept of nationalism itself is based on philosophically unjustifiable arguments. He finds it problematic to forge a connection between shared culture and shared political life; he queries the connection between societal culture and distributive justice. I have argued along with him that the role which culture and cultural community play in one’s life is very different from that of political community. To view them as one and the same leads to social and political implications. It is an observed truth, particularly in the modern political context, that most nations shelter culturally plural communities. Identities are negotiated in social and political context. They do not inherently exist but similarities are sought through intercultural dialogue. Also, since cultural nationalists collapse cultural identity into national identity they assume that culture and geographical area inherently go hand-in-hand. It is fair to argue, I believe, that it is a historically experienced fact that one’s culture travels with one. one draws comfort and a sense of continuity from one’s culture but that does not hinder one’s sense of duty to one’s immediate group with whom one shares one’s life. Reciprocation of obligations is a social virtue derived from universal

ethical principles. Moreover, it is questionable whether distributive justice is easier to arrange if people share public culture because shared culture consequentially leads to shared responsibility. Accepting one's share of obligations is a matter of social conscience which develops with the right kind of moral teaching generally and not by a certain culture, in a certain way. People are essentially moral beings who associate with other members of society and wish to accept social duties because they genuinely enjoy social life and appreciate living in a group rather than viewing obligations as something which one has to undertake in order to ensure one's rights.

Moreover, I have endeavoured to point out, as Bhabha suggests, that shared identities cannot be created, nor can a shared culture be constructed. Bhabha explains how and why identities could not be constructed as liberal nationalists believe. He observes that people are not passive agents who can be manipulated into accepting the identities structured for them. I have resorted to Bhabha's analysis giving us a detailed narrative of such an attempt by the colonizers in late 19th and early 20th century India and how it did not lead to the anticipated result of political control as they had hoped and instead led to the formation of resistance to political and cultural domination. Not only is non-recognition of difference a form of oppression but also non-recognition of similarity forged between cultures due to hybridisation is also unsettling and detrimental to political harmony.

Another major point which one can raise against reviving nationalism as a viable political theory is that it cannot be accepted ubiquitously in the contemporary world because it is wrong to assume that political unity can only ensue within shared culture. It may have

been the case in the western nations but such a vision of nation is not a feasible option for nations which are historically multicultural in their structure. Political unity is not about 'shared way of life': it is about 'shared life'. One accommodates whatever arrangement is appropriate for seeking coherence within the existent social structure. It is not a matter of recognising that difference exists in society: it is how difference is negotiated which counts. Moreover, one can agree with Gayatri Spivak that arguing for shared culture as a necessary condition for national coherence is, as deterministic as arguing for shared ethnicity. It is as exclusivist as ethnic nationalism and unsuitable for the reality of the multicultural structure of today's political communities. If liberals accept political membership to be voluntary, how can they revert to membership decided by non-voluntary elements?

However, such strong criticism of nationalism in Indian political discourse is not a recent development. Opposition to nationalism as a coherent doctrine for multicultural states has been persistent from earlier political philosophers of the Indian subcontinent. I have returned to the 1920s, the hey day of nationalism in the west, to argue that the negative aspects of nationalism as a theory have been recognised since then and it has always been resisted as a divisive ideology constructed for political purposes within multicultural nations. Modern political thinkers have drawn on many convincing objections raised by great Indian thinkers of the time to highlight the ideological problems nationalism harbours within its structure. I have particularly alluded to the arguments forwarded by two prominent philosophers of early 20th century colonial India, namely, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, in their opposition to resurrecting nationalism as a

benevolent ideology. This is because, I believe, they speak from a perspective which is experientially unavailable to many western writers. They have argued rightly. I observe, that nationalism has a built-in tendency to divide the community and not to unite it as it has often been claimed to do. It does not deliver values like equality, freedom, and individualism for which liberal political ideology aims. It does not guide us towards an ethical community. The circumstances under which nationalism raised its head have a lot to do with the shape it has assumed. The very history of nationalism suggests that it took its shape to accommodate the Industrial Revolution and its consequential effect on social and economic structure in the west. Since it originated at a time when enormous increase in material wealth was the main trend, the ensuing ideology revolved round ensuring equality, liberty and individualism within materialism. It became a prime duty of the state to oversee the distribution of wealth generated by industry. Instead of trying to secure a harmonious social community with moral commitment to the welfare of every member, the political structure which developed concentrated on arranging a materially fair community. Instead of re-establishing lost social structure within interacting communities, the state endeavoured to secure individualism, liberty, and equality in economic terms. This, they observed, led to the estrangement of ethical principles from the political arena and tethering it to an amoral political structure. Tagore and Gandhi saw political and social harmony in ethical communities seeking equality, dignity and so on in spiritual terms.

My own inclination in seeking politically harmonious communities is towards the solution Gandhi and Tagore propose; for seeking political groups not as *Gesellschaft*, that

is, an 'association', but as *Gemeinschaft*, a 'community' in Ferdinand Tonnies's sense. It is in seeking togetherness, as Gandhi and Tagore envisage, in the shared community in the wider sense. Gandhi and Tagore, both accept the liberal nationalists' position that there is more to citizenship than loyalty to a constitution. Their argument appears to be very similar to that of the liberal nationalists in the sense that they both agree that constitutional patriotism alone does not create and sustain coherence in political community but they do not ground the sense of belonging in ethnic or in shared culture as cultural nationalists do. They both accept patriotism as the basic sentiment for political coherence, as Herder and Fichte do, but they do not accept that ethnic roots are necessary for grounding patriotism. For Gandhi and Tagore, patriotism is exhibited in respect for everyone's individuality yet respect as a member of the community. They seek the welfare not of a section of people who share ethnic bonds but of 'the whole people' whoever they are. Patriotism in their terms is expressed by offering one's loyalty and by contributing to the well-being of every member. It is located in working towards the integrity of a group. Gandhi aims for spiritual freedom like Fichte but he does not seek it in political life. For Gandhi, spiritual freedom is achieved in realising individuality not by doing solely as one wishes but as one would wish were one duty-bound to the community which has given one existence, and that his actions are conducive to the welfare of his community. He accepts Miller's argument that moral values are determined by the community, but he disagrees that the state should enforce these on its citizens through statutes. He believes that people live the values through their actions rather than observe them as obedience to the political structure. He greatly appreciates and respects liberal values like liberty, equality and so on as the most significant virtues but shows how

liberal nationalism is mistaken to assume that they can only be seen in material terms. Both Gandhi and Tagore advocate a communitarian basis for a harmonious liberal state. However, the way that they seek to create a socially harmonious society is not similar to the one proposed by liberal nationalists. They do not seek 'exclusive community' for delivering effective welfare of its members. They see integrity in shared life, and in ethical commitment to the community in private as well as public life. Citizens in their vision of political community do not need ethical particularism to protect their fellow citizens because they will be guided by ethical principles rather than as a duty to favour one's own kind as a contractual assurance of reciprocation.

The sense of togetherness is not dependent on shared descent, shared space, shared history nor shared culture. National unity, our shared political identity lies in sharing our life with those with whom we share our surrounding and common interdependent life and not on any ontological identity we share through ethnicity or culture. It is acutely connected with shared life and a shared sense of moral responsibility for the welfare of other members of the community. Society is not born out of people living together in a common place but it is contingent on interdependency for making life comfortable emotionally as well as materially. Taking a step away from the emotional side of human life and tethering it to rationalism and individualism as though individuals are outside common life is a misunderstanding of human nature. Thus, cultural nationalism can be more of a stumbling block for securing political coherence and not an asset which promotes togetherness.

Though one can reject nationalism as a relevant doctrine for contemporary multicultural societies, one cannot deny that a sense of belonging among citizens is necessary for securing political coherence. One can agree with nationalists that shared commitment to political community alone is not enough to bring about the necessary sense of togetherness and commitment to common cause. Liberal nationalists are right to argue this point. However, the point of discomfort for liberal nationalism is, as discussed, that the majority way of life (particularly the western way which privileges autonomy) is the preferred way and the only discussion in which such writers like Miller, Kymlicka, and Taylor engage is how other cultures can be 'tolerated' and how they can be 'accommodated' within their structure. But the issue in multicultural communities, as Parekh observes, is not about tolerating outside cultures amongst us: but it is about celebrating cultural diversity and respecting all members for their contribution towards social harmony. He rightly points out that 'citizenship is about status and rights, belonging is about being accepted and feeling welcome'.⁴ Where can one find such an environment where every member in a multicultural community feels that he belongs to the political community as a citizen in status as well as in spirit? The way ahead may lie in taking into account the Gandhian view of political community and Indian experience and locating political solidarity in an ethical social community where liberal values are apportioned to each individual and every individual is treated as a coherent part of the community in his own right. Liberal nationalism, as an ideology, has no resources to deliver this.

Multiculturalism is the new order of the world and it is not possible to reverse the social structure. Hence, it is an inappropriate vision to see future political communities in nationalistic terms. The way forward is for exploring viable solutions to structuring multicultural nations where political harmony can exist and liberal tenets are realised. Reviving nationalism in contemporary multicultural communities, I consider, is not a justifiable option.

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