Exclusion and Desire for Power: A Distinctive Characteristic of Nationalism

An important idea that emerges regularly in the theoretical understanding of nationalism is the 'idea of exclusion'. Perennials and primordials believe that the world's natural order ensures the exclusion of those who don't belong to that particular order. At the same time, cultural modernists understand that the change in the mode of economy ensures exclusion. As primordialists point out, if the world's natural order is a division of humanity made by culturally fixed groups, then the groups would tend to exclude others. Such order is bound to create hostility between nations and ethnic groups. At the same time, it is difficult to prove that the genetic pool of smaller social units such as family and clan is extendable to larger groups. It is also pertinent to note that boundaries of ethnic identity are fluid and are continuously redefined and reconstructed via individual choice and according to changing conditions. So, the primordial and perennial claim that ethnic and national ties are ineffable is problematic. The organic nationalism theory also neglects changes affecting nations, such as migration and colonisation, and fails to explain the reasons for the loss and rebirth of nations. Mere knowledge of ethnic ties is not sufficient in predicting the dynamics of ethnic groups, as the use of ethnic attachments for political and nationalist ends can transform their very meanings. In this way, primordial sentiments are ineffable, overpowering, and coercive.

Primordial identities question emotion and affective ties and explain the power of cultural givens of human existence, such as blood, kinship, language, custom, religion, and territory. In this way, cultural primordialists build on the anthropological conception of culture, which defines it as a total way of life having a unique historical group past. However, the imagination of unique peoplehood, distinct culture, and distinct historical experience encoding a set of symbolic patterns remains a fundamentally divisive and exclusivist doctrine. Isaji (1992) situates primordial attachments alongside modern secular civil ties, which impede and dissolve the civil ties of the modern state.

Other than impeding the functions of the modern state, another marked gap in primordialism is its givenness and unquestionable reverence for the fixed social position. An organic understanding of nationalism imposes retrospective nationalism on communities and groups, whereas the identities and consciousness could have been local, regional, or religious.

On the contrary, socio-cultural modernists have historically been grounded in addressing the issue of nation-building. Modernity created cultural homogenisation and the emergence of a new national conscience. Modernist processes like printing and communication helped form the community by imparting a sense of nationhood but fell short of explaining nationhood as an ideology. The centralised, uniform state proposed by the socio-cultural modernists gave members a sense of belonging towards one's identity against the other. Cultural homogenisation was ensured through an education-dependent, high-culture culture protected by the state. Cultural homogenisation was enabled through socio-economic modernisation. Socio-cultural modernism places nationalism as rooted in the past.

However, the homogenised mass culture theory must be revised in varying socio-economic terrains. Deutsch (1953) notes that modernisation enables social mobilisation and social communication. If social communication outraces assimilation, competition among the various groups is inevitable. In a way, the forces of modernisation have a different impact on the consolidation of states where people share lingual or cultural similarities. However, it can be different for states with mixed populations. Secondly, modernisation is also accompanied by the growth of new economic and political orders. Traditional values and authority misplace their meaning in the changing societies. As the old structures fade, societal equations of status and power are reworked, too. This reworking of values and new relationships is reflected through contesting power claims and, thus, the idea of exclusion, which can emerge with modernity. As there is a tussle for control of the economy, objective class differences emerge between formerly classless groups. Competition during modernisation is essentially a competition between

large-scale groups for privilege. It brings different ethnic groups with different values and languages in confrontation.

Thus, a vital accompaniment to the process of modernity has been a multiplication of the claims for greater access to power and resources. However, the success of any such claim depends on the infrastructure of social communications and the comprehensive institutionalisation of values, roles, and expectations. Melson and Wolpe (1970) remarked that the social groups grew faster and reinforced ethnic differences, creating a stark ethnic confrontation. As there is a tussle for controlling the economy, objective class differences emerge between formerly classless groups. Thus, different ethnic groups who held different values -and spoke different languages were pitched against each other. As tribal and kinship networks failed to provide support, individuals sought to create a broader formation, such as an ethnic nation. This way, the ethnic boundaries broadened, and loyalty towards the immediate tribe was replaced by loyalty towards an identity. As modernisation also politicises ethnicity to seek greater values in the political process, ethnicity is mobilised through ethnic clientele. The politicisation of ethnicity transmits the message to the masses.

Rogowski (1985) notes that elites believe in ethnic nationalism only when they expect the future autonomous nation to have a favourable supply-demand ratio for their particular skills. For gaining greater economic and political participation, ethnic mobilisation can be carried on cultural lines rather than economic lines. Ethnosymbolism here is used as a smokescreen for underlying demands of economic and political values. So, the demands are carved in terms of invoking pre-modern ethnic identities and contextualisation of ethnic demands through the more significant phenomenon of ethnicity. Reverence for the nation's past is invoked, providing new meanings and functions for myths, memories, symbols, and values.

Modernisation correlates with institutionalism, whereby institutions work as political actors and provide opportunities. They function as recurring patterns of behaviour and are embedded in particular contexts shaped by the forces of modernisation. Institutions are understood as models or scripts for behaviour and include the structure

of governance and the inclusion or exclusion of different actors. As explained, there can be no grand theory of ethnic nationalism; only partial theories concentrate on specific aspects. Various dimensions of modern social, cultural, and political change serve to make both nationhood and ethnicity salient. Ethnicity and nationhood are social problems and political resources often used in various political strategies. Hence, taking cues from differing theories to make sense of our case study is reasonable.

Ethnic Nationalism: A Derivative Discourse of the Contestation Between the Self and the Other

In post-colonial states, nationalism has evolved as a replica of what it once stood against. Chatterjee (1986:42) perceives this problem as a derivative discourse. Postcolonial nationalism adopted a repressive structure shaped by Western capitalism and rationalism. Chatterjee's colonial state model presents an excellent framework for understanding the contestation of self and others in the context of the nation. The West has asserted its superiority through its access to science and technology, while the East pitches its superiority in the spiritual domain, often done by glorifying the golden past. Chatterjee (1986:121) notes that "nationalist thought accepts and adopts the same essentialist conception based on the distinction between 'the East' and 'the West', the same typology created by a transcendent studying subject, and hence the same objectifying procedures of knowledge constructed in the post-Enlightenment age of Western science". Plemenatz (1973) and Greenfeld (1992) also have suggested ways the other gets imitated. Plemenatz (1973:30) distinguished between Western nationalism and the oriental type, where Western domination undermined Western society's structure. He writes that

> Drawn gradually, due to the diffusion among them of Western ideas and practices, into a civilisation alien to them, they have had to re-equip themselves culturally to transform themselves. In their