

Sources of Ethnic Nationalism

Ethnic nationalism derives from subjective and objective sources to manifest itself as a socio-political value. Cultural attributes and symbolic ethnic markers, such as language, territory, and religion, form the objective dimension, while the subjective dimension includes group loyalty, identity, etc. The objective and subjective values determine the lines of ethnic identity and membership, along with group inclusion and exclusion questions. The objective factors are central to the discourse on ethnic nationalism, but sometimes, the role may be exaggerated. Fenton (2003) places ethnicity as the construction of descent and culture and ethnic nationalism as the social mobilisation. The mobilisation depends on the level of self-consciousness in an ethnic group and awareness of differences with other groups.

De Vos (1995) points out that ethnic nationalism is defined by the subjective application of cultural references or their emblematic use to differentiate themselves from other groups. Thus, cultural references become a marker for group affiliation and identify strangeness and unfamiliarity. The awareness of difference plays a vital role in mobilisation. When a group has no consciousness or the desire to organise in terms of ethnic consciousness, ethnic nationalism does not evolve.

Subjective references thus perform the function of the social organisation of cultural difference and distinction of 'us' and 'them'. Thus, subjective references perform the essential function of generating social labels. A peculiar characteristic of subjective references is that they are formed through mutual contact rather than in isolation. Burgess (1981) explains that symbolic markers explain the quality of the subjective aspects of ethnic nationalism. The subjective element of ethnic nationalism, by and large, plays a more crucial role than objective qualities, as group formation is a subjective experience undertaken by group members themselves. The differences that set the group apart are usually drawn along real or putative shared culture. So, the differences are crucial for the group members and members of other groups.

Smith (1999) and Hutchinson (1996) particularly emphasise the importance of myths, symbols, and memories as primary elements of eth-

nically defined groups. Smith (1999:50), for example, describes it as “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, and one or more common elements of a common culture, including an association with a homeland and some degree of solidarity, at least among the elites.”

Interestingly, the description seeks a compromise between objective attributes, namely common history and culture, and subjective qualities of ethnicity, such as myths and memories. Combining subjective and objective variables makes ethnic nationalism viable and potent in social structures.

Construction of Ethnic nationalism

Ethnic nationalism is a process of construction of an identity negotiated through social practices. Through engaging social processes, actors identify with and commit themselves to a particular vision of nationhood. Smith (1991) identifies fundal elements for constructing ethnic nationalism, a historic homeland, myths and memories, and amassing public culture. Ancestry and historical memories play a crucial role in transmitting the values of nationalism and forming identity. The customs, rituals, and preconceptions shape the content of culture, broadcast it, and formulate behavioural patterns. Popular myths, art, music, and literature provide a bridge with the homeland. A sense of solidarity is manifested through political and popular community institutions or organisations. Yinger (1994) introduces another exciting characteristic of ethnic groups other than segmentality: participation. According to him, ethnic nationalists take part in everyday activities for the valorisation of their culture. So ethnic membership involves not only a possession or a belief in possession of common origin and culture but also requires participating in shared activities, which in turn sustain the belief in common ancestry.

Ethnic nationalism operates in a more extensive social reservoir and ensures interaction with other groups to enhance pseudo-kinship ties. The group then acts or participates in shared cultural activities that not