

Nationalism and Literature

Freedom Struggle brought into focus the notion of nationalism and one can deal with the subject 'Nationalism and Literature' very easily by describing patriotic writings as an expression of nationalist fervour of the people against a foreign domination which began to emerge in the nineteenth century particularly in every Indian language.

In Malayalam the first and foremost of the poets expressing this sentiment was Vallattol Narayana Menon. Having whole-heartedly accepted Mahatma Gandhi as his guiding star in 1920 wrote his famous poem, '*Ente gurunathan*', My Master that made him an eloquent champion of the nationalist movement. At the same time Vallattol also wrote poems like '*Matrivandanam*' extolling not Bharatbarsha but his motherland Kerala. This is the ambivalence of the whole issue of nationalism in Indian context. Here both nation (*desa*) and region (*kshetra*) are of equal importance and hence the issue of nation and nationalism becomes problematic and needs an in-depth exploration.

Before I proceed further let me reiterate that the ambivalence of writers in this regard can be described by relating a passage of a dialogue from the novel *Aranayak* written by Bhibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyaya in 1939. Just for information on his another novel 'The Saga of the Road' Satyajit Ray made a film in the 50s of the last century and became a world celebrity. The dialogue from *Aranyak* is between the narrator writer and a tribal girl. The writer asks:

Have you ever been to a city ?

No babuji, she answered.

Have you heard of any cities ?

The writer enquired.

Gaya, Munger, Patna

Have not you heard of Kolkata ?

Yes, I have

Do you know where is that ?

No, babuji

Do you know the name of the country where we live?

Yes, we live in the district of gaya.

Haven't you heard of Bharatavarsha?

Bhanumati shook her head in negative.

She has not heard of it. She had never been out of Chakmakitola.

Where is Bharavarsha?

The question asked by the narrator-writer, where is Bharatvarsha? problematizes modern India's search for identity. Should we live with a regional identity or a national identity? Did we ever have a notion of a nation?

Before the advent of British, we had a psychological and geographical image of one India but then it was quite loose in its conception. It was loose because of the pluralistic structure of Indian society. But, at the same time a multilingual, multiracial, multi religious and multicultural India had some kind of an integrative framework of a nation governed by *dharma*. Whether India followed the polity of confederated republics or monarchical state, it was *dharma*,_the religious, ethical, social, political, juridical and customary law which governed the life of the people. Dharma was our ethical, social constitution. The king was only the guardian, executor and servant of the *dharma*. It was with the British rule that the idea of a modern-state entered Indian society but then it was also opposed by many nationalist Indians like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and others. Bankimbabu would always say that do not forget that the highest *dharma* is

the love of one's country. Love of it is not European patriotism, which is an abominable sin. Under the influence of this pernicious patriotism, the original people of America have been wiped out from earth. Bankim constructed an idea of a nation based on *dharma* and explained it in terms of *manusattava* and *samanjasya*, humanity and harmony and turned it into universal humanism. In other words here in India nation reflects universal humanism. Nation for India is just not a geographical territory.

Hence in the Indian context, there has been some kind of ambivalence also towards the idea of a mono-cultural nation state, and towards the western brand of nationalism. This was often expressed while recognizing the need for a national ideology of India or a concept of nationalism.

There is no doubt that India has a geographical identity – a geographical territory but the idea of a nation is more cultural and less political and hence in spite of the geographical changes, for example, Ashok's India was different from Akbar's India and Akbar's India was different from British India and present India is different from British India, the idea of India as a unified cultural space remains and which is described as *Saptadwipa Bharatdesa* in the *Bhisma Parva* of Mahabharata or

Nuhu Sifir, India of the ninth sky by Amir Khusro, the father of Urdu language or India as a unified cultural space by Shankara Deva of Assam. This being the reason, India is not a nation-dominated (*rastrapradhan*) country as Tagore would say, where the core of the country remains encased in its nationhood but a society-dominated (*samajpradhan*) country, where the core of the country is spread all over the place among the people in diverse forms. India, therefore, is both *desa* and *kshetra* nation and region. It has both a central identity as well as a federal identity. For India to survive as an effective democracy it has to be able to acknowledge and accommodate the various identities of its multifaceted population. It is not a nation-state but what Nehru had said, a nation in the making: Our nationalism is Indian in a syncretic manner. It is based on our pluralism, spiritual tradition, idea of truth and tolerance and hence our nationalism has the universal strength.

The western concept of nation-state is to create politically and culturally a homogenous entity – a strong interventionist, democratic, secular and centralized state with a uniform rule of citizenship. Nationhood, the West thinks, gives strength because it is the great force of homogeneity and identity but India, on the contrary, opposes this construction and upholds a distinctively

pluralist idea of the Indian nation. Tagore did not want Indian society to be caught in a situation where the idea of Indian nation would supersede that of Indian civilization and where the actual ways of life of Indians would be assessed only in terms of the needs of an imaginary nation-state called India. (See Ashis Nandi, 'The Illegitimacy of nationalistic Culture, violence of the politics of the self in Rabindranath Tagore'). Tagore was one of the few Indians who made federalism an important part of his concept of national ideology. He says, 'If God has so wished, he could have made all Indians speak one language..... the unity of India has been and shall always be a unity in diversity.'"

The real tradition of India is to work for an adjustment of races, acknowledge the real differences between them, and yet seek some basis of unity. The basis for this tradition has been built in India at the social level, not the political, through saints like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Ramanujan Ezhuthachan and others. It is this solution - unity through acknowledgment of differences - that India has to offer to the world.

The equation, nation=state=people, and especially, sovereign people, undoubtedly links nation to territory, since structure & definition of states are now essentially territorial. A country for Tagore, was not territorial

(*mrinmaya*), it was ideational (*chinmaya*) but on the other side his approach to nation and nationalism was very different. He remained anti-imperialist all through his life but went against any kind of violent or narrow nationalism and spoke about a world-embracing and inclusive nationalism which became the basis of Pt. Nehru's vision of India's future as a liberal secular democracy. If Tagore was anti-imperialist, it was not just against British imperialism, his anti-imperial disposition was a universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity and a protest against violence.

After all, the word nation stems from the Latin verb *nassi* meaning to be born and originally used to designate a group of people born in the same place i.e. territory but nation or *rastra* is derived from the Sanskrit verb *rajri*, which means that which shines because its 'hum harmonizes with the music of life'. India's unity is based on our diversity, on our multi-lingualism, multi-religious and multiracial existence. We live with many identities and at the same time we are conscious of our Indian national identity. Indian nationalism is not based on language, geography or ethnicity. Indian nationalism is the nationalism of an idea, the idea of an ever-ever land to which we belong. This land imposes no procrustean exaction on its citizens: you can be many things and one thing. Interestingly and most importantly in India's

political arrangement there is no way for any person to be only Indian and nothing else; indeed, one could not be an Indian without being some other things at the same time. Indianness is a complex and multi layered identity, which encompasses other such identities without canceling them. India's great diversity, a pluralistic worldview and its multicultural and multi-religious reality form the basis of Indian identity. You can be a good Bengali, a good Keralite, a good Hindu or a Muslim, and a good Indian all at once.

These identities do not exist as structure of opposition but as a hierarchy within the structure that can harmoniously co-exist. In Indian tradition this hierarchy is explained so beautifully:

“One should abandon one individual for the sake of the family, abandon the family for the sake of the village and abandon the village for the sake of the nation and abandon the nation for the sake of the self.”

Tyajedekam kulasyarthe |
 Gramsyarthe kulam tyajet |
 Janapadasyarthe tyajed gramam |
 Atmarthe prithivim tyajet ||

During British era in the patriotic songs one notices an anticipation of the economic drain theory postulated by Naoroji and R.C.Dutt. Whether true or false, the very idea of the flight of wealth from the country caught the imagination of the people. It explained and identified the reasons of poverty, prompted the middle class to look back to the past with a nostalgia for a golden age. The metaphor of the golden past and the identification of the foreign rulers with the villain of mythology were the recurrent features of the patriotic literature.

The other feature of the patriotic writing is the assertion of Indian identity in terms of religion, language, myth and history. Patriotic writings grew almost spontaneously in different languages as the resistance of a community against the foreign rule. This idea of a community of the Indian people surfaced independent of the construction of nation as a political category. The English-educated elite soon became engaged in the construction of the Indian nationality and gave it a new political signification. The patriotic writings were an essential instrument of this exercise.

The movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 reintroduced, or strictly speaking, created the right moment of the adoption of the song

Vandemataram as a political song. For the first time literature and political or national movement came close and exerted influencing one another. This was the period when the poets spoke in two voices, one of violent rhetoric of aggression inciting people to take to arms, the other of the eulogy of the country, the mother, once resplendent in wealth, now in distress but promising a bright future. Patriotic writings in any literature are made of this stuff, and Indian literature is no exception.

Patriotic poetry in different Indian languages cannot be judged by aesthetic criterion alone nor can their aesthetic quality be appreciated by a set of political canons either. Any aesthetic judgment without the historical role of these poems in the development of the spirit of the time would not be proper. Just to give one example of a fiery song written by Tagore in the 1905 Bengal partition days, not a great song aesthetically but while singing that song Bipin Chandra Pal, of Pal-Bal and Lal fame, forcefully took the reign of a horse driven by a British, Captain Kemp, of the British police, who was leading an Indian Police force with a baton in his hand, to stop a procession of the people agitating against the British policy of partition of Bengal. After independence these songs have gone to oblivion but

their historical and political significance cannot be minimized under the pretext of any aesthetic criterion.

Another extraordinary thing happened during that time that during the freedom movement literate and illiterate folk poets came closer in enthralling the people with their powerful songs with patriotic fervor. It was not a new thing. In 1857 and afterwards for some years the illiterate folk poets dominated the literary scene. It was the moment of silence in literary history, when one could not find in literature any evidence of the immediate impact of an event like the rising of 1857, which was in its magnitude and intensity, in its excitement and suffering was certainly one of the most stirring events in the history of India. On the contrary our poets were writing poems eulogizing British imperialism. Ghalib in Urdu, Ishwar Chandra Gupta in Bengali, Bharatendu Harishchandra in Hindi, Dalpatram in Gujrati and many others. No doubt, the middle class India had yet to develop a literary instrument to capture the implications of the rising of 1857 in its magnitude but surprisingly the heroes of the revolt – Rana Beni Madho, Rani of Jhansi, Kunwar Singh , Nana Sahib – passed into folk lore and songs and poems in their praise composed soon after the revolt by the illiterate folk poets who did not care for

elegance and sophistication of speech but created vivid situations with tremendous power.

The direct correlation between the contemporary political actions and literature opened a new horizon of thematic possibilities before the poet during the Swadeshi movement- as well as later-the patriotic nationalistic writings used history and myth quite extensively by giving new meanings to the themes derived from history and myth to heighten the patriotic spirit of the people.

In the patriotic literature of those days there was a search for national heroes and very soon Lord Krishna, Shivaji, Maharana Pratap, Chandra Gupta Maurya, Akbar, Sahajahan, Tipu Sultan or Chankya and many other figures from different regions served the purpose of projecting models of heroism but at the same time, there was also an expectation, a waiting for the arrival of a new leader with a vision as how to free the country and people found that vision in Gandhi about whom Vallattol said

The wide, wide world, is all his home
 The grasses; plant and worms, kinsmen
 His gains arise from sacrifice
 And glories from his lowliness
 In him the yogis live their life
 And thus my Master reigns supreme.

Namakkal Ramalingam, the Tamil poet, wrote a poem about Gandhi which became a marching song during the freedom movement. The Hindi novelist, Premchand created a character of a beggar, Surdas, a typical Gandhian prototype in his novel, *Rangabhumi*. One of the most significant dimensions of Gandhi's life that gave the new literature distinctiveness is his challenge to the Western civilization and assertion of the dignity of Asian values.

Besides, both Gandhi and Nehru realized that the overthrow of the domination of Indian princes was an essential part of the Indian struggle. Gandhi wrote in his 'Hind Swaraj (1909), 'My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. I should resist the tyranny of the Indian princes just as much as that of the English.' K. Narayan Kurukkul in Malayalam in his novels and also other writers of different languages in their political novel took up this issue and directed people to rise against the tyranny of the rulers of the native states.

In due course in the political novels the political ideology of the revolutionaries came into focus and new militant heroes came into existence. Hasrat

Mohani, an Urdu poet, politician, a nationalist and visionary, who moved the resolution of complete independence at the Ahmedabad Congress in 1921, wrote a ghazal, 'why should we like Gandhi sitting at the spinning wheel? Like Lenin, why should we not shake the world?'

Tilak, Subhas Chandra Bose, Swami Dayananda, and others emerged as heroes in literature. Sharat Chandra Chatterji, wrote 'Pather Dabi,' 'The Right of Way' in 1926, an extremely provocative political novel eulogizing the revolutionary terrorism, which was proscribed almost immediately. Tagore wrote in 1934 his novel *Char Adhyay*, denouncing terrorism but at the same time admired the selfless love of these young extremists for their country. Tagore was against violence and hence he was against violent nationalism leading to violent activities.

Gandhian heroes and later on revolutionary heroes, and thereafter heroes professing the path of progressivism came on the Indian Literary scene. The best example is Yashpal, the Hindi novelist, who in his novel, 'Dada Comrade' described an idealist young man, being alienated from the terrorist's verges towards Gandhism and then after his disillusionment with the congress finally accepts communism. Writers in their poems and novels brought out the issue of haves and

have nots, excessive exploitation of the poor, dalits and women and atrocities towards them as a natural development of the writer's psyche to follow the path of progressive ideology without going for the fundamental canons of Marxism. Those were the days when our writers spoke in two voices:

One voice was the age-old Indian approach to progressivism interspersed with idealism and the second voice was Marxist approach to progressivism. But it was sometimes a romantic association with Marxism, sometimes professing socialism inspired by Russian example or else Bengali writers like Tarashankar Banerji tried to integrate Marx with Indian tradition.

The first major Indian writer to respond to Marxism and Socialism as an alternative to Gandhian politics was the Hindi Urdu writer Munshi Premchand. He was a keen observer of the international politics which made him also a scathing critic of capitalism. He wrote:

“To hope that the capitalists will desist from exploiting the helpless condition of the peasants is like expecting a dog to stand watch over a piece of meat.”

But at the same time his novels elucidated the Gandhian notions of '*hridaya parivartan*'(change of

heart)and ‘*adarshonmukh yatharthavad*’ (idealistic oriented realism) and just not rabid Marxism.

One of the significant events in the history of modern Indian literature is the formation of the All India Progressive Writer’s Association (AIPWA) which had the blessing of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was in 1927 Nehru attended the ‘Oppressed Nationalities Conference’ at Brussels and brought socialism and progressive ideas in the fold of Indian National Conference and gathered round him in the Congress Party a group of radical thinkers like Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and others and hence it is not correct to associate the AIPWA movement with Marxism. The first meeting of this Association was held in Lucknow in 1936 under the president ship of Premchand. This meeting, it is said, was a culmination of moods, efforts and initiatives that began with the publication of *Angare* (1932), a collection of ten works, including five short stories by Sajjad Zaheer but in fact, it was Nehru’s initiative to induct Nehruvian socialism in Indian polity that prompted many writers to join the AIPWA. With the Lucknow meeting the idea of socialist realist movement was initiated and it grew into a pan Indian movement. In Malayalam, for example, very soon began a movement, called life-oriented literature (*Jival Sahitya samiti*) and by the beginning of

the forties political literature appeared with full power. K Damodaran, P. Keshava Dev in Malayalam, Sri Sri in Telegu and others spoke against exploitation of the poor and spread the spirit of revolt against the perpetrators of crime against humanity. Slowly the AIPWA associates came to be identified with Marxists but a large number of the writers were not Marxists, who could be described as 'socialists' as far their themes and moods are concerned and unlike Marxists they were for the freedom of the country and the growth of radical nationalism . This was the basic difference between non-Marxist writers and the so called Marxist writers. I called them 'so called' because the writers of those days were not very certain to follow just one path of Marxist socialism but to involve in it the age-old India's approach to humanity, peace and welfare of the people of the world and also because, after all, the writers wanted the country to be freed and followed a syncretic approach to nationalism based on our pluralism, spiritual tradition, idea of truth and tolerance. Moreover, if progressivism and militant nationalism are to be associated just with Marxism then Swami Vivekananda should be branded a Marxist and not a spiritual Swami who spoke passionately for the eradication of poverty and social change. _Premchand's 1934 novel *Gaban* (*Stolen Jewels*) reflected the political turmoil in its story

of a peasant disillusioned with corrupt Congress leaders. Mulk Raj Anand's 1936 novel *Coolie* was about a strike of Bombay textile workers and featured a confrontation between a "Red" trade unionist and a compromising Congress union leader. Frustrated by the leadership, radicals within the Congress like Pundit Nehru and others formed the Congress Socialist Party, which the Communists joined in 1936, with Sajjad Zaheer (already a Communist) becoming general secretary in 1938. This is one of the glaring examples to prove that the dividing line between Pundit Nehru's brand of Socialism and Marxism was quite blurred and polarization of thought was not deep among the congress party members and communists in those days and as a result the Marxists and the members of the Congress Socialist Party could jointly work together for the social upliftment and raising voices against all kind of atrocities against humanity.

In fact the Progressive Writers' Association was much more complex than that. It was created through the interaction of several forces operating in Indian society. The national struggle for independence from the British, the drive for social transformation within India, and the savage international polarization between

fascism and democracy in the 1930s all came together in its formation.

The words in which Premchand supported political and social people's revolution in his presidential address proved that he had left his reformist ideas behind. His unsuccessful experiments with Gandhian politics had led him to the realization that people, who attempted to end spiritual and material problems of mankind through propagation of great religious and moral principles, are never successful. In the present times it is possible to build justice, morals, and humanity, only by establishing an economic and political system in which it is impossible for some people to rob others of their rights. But in Premchand's ideas one can find more of ambivalence rather than conviction because he always accepted Gandhi as the greatest Indian leader of that time.

He advised the writers to look for beauty in the lives of the common people and in their daily struggle, and not to imagine that beauty resided only on the brows of perfumed women with painted lips. He said to the writers, if you cannot see beauty in a poor woman whose perspiration flows as, laying down her sleeping child on a mound along the field, she works in the field, and then it is your own vision that is to blame. For, behind those wilted lips and withered cheeks reside sacrifice, devotion

and endurance. Youth is not the name for poetic ecstasy and sighing over the coyness, perverseness and variety of the fair sex; it is the name for idealism, courage, endurance and sacrifice.

He said that when this new vision of beauty is born among the writers of literature, it will appear us to dig out the foundations of a culture in which thousands of human beings are subjected to the tyranny of one. Invested with dignity, our people will revolt against capitalism, militantism, and elitism, and we (the writers) will no longer be satisfied with creating on paper, but will create a system that will not be incompatible with beauty, good taste, dignity, and humanity.

Let me go back into the history of Indian nationalism to understand its development properly. S.V. Ketkar in his novel *Paraagandaa* (1926) raised the issue of Indian national identity by deploring the existing behavior of the Indians, of his caste and regional identity and wanted the sense of Indianness to be inculcated among them. This kind of a sense of mono cultural nationalism was not suitable for India, which believed in plurality of existence. Indianness is to be understood in a bigger perspective where India's unity is based in

acknowledging the differences prevailing in the country, coexistence and harmony.

After the great killing by General Dyer of unarmed people at Jallianwalabagh in 1919, Tagore renounced knighthood as a protest against the barbarity of the British and the so-called champion of Pakistan, the most distinguished modern Urdu poet, Iqbal wrote a Qat'ah, quatrain about the incident:

“To every visitor the dust –particles
of the garden declare,
Beware of the teaching of the times.
The seed (of freedom) here was sown with martyr’s blood
Which you must now nurture with your tears.”

One of the famous Urdu songs of the freedom movement was on the lips of the four revolutionaries, including Bhagat Singh, while they went up to the gallows:

*Sarfaroshi ki tamanna ab hamare dil me hai/
Dekhna hai zor kitna baju-e-katil me hai//*

(Keen is our desire to lay down our lives/ we will see how much strength in murderer’s arms.)

It is true that violent nationalism entered into the movement for freedom during that time but it was very

natural as argued by Franz Fenon that violence is necessary in the process of decolonization as it unifies and truly liberates the native people.

The resolution of the complete independence by Jawaharlal Nehru on the mid-night of 31st December 1929 created a new wave of nationalistic fervor. At the time of our freedom struggle to develop a voice of total India, the western oriented modernists went for a uni-cultural nationalism and the monolithic structure of Western nationalism slowly infiltrated in our socio-political structure which to a great extent resulted in the development of the two-nation theory and the partition of the country and as a result the independence which we received turned into an independence laced with the worst possible blood bath in the memory of the subcontinent. Our nationalism at this juncture was a nationalism of mourning, a form of valediction. What we witnessed was just not the British policy of divide and rule which surely was there, but our own willingness to break up our own civilizational unity, so fondly developed by Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru. The proponents of Western mono-cultural nation-state or of monolithic unity, of the ideology of one culture, one language, and one nation in effect destroyed the unity of the people. Today, 71 years after Tagore's death and 64

years after Gandhi's, the discontinuance of their version of patriotism or cultural nationalism is disturbing. It is very tragic because it means the loss of an alternative basis for human and political order which is the age old cultural nationalism of India.

One cannot deny literature's ability to function as a signifier of national identity or heritage but in Indian context writers, statesmen and political leaders were, by and large, in tune with an identity based on cultural nationalism and therefore it was not connected as much with physical and local attachment but with love of liberty, of independence, of peace, social happiness for one and everybody even beyond the boundaries of one's own country.

The singular thing about India is that you can speak of it only in the plural. What can destroy India is a change in the spirit of its people away from the pluralism and co-existence that has been our greatest strength. It is also essential to accept that any political system in India must take into account the diversity of the country. Nehru articulated a vision of India as pluralistic national identity vindicated by history. He said in his 'Discovery of India':

“Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied the mind of India since the dawn of civilization. That unity was not conceived as something imposed from outside a

standardization of externals or even beliefs. It was something deeper and within its fold, the widest tolerance of belief and custom was practiced and every variety acknowledged and even encouraged.”

The challenge of Indian democracy is to meet the basic material needs of all Indians while accommodating their diverse aspirations within the national dream. But dreams remained unfulfilled and corruption, violence, sectarianism, the criminalization of politics, and wide spread social tension all mounted during the last seven decades first in slow progression and afterwards in leaps and bounds. As the country celebrated the sixty-fifth anniversary of its independence, it realized that it has reached a period of ferment in which profound challenges have arisen:

1. Challenges to the secular assumptions of Indian politics.
2. Challenges to the national loyalty of Indian citizen because of sectarian agitation and insurgencies.
3. Challenges to the participative democracy about which the great socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan once said that it has reduced itself to a political system to merely perpetuate the abuse of the people, for the people, by the people and as a consequence to that

4. Challenges to public morality and public virtues which have declined to an all-time low because of naked self interest and corruption threatening to engulf the ordered state based on democratic principles.

At that point says Paul R. Brass, 'regional political forces and decentralizing tendencies inevitably reassert themselves but surprisingly in Indian context the general scenario of a nation remains intact.

It is because, as said by famous Tamil and Indian English writer K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar, 'the fact of Indian unity is a positive faith with most Indians and it does not require any logical or material corroboration from statistician or propagandist.' Another distinguished Gujrati writer Uma Shankar Joshi said that what is most striking about India is that she has preserved an identity through the ages..... an inner unity. It was also said very correctly by Anantha Murthy, the noted Kannada writer that 'if we take the popular slogan, unity in diversity, and one begins to see the unity. And if one insists on looking for just unity in India then what one sees is nothing but diversity.'

After independence, because of our overriding interest in territorial integrity, we went all out with our wrong assumption to make the centre strong. Nationalism that time constituted itself into a state ideology; it appropriated the life of the nation into the life of the state, and we drove ourselves into a state of amnesia, particularly with reference to the plurality of our cultural nationalism and we thought, however very wrongly, that Hegel was right to put forth the theory of integration of cultural minorities into larger societies, or John Stuart Mill was correct to argue that integration in the form of social assimilation would be beneficial for the minorities who were assimilated. All these views were raised in the name of national integration. But in a multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-religious society it created many problems like problems of language, state reorganization, minority and their religion, economic and social backwardness, nationality and separatism. It is not integration or assimilation of the minority with the majority social group, but the feeling of community, which needs to be revived. We don't need a Central Government which centralizes everything, said Anantha Murthy, but a Union Government as in India, which is the hub of a federated nation. There is a history behind it. In 1947, the members of the Constituent Assembly

addressed their mission with multiple dreams but they were deeply suspicious of any federal scheme that advocated minimal Centre and strong states. This wariness stemmed almost entirely from the Congress experience with the Pakistan movement and the stand taken by the Chamber of Princes in the debates on the federation that was supposed to take the 1935 Constitution to its logical conclusion and as a result a strong, paramount Centre was the consensus of the political class in 1947.

Secondly, flowing from its earnest commitment to the unity and integrity of the new India, the Constituent Assembly was equally in love with centralized planning. This was not exclusively an infatuation with the Soviet Union. Many Congress leaders were sold on President Roosevelt's New Deal in the US and the welfarist impulses of the Labour Party in Britain. They sought to replicate some of the achievements on both sides of the Atlantic in India. The centralizing impulses of the Nehruvian Congress wholeheartedly supported by Nehru's cabinet, with the passage of time, ran into difficulty when **agitations for secession from Indian union grew and still to be found in the peripheral parts of India.** The plethora of sectarian agitation, religious clashes

and movements for secession or autonomy reflect periodic breakdowns in the ability of the state to convince sections of its people that their economic and political aspirations are being met within the state structure. The demand for separate identity is symptomatic of the desire for self-realization, rather than an ultimate objective in itself. Each group is just saying, 'give us our space, in which we can feel we belong, we call the shots, we determine our own fate.' Now political theorists and leaders have begun to think very seriously if the cause of national unity was not best served by strong and self-confident regional units, and whether the Indian State should not be conceived of as a whole made up of wholes. Already a step has been taken by re-introducing the idea of Panchayati Raj or local self government, long feared by the modernists, as the root of India's traditional 'spirit' of 'localism' and fragmentation which has, now become quite popular and as a result the dominant model of centralized, parliamentary democracy has been appropriately modified and a distinctly Indian variety of democracy has emerged which is not only important to India but relevant to the new world of plurality. However, even in a federated nation that the argument that more freedom of action should be given to regions and at the same

time the centre should also be powerful, can be contested. It is almost walking on a thin edge of a sword. It needs tremendous expertise both on human and rational level. One who knows how to do this balancing act is known as a true leader in a country of multiplicity like India.

No doubt that our nationalism which is based on our pluralism, spiritual tradition, idea of truth and tolerance has the universal strength. Such a federation can survive only by strengthening each and every culture and its language, not by neglecting them. Multi-culturalism has been the very stuff of our nationalism. It means that every culture has its own existence and lives with another culture in peaceful co-existence. This concept of community is extremely crucial for our understanding of the fundamental unity of Indian polity and the meaning of cultural nationalism.

In the post-modern period we find India is faced with the challenge of evolving an integrated pattern of life for her people. After independence in the next 30-40 years because of the phenomenal growth in corruption, communalism and criminalization of the polity and the politics of populism people became completely disenchanted with the traditional patriotism and it was no more used as a theme of literature and

realized that mere political freedom is not enough to face the multi-dimensional realities of life. Writers became sarcastic towards the rulers but during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 and 1971 and the Indo-China war of 1961 made a difference and that difference could be evinced in the post-modern period.

Initially the writers, artists, cultural workers were in an ambivalent situation. They did not know as how to reconstruct the model of national integrity. In fact because of the modernization process, mainly in economic/industrialization terms and muscle-and-money oriented politics, little scope has been left for individual writers to guide society. Before independence they were at the centres of national-decision-making and had an active guidance role but after independence it became almost impossible for writers to re-commit themselves to a 'cause mobilization' for collective action. But now the change is very much perceptible. Intellectuals are now busy deconstructing the cultural nationalism. Films are made on patriotic subjects. Patriotic songs in cassettes are sold in large numbers. People are now realizing the importance of our plural culture which contributes to the multi-coloured fabric of human experience. In such matters people are moving from a position of reaction to a position of response. Writers

are busy in creating the network of relationships leading us to a non-sectarian, selfless position and giving us the meaning of the oceanic circle of unities of which the centre is man.

The direct correlation between the contemporary political actions and literature can help a great leader or leaders in mobilizing vast masses of people around economic demands and equalitarian principles. It is a fact that almost all techniques of mass mobilization hurt someone or the other but a movement around equalitarian principles would hurt less people, and would bring a more secure nationalism and unity and create a more human society.