

Homogeneous identity and nation formation

Dr. Suman Acharjee

Assistant Professor (English)

Central Sanskrit University, Ekalavya Campus, Agartala

Email - sumanacharjee20@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article stresses on the effort of the nation-builders those who like to keep running hegemonic structure for the sake of homogeneous concept of nation. This present world has become a global village due to developed transport system and smooth internet connectivity. As a result, inter-dependency among the nations has increased a lot. It has resulted into the manifold increase of import-export business. This Covid-19 pandemic situation is the burning example of this during which all the nations are being found on same ground with the motive of helping each and other in distress. In such a scenario, the colonial mimicked concept of nation and nationality sound back-dated and conflicting. In this modern era, people are found crossing borders now and then for their livelihood and with various other purposes. Thus all the people are contributing collectively in enriching the world governance system. The theme of India's G-20 presidency – 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' is the burning example of the present day global thought.*

Key Words: *Nation, nationality, nationalism, border, identity crisis.*

1. Concept of nation and the sense of homogeneity:

The word 'nation' is a by-product of colonial thinking. During the British colonial settlements in various countries, the colonized felt the necessity of interlinking the geographical arena with the identity of the inhabitants living in that particular demographic location with the purpose of generating a sense of unity by the illusory sense of nationalism. Benedict Anderson here rightly regards 'nation' as "an imagined political community" (Anderson 6). It is imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 6). This sense of unity generated during the colonial period seemed worked well in fighting against British or colonizers. Thus 'nation' as a concept can be termed as an artificial one which was created suppressing the heterogeneous nature of the society.

And it is from this concept of 'nation' the sense of identity takes part and the concept of nationality and nationalism come into existence. Nationality refers to the process of identity formation on the basis of geographical location of the nation. Thus national identities like Indian, British, Bangladeshi, Pakistani etc. were generated and it is from this sense of national identity the concept of citizenship also comes into existence. And this sense of being an esteemed citizen of a nation and the taught realization of sacrificing of one's own self for the sake of one's own nation is the concept of nationalism. These concepts like nation, nationalism, nationality etc. seem very unrealistic in this present global scenario in which the sayings of Upanishad 'the entire world is one family' have been prioritized.

The narrow nationalistic sentiment gives birth to border and identity crisis. As the concept of nation is inter-linked with the demographic location of any country, it becomes pertinent for any country to draw its own border-line and safeguard the same properly. This image of border further gives birth to border-conflict which claims many innocent lives either through riots or through various confrontations in the line of control. Amitav Ghosh rightly describes this phenomena in his novel 'The Shadow Lines' through the character of Tha'mma who manipulated a sense of hatred after 1964 riot in Dhaka for the people beyond border. She says:

I gave it to the fund for the war. I had to, don't you see? For your sake; for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out. (Ghosh 237)

The above mentioned quotation is ironical in the sense that the sense of unity which was created in the name of nationalism during the British regime to fight against the colonizers still generates the same kinds of feeling of insecurity towards others beyond border. It indicates that this sense of insecurity comes along with the concept of nation and carries the same along with it.

Homi K. Bhabha in regard to the concept of nation says –

Nations, like narratives lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. (Bhabha 1)

The above mentioned Bhabha's quotation regards the concept of nation as an effort to generate an 'impossible sense of unity'. The question automatically strikes the mind is why this sense of unity is impossible. The very answer of this question lies in the nature of nation which is purely heterogeneous i.e. this society is diverse in nature. The true essence of this society is diversity and where there is diversity, disunity is natural. As a result of it, political disunity, ideological disunity, cultural disunity, racial disunity etc. which sometimes result into violent clash and confrontations truly justify the saying of Homi K. Bhabha. In support of Bhabha's thinking the below mentioned quotation also is worth mentioning -

The production of a unified imaginary community can be both nationalisms greatest strength and its ultimate weakness. Although the myth of nation might function as a valuable resource in uniting a people in opposition to colonialism, it often does so by ignoring the diversity of those individuals it seeks to homogenize... (McLeod 103).

2. Nation & border:

After discussing the real nature of nation, it is pertinent to describe the concept of border too. Border is simply a political by-product. The logic behind the creation of border is to nurture a hegemonic system and to uphold a sense of unifying identity. The present political scenario of any nation is sufficient enough to show the loopholes behind this sense of unity which was expected to be a permanent one with the concept of nation. Modern day political system which relies on vote bank politics creates political disunity among the subjects of any particular nation which sometimes takes the form of bloodshed and riot and thus questions the sense of unity. In regard to border / partition, Someshwar Sati comments:

The logic of the partition appears to be arbitrary. The lines that divide India from East Pakistan are as illogical as the lines of the circle the narrator draws on the map with the help of his compass and pencil. These lines are merely the whims of politicians and nothing else as they cannot enforce cultural difference nor can they separate the two communities living across the border. (Sati 55)

The above mentioned quotation highlights the loopholes behind the concept of border. Tripura, one of the north-eastern states in India which is surrounded by Bangladesh in all three sides experiences the frailty of the border now and then. Many Bengali refugees had to leave Bangladesh and to take shelter on different occasions in Tripura due to many political reasons. But their sense of cultural connectivity with Bangladesh still can be noticed. Even many of them still visit Bangladesh through some porous areas in the border to meet their remaining relatives there. This influx of refugees in Tripura has become a ground of conflict in between non-tribals and tribals. Sometimes it took violent shapes also. But the very reason behind this conflict is the manipulation of cultural identity and the sense of insecurity which both of them feel under the political influence.

3. Conclusion:

Srimad Bhagavad Gita is worth quoting here in which Bhagavan Shri Krishna says that change is inevitable and even the same is scientifically proven through the sayings of Charles Darwin who once proclaimed the theory of 'survival of the fittest'. 'Fittest' here means that species which or who can adopt and adept in the ever changing atmosphere. Both the sayings authenticate that change is must. From this perspective, the sense of remaining or saving the root culture from change sounds illogical. But both non-tribal and tribal people are fighting on the same ground

which stimulates one to find out the proper cause behind this. If this matter is inspected properly, it can be said that it is biased political thinking under the guise of cultural purity promotes this sense of disunity which again brings into light the frail demand of unity behind the sense of nationalism. Shiv Khera represents the present scenario of modern society in the following way:

... each person is not only looking for loopholes to cheat the system, but there is also a competition about “who’s the bigger crook? (Khera 53)

The above mentioned quotation truly highlights the present internal scenario of any particular nation in which for the sake of political supremacy each and every citizen is divided by political ideology. Though homogeneity is imposed in the name of national identity but a sense of division still prevails sometimes in the shape of language, culture, religion etc. This sense of division upholds the heterogeneous nature of the society and nation which proves homogeneous identity as a fading feature.

REFERENCES:

1. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.
2. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. 1988. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.
3. Bhabha, Homi K. “Introduction: narrating the nation.” *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. New York: Routledge, 1990. 1-8. Print.
4. Derrida, J. “Letter to a Japanese friend.” *A Derrida Reader*. New York: Harvester, 1991. 273-78. Print.
5. Desai, Gaurav. “Rethinking: Postcolonial English Studies.” *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Malden, USA: Blackwell, 2000. 523-39. Print.
6. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Newyork: Grove Press, 1963. Print.
7. Khera, Shiv. “Citizens: Crooks or Custodians?” *Freedom is not Free*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 2005. 50-58. Print.
8. McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt. Ltd., 2010. Print.
9. Waugh, Patricia. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.