

NATIONALISM AND POPULISM IN A GLOBALISED AGE

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What is nationalism in our age? A populist age of knee jerk reaction that is trying to redefine it. Nationalist images are always expressing through symbols. It needs to be represented in the mass democracy. In the assertions of nationalism, citizenship is the central theme and nationalism has a wide range of definitions since its origin. Let us examine the phenomenon and what is happening around nationalism in our time?

What is nation? And one of the best scholar of the modern day nationalism, Benedict Anderson who defines it, "I propose the following definition of the nation, it is an imagined political community, and imagined, as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members even of 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 images of their communion, communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsify or genuineness, but by the style, in which they are imagined, firstly, the nation is imagined as a community, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail, in each, the nation is conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity, that makes it possible over the past two centuries for so many millions of people not so much to be willing to die for such limited meanings"¹. The essence is that the son of the soil roots that makes nation in our period, the imagination and its power that creates the nation.

What is taking place in the politics of nationalism? Ethics and politics and of course, political morality the question dates back to its origin itself, free will of the democratic citizens, how is their representation in the democracy? This is one of the complex issue of the modern day democracy. After all, mainstream politics of left and right, this boundary is almost invisible now. The Anti-establishment populist assertions have been the undercurrent in the present day mainstream politics. Developed or developing countries are not much difference in these types of social and political expressions. Marginal forces and agendas in the society of yester years are capturing the mainstream positions in the society. In this era of post-democracy, look at the election results and new political formations, for eg-Greece-Syriza, Italy-Five Star Movement and Northern League, Iceland-Pirate Party, AAP in Delhi, Podemos in Spain etc². These new political forces are displaying a new sensibility of political identity rejecting the traditional political agendas. Bernie Sanderson and Jermy Crobyn, are representing the phenomenon in both USA and UK and of course, Ronald Trump as well. Referendum or plebiscite is a short cut to day to day problems of political praxis. A single agenda shock therapy to the established order is a

¹ Benedict, Anderson, *Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* London, New York, Verso, 2006.

² These are the important political parties in the world.

routine democratic process. Direct democracy and its referendum lessons are making new lessons in the post -democracy. A deliberate democratic political process is slowly emerging overcoming the machiavellian lessons. Besides, in the new era politics, culture is a dominant agenda, the definition of it is really a hegemonic war zone of political battle. A left wing or right wing populism, the possibility might not be ruled out in present day democracy. This fluidity, wit and sarcasm that is the order in these days as a form of politics. See the podemos's election manifesto³.

Urban Politics in the 21st century

An urban civilization is searching for the novel ideas in 21st century. Agrarian based village economy had been a nostalgia in the mainstream politics of 21st century. Back to the nature that is an undercurrent in the human imaginations as a vibrant civic order. The meaning of ruralism in this 21st century is looking for a creative dialogue. In Indian context, Gandhi-Ambedkar dialogue had taken place in the 20th century. The debate in this urban context is so relevant and this Century is moving into the question of planetary boundaries. The great urban civilization of this urban century is looking for a meaningful answer. Demos who make history-the classic answer sabotages any constructed meaning at present. Recent times, predictions are beyond the world of analysts and any kind of interpretations, unexpected electoral outcomes, swing voters and populist assertions that set the agenda of politics in this early decades of 21st century. Anti-incumbency factor is going to become a hegemonic feature in today's representative democracy. Populist swing is reflecting the mood of democratic vacuum. Election results are giving big lessons to the elite sections of the society. Anti-establishment parties or movements are in a hegemonic position and rejecting the old political paradigm.

The grand old parties are struggling to survive in many countries. For example, Indian National Congress in India, and African National Congress in South Africa. And the current era political events which are transforming the functions of Grand old parties in USA and UK. The left of centre and right of centre parties are losing their mass appeals and losing their electoral constituencies to the new age populist parties. Austerity and anti-austerity measures have been the hard issues in the political battle. Conservatism and radicalism are searching for new political definitions in the 21st century. What is the role of Edmund Burke and Thomas pain in this era? Protectionism is a powerful mobilizing agenda as a reaction to the socio-political and cultural changes of globalized era. Electoral constituencies are built around a fear of insecurity. It might be the job, cultural identity or social security. A combination of exclusive cultural, political and economic policies is getting a wide mass appeal. A change in the social structure of the society due to the new technological advances and the precariousness of the social life in which the identity based agenda has been a crucial factor in the current era politics. New age political parties and their electoral appeals, Pirate of Iceland, Podemos of Spain, Syriza of Greece, AAP in India, Five star movement of Italy-all these parties are breaking off the electoral base of the traditional political establishment in western and eastern democracies. Anti-establishment and anti-party politics is gaining a new electoral constituency. The new political process is actually redefining the role of politics and politicians. Even the election victory of Donald trump is an anti-establishment political current. In the Brexist and Italian referendum, the result was

³ Their manifesto is like a IKEA Catalogue.

same⁴. The Post-truth⁵ era in which a populist awakening dominates in the social life. Latin American populist awakening had written the script of post-cold war era populist left politics. Democratic wave and its left and right dynamics is breaking off the ideological blocks and much more flexible in the socio-economic policies. After all, the promethen age is to have a dialogue with the anthropocene truths in a creative way. The UN declaration of refugees and migrants had underlined the seriousness of this issue confronting the humanity. Migrants and refugees, they are a part of mainstream political discourse creating a political division over the issue. Anti-immigrant politics has been a huge political constituency. The tragic of being a refugee or migrant for various reasons like climate change has been a hard truth of the present day human civilization. UNHCR reports the tragic reality of displaced people and their day to day life struggles. 10 million people who are living as state less people have been an anti-thesis of modern day nation making. Refugees/migrants and the citizenship issue at which modern nation state is in a dilemma. to resolve this human tragedy, international community is to give serious attention.

After the cold war political scenario, Culturalism is exhibiting a strong undercurrent. It reinvents and redefines the social context of society. The meaning of culture is turning out to be a powerful populist and nationalist appeal. The division of left and right in a traditional sense is disappearing in this social and political context. The social life of anthropocene world is yet to be explored. The fact is that the period is for searching alternative life styles and cultures. The language of social and political truths around the 20th century has almost disappeared. What is liberalism in our period and tolerance and non-violence? social meaning of technology and its role in shaping human life? Nativist pull and globalized aspirations? Equality and inequality etc. In short, we are witnessing a hegemonic nationalist assertion with a new age sensibility. Identity and culture of the society is rediscovering and its wisdom is yet to be expressed fully.

In Indian context, the discussion of liberalization after 25 years is so interesting. Society is really expressing new ethos and social fantasies. The fact is that the post-internet generation and their new technological explorations are reflecting the globalized life opportunities and life chances. Across the social groups, the aspirations of the people for better life are so vocal and restless. The ethical questions of post-liberalized life are searching for answers. Between the hard political contest of globalization and anti-globalization waves, nationalist aspiration is the nerve centre of present day politics. Opportunities of life in the migration are a seductive mantra of human life.

The fourth industrial revolution initiated by WEF (World Economic Forum) makes some interesting turning points in the history of human life. The influence of it is so wide which is affecting the human life and the planet in a much wider scale. The struggle of human beings with the robots upon which the competition leads to the ethics and morality of human rights. The net result is a provoking discussion in the future of human life. The relation of human being and machine and its social consequences are one of the serious ethical questions of the current era. The boundary is getting blurred. Whither this technological revolution? The Identity is so complex and vibrant in the political sphere. Human society and its aspirations for a globalized, cosmopolitan citizenship is going to become a distant dream. The planetary citizen of

⁴ Brexit Referendum-United Kingdom's Referendum on European Union.

⁵ Post truth-The world is said to be in a post-truth social condition.

the *vasudaiva kudumabakam*⁶, The citizen who cares and nurtures the life in the true spirit of the brotherhood, compassion, love etc.

Why is this globalization deficit? This is a Global-local question, the era is getting globalized in such a super speed and intelligence. Goods, services and people are moving around the world so fast and the local and nativist pull is a core determining factor in that social context. A dialectical relation is to be found out in this swing. This global and local interaction and the globalized citizen with this localized pull is a question of this age. Identity politics has been playing its own role much clear. This identity crisis leads each society into its own dilemma on values and life styles. These life truths are clashing among themselves in this globalized world in a much sharper and polarized way.

How is to resolve the identity crisis? Democracy and the identity question in our time moves around Populism and its reactions. One of the crucial question in our time around populism is that the political fallout of it. A short cut answer to the present day democratic life is raising a voice in an anti-establishment platform. The phenomenon and its political answer on today's planetary question is too simple. For example, climate change will have serious implications not only in this generation but also for the future generations as well in such nationalist and populist social and scenario.

What will be the future of work? UN report says that robots will take away 2/3 of the jobs in the developing countries⁷. (Robots and industrialization in developing countries by UNCTAD) The workers will be replaced by the robots. It hits the manufacturing workers very badly.

The issue of migrant labor that divides the labor market in a negative way. But, they are playing a crucial role in the economy of a nation state. The integration of these workers is a nation-state's nightmare now. Xenophobic responses are a popular form of reaction towards it. ILO says that 150 million migrant workers are living in the world (ILO web site).

The priority of the modern nation state is to protect its citizen's interest. The hegemonic identity of citizen feels threatened in the society due to the migrant waves. Economic and culture factor of the migration brings over the question of universal brotherhood and solidarity. Welfare of the citizen is a mainstream political slogan in this anti-migrant political assertion. In an age of the technological quantum leap, the workers of the native countries are really in panic for losing their jobs and social security. The precariousness is the ultimate result of it.

Nation-State is not a static phenomenon. It keeps on transforming like any other human construction and citizenship is expanding in its content and form over these years. Identity and citizenship in the nation-state has created a political context of social and political polarization. The 20th century citizenship culture of the political representation is so different from the present era due to the technological advancement. A post-human political project and governance is being developed. The global economic crisis after the economic recession that hits the world economic life badly and of course, the reaction in the social political sphere is exclusiveness.

The social and political imaginations in the present social system of exclusiveness are being reshaped the present day in a vibrant and populist manner and to find out the shared value is so difficult. A post-secular age of exclusiveness and polarization is the hard reality of this era. After the cold war is over, the 21st century is witnessing this reality of cultural politics of

⁶ Vasudaiva Kudumbakam-According to Indian thought- it means world is one family.

⁷ UNCTAD Report-2016

nationalism. Each society understands its own paths and confronts deeper cultural roots. At the same, the planet is acting like a global village and the whole world is in the midst of planetary issue like climate change and bio-diversity loss. And the rapid changes of technology with new business models have absolutely changed the economy. The traditional economy of subsistence is vanishing.

Forced displacement is one of the harsh tragedy of human life. The UNHCR report says that one individual out of 122 people in the world has been forced to run away from their own home nations. The three important sections of the displaced people are refugees, asylum seekers; people belong to the same countries. In other words, these people are homeless people. Marx Weber wrote about them using the basic idea of Jainism. Homelessness is the way to salvation of life. But, the reality of homelessness and its brutal logic in ordinary human life that adds the tragic element of human life. What it says to the world is that we have to exhibit more love, care and affection to the society. And what is the progress and advancement of human life? Is direct democracy an answer to the crisis? In the Greek referendum, no vote was an answer to the referendum on austerity measures. In Greece, the anti austerity party-movement⁸ was in a bitter negotiations with its creditors. Debtor and creditor and its politics made a negative effect on the democracy. In democracy, one of the problem is that ordinary citizen-voter is living beyond the complexity of the present day democratic governance. Anyway, the creditor and debtor politics had a serious impact on Eurozone and rest of the world. The whole world is closely watching over it. And what are the possibilities of new democracy over this development? Nation state and supra national unions are in the process of hard negotiations. Greek and Bexist negotiations with EU have proved the crisis. Yes and No vote in democracy are developing as a democratic weapon of problem solving in modern democracy. The referendum age is learning some hard lessons of the direct democracy.

The construction of majority and minority is one of the unresolved problems of the democracy. Where is the place of minority opinion in the democracy? How can be possible for a democratic equilibrium between majority and minority opinions? The classic imbalance between majority and minority makes a democratic deficit. The representation of the minority is an unresolved classic question in the democracy. Most often, Democracy speaks out itself as a representative of majoritarianism. The globalization era economic and political fights for hegemony are rapidly shifting the base of the political establishment. The gap of centre-left and centre -right politics in advanced countries has given the space to the anti-austerity populist movements. The movements and anti-elite politics has pushed back the socio-political consensus of the last century. Politics of recognition and dignity is always a war of life struggles. The refugee crisis-is related to the identity status of refugees. In the modern world, without an identity, there will not be any recognition at all. We had known this classic lesson from the history. Ambedker's struggle for Dalits and Jaipal Singh's struggle for Adivasis⁹ have been the great examples in Indian history. In the world history of identity and recognition, to raise the issue of indigenous people in the League of Nations was an important event in the second decades of last century led by the Cayuga chief Deskaheh and Marori religious leader

⁸ Syriza

⁹ Jaipal Singh, the great Adivasi leader of India

WT.Ratana¹⁰.Ofcourse, the struggle of Martin Luther king Jr for the Black people could be seen in this social context.

Populist appeal of the nationalist imagination is addressing the democratic deficit in various ways.Democracy is growing with the push and pull of it. Indeed, the soul of democracy lies in the roots of its plebian assertions.

¹⁰ UN Report of the World indigenous people