

NATIONAL UNITY, NATION AND NATIONALISM

Jayaprakash Narayan

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN (1902 -79), popularly called 'Lok Nayak' was one of the most prominent leaders and thinkers in modern India. He played a major role in the struggle for Independence. His struggle continued even after the country achieved Independence. He played a major role in the Socialist and Sarvodaya movements and finally in the movement against suppression of civil liberties (1974-7) popularly known as the J.P. Movement. In this extract from *Jayaprakash Narayan: Selected Works*, vol.2, J.P. explores the changing connotations of nation and nationality at different points of time. The meanings of nation and nationality depend heavily on the circumstances of the state and the structure of society. However, in ultimate analysis, it means that 'the lower classes – the masses – should fight imperialism not to secure their own freedom from exploitation but to enthrone the bourgeoisie and the landed magnates, who themselves do not participate in that fight, in the place of the imperial power. This unity can be maintained only at the cost of mass consciousness.'



A. Work in small groups and discuss the following questions:

1. What type of country is India?
2. What is democracy?
3. Name some famous personalities Bihar has produced.
4. Who was J.P.? What do you know about him?
5. How did he come to be known as 'Lok Nayak'?
6. Why is 5th June known as 'Sampoorna Kranti Diwas'?

NATIONAL UNITY, NATION AND NATIONALISM

1. What is national unity? What is nation? What is nationalism?
2. Let us compare two **notable** events of our national history: 1857 and 1885¹. There were only twenty-eight years that separated those two events. Yet they **wrought** an incredible change in 'national' outlook. 1857 witnessed an open and armed struggle for sovereign power; 1885 an act of humble petitioning.
3. From a struggle for **sovereign** power to prayer for a Royal Commission marks a great change. Yet, the latter has been called 'the beginning of the formulation of India's demands'.
4. If, however, both 1857 and 1885 represented national² movements, it is obvious that nationalism means different things at different times. The difference lies not only in its objectives but also in its human content. In 1857 feudal chiefs and their soldiers were the 'nationalists'; in 1885, seventy-two gentlemen extracted from the middle classes, including the cadre of retired government servants.
5. These facts throw a flood of light on the problem of nationalism and national unity. Neither the feudal chiefs who fought in 1857 nor the *baboos* who founded the Congress in 1885, comprised the whole nation and stood for all the classes and groups within it. It would have been comic for the **peasants** in 1885 to have 'united' with the *baboos* in demanding 'seats' in the councils and more jobs for the English – educated! (Perhaps it is not quite obvious even now that it is only slightly less comic today to expect the peasant to unite, again with the '*baboos*', in fighting for an undefined *Swaraj* and a mysterious thing called the Motherland.)

¹ 1857 and 1885: 1857 was the year of the so-called 'Sepoy Mutiny' and 1885 was the birth – year of the Indian National Congress.

² I have said above the nationalism in its modern sense is a recent development and grew with the nation – states of capitalism. Psychological equivalents of the nation, however, in the sense of political institutions being made the centre of the loyalties of men to their kings and the devotion of the Greek to his city. I am using the word nationalism in this broad sense here.

6. Thus we see that a 'nation' does not in reality mean the whole nation, nor does nationalism comprise the interests of all the classes and groups within it. At different times different classes constitute the 'nation' and give expression to nationalism. What class or group would play this role at a given time depends upon the **circumstances** of history and the structure of society. It may often happen that the so-called national interest of the moment is actually against the real interests of the majority of the people. When the cry of 'the nation in danger' was raised in the General Election of 1931 in Great Britain, the purpose in reality was to **stampede** the people into voting for the **perpetuation** of British capitalism, standing as it did for their exploitation and economic bondage. To talk, therefore, of the nation as something undivided and whole, is to become victim to class propaganda.
7. The Indian nation is made up of princes, industrialists, bankers, merchants, peasants, labourers, etc. Nationalism does not mean the same thing to all these classes. The freedom of one of them is not the same as the freedom of the other. Nor is the manner in which they would fight for freedom, the same for all.
8. Let us take the princes. Their freedom means complete sovereignty which can be won only on the battlefield. But which of the princes, since 1857, is in a position to go to war for his sovereignty? It is clear that the princes must permanently remain **vassals** of British imperialism. This naturally ranges them against the 'national' movement in so far as it opposes that imperialism. Here is the **first breach** in national unity.
9. The landlords of India, as is well known, are largely the creation of British **imperialism**. The bigger landlords have always solidly stood with imperialism and have been its **strongest props** in the countryside. Nationalism has no meaning to these people – accept jobs in the higher services; and if any political power is to be given to Indians on account of nationalist forces gathering strength, then the balance of such power. They themselves are not interested in opposing or even agitating against imperialism. Their entry into politics is merely to ensure that their interests do not suffer on account of any power being 'transferred' to Indian hands. No one with the least political understanding

or experience can talk of unity with the landlords. Here is the second breach in national unity.

10. Let us take the industrialists next. Nationalism to them means complete freedom to exploit the country's resources (of men and materials) and to build up their fortunes, or, as it is **euphemistically** put, to develop the country. To do this they require a great deal of control over the State - leading ultimately to complete control at once; but, since that is too risky to secure, they would be satisfied with gradual concessions of such control, i.e. with 'reforms'.

B1. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What were the two important events and when did they take place?
2. How did they bring incredible change in national outlook?
3. 'Nationalism does not mean the same thing to all the classes.' Why does J.P. say so?
4. What, according to the author, is the first 'breach' in 'national unity'?
5. "No one with the least political understanding or experience can talk of unity with the landlords. Why? Explain.
6. What, according to J.P., is the second 'breach' in national unity?

11. The Indian industrial class has grown up under the **aegis** of imperialism and is completely at its mercy economically and politically. It has no other foreign support, as the Irish bourgeoisie had in the USA. In India itself its growth has not resulted in such benefits to the people, nor has it so made its influence felt on the economic or cultural life of the country, as to arouse and gather enthusiasm and support for itself. The result is the inability of this class to oppose imperialism. At best it can put pressure on it. But even this pressure it is unable to exert **as** a class. The only manner in which it can bring pressure to be exerted on imperialism is by inducing and **surreptitiously** helping other classes, with lesser stakes, to do so. This help, too, it will withdraw if the objective of the pressure is any other than what is demanded by the interests of their class.
12. Thus, we see, first, that the Indian industrialists are unable themselves to oppose imperialism; secondly, that they would be satisfied with facilities for economic development; and thirdly, they would support nationalism only when

it aims at placing them in the seat of power. Here is the third breach in national unity.

13. Let us take the peasants now. India is a land of peasants. If Indian nationalism has any meaning, it should mean the freedom of the peasants. What is that freedom? Above all, it is freedom from exploitation irrespective of whether that exploitation is carried on by a brown or a white skin. It is, further, the opportunity to shape the nation's economic and political policies in accordance with their own interests. In short, it is a peasant *raj*.
14. As for method of struggle, peasants have always known only one method – direct action. Such action, however, is as dangerous for the foreign oppressor as for the native. It is necessary therefore, that in the interest of the latter, the peasants do not become conscious of their economic and political destiny. In other words, 'national' unity breaks up as soon as the peasantry becomes conscious. Here is another breach in unity.
15. Likewise with the workers. The workers' freedom means freedom from wage-slavery by social ownership of means of production. Like the peasants, the workers' weapon too is direct action. And they too must not become class conscious, so that national unity may be maintained. A class-conscious working class means the break-up of national unity. Here is a further breach.
16. The above analysis has shown that there is no such thing as national unity which the socialists are trying to destroy. Nationalism does not mean the same thing to all the classes within the nation – it is not to be simply expressed as the overthrow of the foreign incubus. Some classes in their very nature are *for* that **incubus**. Of those that are against, some are incapable of opposing it, and those that are in a position to do so, have fundamental interests directly opposed to those of the first.
17. The analysis shows, further, that the national unity ... means in reality that the lower classes – the masses – should fight imperialism not to secure their own freedom from exploitation but to enthrone the bourgeoisie and the landed magnates, who themselves do not participate in that fight; in the place of the imperial power. This unity can be maintained only at the cost of mass consciousness.

B.2. 1. Write T for True and F for False statement :

- (i) The Indian industrial class can effectively oppose imperialism.
- (ii) The Indian industrial class support nationalism whole heartedly.
- (iii) The natives would love if the peasants became conscious of their economic and political destiny.
- (iv) A class-conscious working class means the break-up of national unity.

B.2.2. Answer the following questions briefly :

- 1. What is the third 'breach' in national unity?
- 2. What do you understand by 'peasant raj'? Explain.
- 3. 'National unity breaks-up as soon as the peasantry becomes conscious.' What does J.P. mean by this statement?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

notable (adj): unusual or interesting enough to be mentioned

wrought (v): shaped, produced

sovereign (adj): a sovereign nation rules itself, used for referring to the highest power in the country

peasants (n): small farmers with little or no land, working in others' fields for their livelihood.

circumstances (n): facts or conditions that affect a situation

stampede (v): to force them without giving them chance to think about

perpetuation (n): upholding something that is wrong, unfair, or dangerous

vassals (n): a person or country that is completely controlled by or dependent on another person or country

breach (n): contravention, failure to do something that one is expected to do

imperialism (n): the actions of a powerful country that tries to gain control or influence over the economic, political and social life of weaker countries

props (n): support, persons who supported the system to be strong or to continue to exist

euphemistically (adv): talk in a way where mild or indirect word or expression is substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt, when referring to something unpleasant

aegis (n): under the protection or authority of a particular group or person

surreptitiously (adv): in a secret way, so that others will not notice

incubus (n): a cause of worry, especially a bad dream

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

- 1. Attempt a definition of nationalism in the light of what J.P. says in the lesson.
- 2. Which element does J.P. find sadly missing in the popular notion of nationalism? How can it be incorporated?
- 3. Did India really achieve what J.P. wanted it to achieve?

C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

- True nationalism resides in mass-consciousness
- Unity in diversity

C. 3. COMPOSITION

- You are the secretary of the cultural association of your school/ college. You have decided to hold a debate on 'have the objectives of 'Sampoorna Kranti' really been achieved?' **Write a notice in about 50 words inviting student's participation.** Include time, venue and topic of the debate. Also, mention the person to be contacted for the purpose.

D. WORD STUDY

D.1. Dictionary Use

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

sovreign	circumstances	economically	transferred	strenth
propganda	accordence	bourgeoisie	ownersip	consious

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

strange	movement	play	interest	fight
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D.2. Word-formation

Look at the following examples:

*"The result is the **inability** of this class to oppose imperialism. At best it can put pressure on it. But even this pressure is **unable** to exert as a class."*

In the above example by adding 'in-' to 'ability' and 'un-' to 'able', we have formed the opposites **inability** and **unable** respectively. In the same way we can make opposite by adding 'dis-' and 'anti-'. Given below is a list of selected words from the lesson. Make opposites by adding 'in-', 'un-', 'dis-' and 'anti-' wherever suitable:

real	educated	national	economic	complete
do	interested	controlled	secure	satisfied

D.3. Word-meaning

1. Ex.1. Match the words in **Column A** with their meanings in **Column B**:

Column A

facts or conditions that affect a situation
 force someone without giving him chance to think about
 continuing with something that is wrong, unfair, or dangerous
 a person or country dependent on another person or country
 persons who support something or somebody
 a cause of worry
 under the authority of a particular group or person
 in a secret way, so that others will not notice
 failure to do something that one is expected to do

Column B

props
 circumstances
 stampede
 vassals
 perpetuation
 aegis
 breach
 surreptitiously
 incubus

Ex. 2. Fill in the blanks with suitable words given below:

mysterious motherland moment majority imperialism
 industrialist withdraw objective freedom development

- India is our
- Every of our life is important.
- Rural is a must for any country.
- J.P. had the support of
- In modern times has changed its old form.
- We should honour and guard our
- What is main of learning English?
- There is something about Netaji's death.
- Jamshedji Tata was a great
- The troops began to from Kargil.

D. 4. Phrases

Ex.1. Read the lesson carefully and find out the sentences in which the following phrases have been used. Then use them in sentences of your own:

struggle for on account of made up of fight for talk of

E. GRAMMAR

E.1. Fill in the blanks with correct prepositions:

1. Nationalism means different things different times.
2. These facts throw a good lightthe problem of nationalism
3. The baboos did not stand all the classes.
4. The difference liesits objective.
5. The purpose was to stampede the people voting for the perpetuation
..... British capitalism.

Ex. Read the following extract from the lesson:

"Thus, we see, first, that the Indian industrialists are unable themselves to oppose imperialism."

In the above line an infinitive 'to oppose' has been used. Find as many instances of infinitives as you can from the lesson and use them in sentences of your own.

F. ACTIVITY

Ex. 1. Make a note of the important points in paragraph 1-6.

Ex. 2. Write a summary based on your notes in about 150 words. Give a suitable title to your write-up.

