



# MARX'S THOUGHTS ON NATIONALISM & INTERNATIONALISM AND DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA'S ALTERNATE INDIAN THOUGHT

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**Abstract:** *The thoughts of nationalism have always been the pivot around which the history of world has revolved. In 18th century Marx came up with the philosophy of Scientific Socialism which created a buzz throughout the world. With its success in 1917 Russian revolution, the philosophy attracted men throughout the world. Marx saw himself as an internationalist beyond the chains of nationalism. It is important to analyse his thoughts in respect of the Communist regimes established during 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is equally important to understand the Indian concept of Nationalism which has been very clearly propagated by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya which is acting as guide for the Indian government.*

**Index Terms** - Scientific socialism, Karl Marx, Nation, Nationalism, Internationalism, Chinese rejuvenation, USSR, Lenin, Fatherland, Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, Narendra Modi, Integral Humanism, Deendayal Upadhyaya

## I. INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx gave the popular philosophy of Scientific Socialism which became very popular during 20<sup>th</sup> century with the success of Russian Revolution in 1917 thereafter rise of USSR and establishment of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and China. India under the BJP government is following the guidelines given by first General Secretary of Bhartiya Jana Sangh Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya in the philosophy of Integral Humanism. It is important to analyse the thought of Marx and other prominent socialist thinkers on the major issue of Nationalism and the actual path followed by countries under the banner of Communism. At the same time it is important to understand the Indian thought on the issue which has been clearly brought out by Upadhyaya.

## II. DISCUSSION

### Rise of Nationalism in Western Europe

The Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648, started as a battle among the Catholic and Protestant states that formed the Holy Roman Empire. In 1648, a series of treaties were signed amongst various parties of the conflict called the Peace of Westphalia which had significant geopolitical effects for Europe. Formation of the modern nation-state, establishment of fixed boundaries and the policy that residents of a state were subject to the laws of that state and not to those of any other institution, secular or religious finds its basis in the Peace of Westphalia.<sup>[1]</sup>

Deendayal Upadhyaya notes-“These nations extended their empires beyond the European continent and subjugated other independent countries.<sup>[2]</sup> Nationalism brought nation and state together resulting in Nation states.” Explaining idea behind this event V V Nene writes- “All this was inspired by the principle of national sovereignty and the expansionist adventures for material prosperity”.<sup>[3]</sup>

Describing the influence of Nationalism in Europe, Upadhyaya writes-“We find that right from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century its map was drawn and re-drawn according to national urges.” He defines the characteristics-“Nationalism united the people and forced different principalities to forgo their autonomy in favour of a national government. It also differentiated one set of people from another, and slowly we find that national interests, rather than whims or wishes of an individual, increasingly guided the conduct of war and peace. As nations came to acquire a distinctive character, the form of government also became a matter of interest and controversy.”<sup>[4]</sup>

## Capitalism and exploitation of workers

With the passage of time, calls for liberty grew louder and monarchy gave way to democracy in Europe. With the mechanization of industries small human effort provided enormous financial gains to the owner of machines. The talented and rich people took advantage of the individual freedom and equality of opportunity which was result of newly acquired democracy. These people monopolized means of production and creation of wealth. <sup>[5]</sup>

On the other hand, the condition of workers started deteriorating. Workers lost the freedom of home, they had to start working in the factories and take orders from the factory owners. The worker migrated from his home town to dwell in crowded cities, where there was no provision of proper housing. No rules existed to protect the worker. He was economically weak and not yet organized. He became a victim of exploitation, injustice and harassment.” <sup>[6]</sup>

## Rise of Socialism

With a view to improve the condition of workers many attempts were made. Deendayal Upadhyaya writes-“The urge for social justice gave birth to a political philosophy, which was termed socialism. Initially there were socialists who wanted to solve the problems in democratic way by the way of legislations and peaceful means. However, there was one group which stood for solution through violence. Its proponent was Karl Marx who put forward the theory of Scientific Socialism and gave the dream of classless society which gave both a hope and self-confidence to the downtrodden. Upadhyaya emphasizes on the fact that it was Marx’s philosophy which became synonymous to Socialism. “Socialism has been propagated before and after Marx. But after Marx no one has been able to make any distinctive mark with regards to objectives and main premises.” <sup>[7]</sup>

### 1. Marx’s dilemma favour or oppose Nationalism

Discussing the evolution of society, Marx believed that human history had progressed through a series of stages. Ancient slave society transformed to feudalism and now feudalism has transformed to capitalism. A dominant class used its control through the means of production to exploit the labour of a larger class of workers at each stage. In each stage internal tensions or “contradictions” eventually lead to the overthrow and replacement of the ruling class by its successor. Thus, the bourgeoisie overthrew the aristocracy and replaced feudalism with capitalism. Similarly, Marx predicted, the proletariat will overthrow the bourgeoisie and replace capitalism with communism. <sup>[8]</sup>

#### ● Nationalism a bourgeois phenomenon

According to Marx, the phase of capitalism is a requirement for Socialism to evolve.

Marx thinks that the nation was created as a socio-economic construction to benefit the capitalist economic system. In order to create conditions conducive to a market economy, after the fall of feudalism and genesis of capitalism, capitalists tried to unify and centralize populations' culture and language within the states. Nation-state provided them a common language which helped in coordination of economy, gave them enough population for internal division of labour and a large territory to maintain a viable economy. Despite the nation being bourgeois in nature, Marx and Engels believed that the centralized state created positive social conditions to stimulate class struggle. <sup>[9]</sup>

#### ● Support or opposition to Nationalism as per requirement of Socialist revolution

Marx’s analysis of the Irish question: Marx at first did not think the Irish nation could achieve independence alone, or that it should. He thought the Irish nation and workers would be liberated when English workers overthrew the English bourgeoisie since they lived in an advanced capitalist country and were in a more advantageous position to overthrow capitalism in the colonizing country of Britain.

But by the late 1860s, Marx recognized the virulent racism and chauvinism among the English workers themselves against Irish people. He came to support self-determination and independence for the Irish nation as the best means for the Irish workers to fight capitalism. He urged the English workers to stand up for Irish independence. <sup>[10]</sup>

Marx concluded "The nationalism of the workers belonging to an oppressor nation binds them to their rulers and only does harm to themselves, while the nationalism of an oppressed nation can lead them to fight back against those rulers."

So, Marx was a supporter of Nationalism, when it came to struggle of pre-capitalistic societies as capitalism was a necessary stage for evolution of Socialism. At the same time, he saw Nationalism in capitalist societies which could bind workers and capitalists together, as opposition to the requirement of mutual antagonism necessary for socialist revolution. As such Nationalism in capitalist societies was a hurdle in path of the next phase called Socialism and ultimate phase of human history which he describes Communism. <sup>[11]</sup>

#### ● Right to self-determination of oppressed nations

According to Lenin the right to self-determination for oppressed nations should be recognized. He says- "absolutely essential to the Social Democrats of Russia...for the sake of the basic principles of democracy in general." Regarding the attitude of Socialists towards forceful secession of an territory he adds that socialists must be "unconditionally hostile to the use of force in any form by the dominant nation (or the nation which constitutes the majority of the population) in respect of a nation that wishes to secede politically."

Further he advocates plebiscite and thinks that Socialists must demand a universal, direct and equal vote of the population of that territory by secret ballot as a criteria for decision. He advises socialists to reject the establishment of an official state language and instead demands that a law should be promulgated which must be operative throughout the state, which protects the rights of every national minority in all parts of the state. Finally he declares- "all areas of the state that are distinguished by...the national composition of the population must enjoy wide self-government and autonomy, with institutions organized on the basis of universal, equal and secret voting." <sup>[12]</sup>

Here it has to be noted that although Lenin is talking about democratic values, however his party lost elections and he usurped power through force. Moreover, USSR was a result of the victory of Red Army and the nationalities were never given a chance to decide whether they want to be part of USSR or not. There was strong opposition to Rusification by non-white Russia and even the white nationalities like Georgia. So it is clear that the concept of Right to self-determination of oppressed nations did not apply to Lenin’s USSR.

Now the question is if he is opposed to this right in his very own country why did he assert such a theory?

Ultimate aim of every Communist is to turn all the nations under the banner of Communism. Communists view strong national sentiment in large countries as opposition to the forces of socialism. Their view is that small nations are easy to influence compared to large nations. And the process of influencing and converting small nations into communist states, one by one, they will bring large lands under Communist regime.

Further, he sees that most parts of the world are under the garb of western imperialism. These suppressed nations are working for their freedom struggles. He wants to utilize the suffering of the people of these oppressed nations and show sympathy for their cause so as to make them feel that Socialism is working for their liberation and is the way forward. Aim was to bring them under Socialism of which USSR claimed to be the world leader and guide.

The way USSR captured certain territories during the Second World War and devised undemocratic and military means to bring Communist regimes in East European nations is in contradiction to this principle. If we examine the other important Communist nation China, its role in dividing Korea, capturing autonomous Tibet and parts of India are against this principle.

In context of India, Ram Manohar Lohia observes the support of Communists towards the creation of Pakistan -“Indian communists supported partition presumably in the hope that they would thereby gain hold on the new born state of Pakistan, obtain influence among the Indian Muslims.”<sup>[13]</sup>

Radhakrishnan (2021, 33) tells that during the time of independence Communists argued that India is not one country and it should be divided into 17 nations.<sup>[14]</sup> This was presumably done as Communists realized that given their limited influence and power it would be easier to control small nationalities rather than whole of India.

### ● Against cultural-national autonomy

Lenin suggests that socialists should fight for the cause of nation—“Combat all national oppression? Yes, of course! Fight for any kind of national development, for "national culture" in general? Of course not!”<sup>[15]</sup>

So, he is adverse to national culture. He explains further-“Cultural-national autonomy, implies precisely the most refined and, therefore, the most harmful nationalism.”

Lenin is opposed to the nation on the basis of culture, that is cultural nationalism as he thinks that this is the culture of the landlords, the clergy and the bourgeoisie. Further Lenin fears when the right to self-determination is provided to nationalities emanating from cultural nationalism, oppressed nations are susceptible to bourgeois nationalism.

So Lenin proclaims-“Our banner, does not carry the slogan 'national culture' but international culture, which unites all the nations in a higher, socialist unity, and the way to which is being paved by the international amalgamation of capital.”<sup>[16]</sup>

It is similar to Marx's views on Nationalism, however he uses the term cultural nationalism since Lenin thinks that cultural nation is just another form of old feudal society which contains seeds of bourgeois. He understands that the people who are firm believers in their cultural roots are unlikely to fall in the trap of Socialism. So, he discards the concept of cultural nationalism at the very onset.

Regarding opposition to cultural nation, it has been two sided story. Efforts have been made to destroy the cultures of captured nations, but own cultures of the dominating population of the country have been preserved and encouraged. During his visit to Russia, founder of world's largest Trade Union Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Dattopant Thengadi saw statues of Greek Gods. He was told that these were destroyed by Hitler, but have again been reconstructed as these depict their national identity. Here national identity is nothing but cultural identity. However, the culture of other nationalities that formed USSR was suppressed. Efforts were made for imposing Russian as the common language.<sup>[17]</sup>

Similar is the case with China where the minorities of Tibetans and Uyghur are discouraged to follow their culture. In contrast, recently Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced - ‘Cultural identity is the deepest form of identity. It is also the root and soul of ethnic unity and harmony.’<sup>[18]</sup> Here CCP is talking about Chinese culture as it understands that this culture keeps them together. So CCP further asks that Mandarin be popularized, as China hopes that it will act as an integrating factor and help in resolving ethnic issues.

It can be said that whether Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao all propagate Nationalism selectively with their only criteria whether it favours them in their ultimate aim of creating a Communist world or not.

## 2. Concept of Fatherland

In "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Marx and Lenin write- "The workers have no fatherland."

However, in the very next year after the October Revolution of 1917, with Civil War underway Lenin announces –“The Socialist Fatherland is in danger.”<sup>[19]</sup>

This statement has large implications apart from the immediate threat that Russia was experiencing at the time when Lenin made the statement. Being the first country to experience socialist revolution, Soviet Union was seen as *fatherland of the world proletariat*.<sup>[20]</sup>

### Use of concept of Motherland during WWII

On July 3, 1941, eleven days after the German attack, Stalin addressed the Nation and announced that Motherland was still in danger and called for guerilla war. He did not say it was a war for Communism- instead; he called it the Great patriotic War.

In August, Stalin issued Order #16, declaring “Everyone who has been captured is a traitor to the Motherland.”<sup>[21]</sup>

So here also we find that the call for motherland and patriotism was used when in need. Another important point to note is that by not declaring it as war on Socialism or Communism, it is clear that compared to the ideals of Socialism and Communism, Nationalism is far more important in the hearts of people. It also proves that Marx was not able to fully comprehend the power of National feelings as a stronger entity in shaping up of history. History of the world and fate of socialism would have been different, had USSR not been able defend itself in the World War. Thengadi recalls that a huge statue named ‘Motherland calls’ along with flame has been constructed in the memory of those who lost their lives at Stalingrad in the fight with Germany during Second World War.

### 3. Internationalism

In the “Manifesto of the Communist Party”, Marx famously quoted –“Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working Men of All Countries, Unite!”

In this way, he urges the workers throughout the world to unite for the universal kingdom of Communism. He acknowledges that the workers have not been able to do so as they are tied in chains of nationalities, religion, culture, family etc. So he wants the workers to loosen up and break these chains. Then only they will be able to achieve the required comradeship. He further visions a world without boundaries under Communist rule.

Following the Marx’s dictum, soon after coming to power, Soviet Union established Third International. Its name was later changed to Communist International, popularly known as COMINTERN. It was announced that this has been set up for furthering the Communist cause and helping socialists throughout the world. But it ultimately turned out to be just a medium to establish Soviet rule throughout the world. Soviet Union recognized its own acts as the path of Marx and discarded rest as bluff of distorted versions.

In the countries which have labelled themselves as Communist whether USSR, China, Yugoslavia, Korea, Vietnam etc. everywhere Nationalism has been a dominating factor and reason for these countries to be separate despite sharing borders.

USSR depicted this spirit of nationalism many times. Thengadi tells that during his visit to USSR in 1960s, he was surprised when he was taken to a place and shown statues of old Russian rulers like Peter, the Great; Catherine, the Great etc. and told that these are National Heroes who have sacrificed, worked or fought for the nation. If Marx had been heeded, these statues would not have found any place. Further, the names of towns and auditoriums have been kept on the name of old feudal lords or monarchs.<sup>[22]</sup> So, it is clear Russia was not able to overthrow this concept of Nationalism in its own country, instead it acted otherwise. The importance USSR laid on nationalism was also evident from the fact that everyone including all the dignitaries used Russian language, not any other language. However, irony is that whichever territory they capture, there they did not allow their language and culture to flourish.<sup>[23]</sup>

Yugoslavia parted its ways with Soviet Union, due to its strong sense of nationalism. It could not follow the Soviet model. Instead, it wanted its own model as per its own requirements.

Similar was the case with China. Mao refused to imitate Russia’s model. Instead worked out its own way despite failures. Now President Xi Jinping is asking for Socialism with Chinese characters, which means that instead of universal values of Socialism, Chinese way of life predominates. In fact some analysts have gone to the extent in explaining the Chinese aggressiveness has nothing to do with Communist Party, but it is Chinese nationalism.<sup>[24]</sup>

Similarly, Dr Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam and others have also followed and developed own models as per their needs.

So it can be said that the Communist world is trying to Nationalize Marxism by making it compatible with the national culture by taking traditions into account.

Regarding Communism under one roof, Marx’s call for international fraternity of workers did not find many takers. COMINTERN was very influential, during the times of Soviet Union. However, it tried to create a uni-centric world which would run as per Moscow’s desires. Sometimes workers of other countries did go against their own national interests as it happened during the Second World War, when Germany attacked France, the French workers sided with Germany against their national government. Reason was Germany’s treaty with Soviet Union, the so called Fatherland of Communists. French communist workers did not want to help anyone opposed to Soviet Union or its friends. Similarly, Indian Communists also changed their stance towards British in line with USSR’s relationship with British during World War II from initially being foes to later changing to friends.

In recent times, China’s initiatives of One Belt One road and huge investments are seen as attempt towards expanding Socialism with Chinese characteristics over the world map. In other words, it is effort to expand Chinese influence.

### 4. Why Do Communists hate Nationalists and term anyone who opposes them as Fascists?

It has been seen that Communists dub anyone who resists them is termed as a Fascist. Dictionary definition says “Fascism is a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.”<sup>[25]</sup>

Although fascist parties and movements differed significantly from one another, they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy and political and cultural liberalism, a belief in natural social hierarchy and the rule of elites, and the desire to create a *Volksgemeinschaft* (German: “people’s community”), in which individual interests would be subordinated to the good of the nation.<sup>[26]</sup>

- Germany’s Hitler and Mussolini have been labelled as the most influential fascist leaders. They have been accused as the precursors of World War-II. Their atrocities, killings and forced labour camps and concentration camps have been well documented to tell the menace of this philosophy. However, it is important to understand that Communist fatherland USSR was equally responsible for encouraging such tendencies as it was only after the 1939 Soviet –German pact that Germany started the World War –II. It was later that the friends turned into foes when disputes arose between Germany and Soviet Union during the war. In the War the group to which Soviet Union was aligned won the war. So it is wrong for Communists to absolve themselves of the responsibility of the acts of the fascists countries Germany and Italy and abuse others with the fascists tag.
- Another point is that Nationalism in Italy, Germany and Spain resisted communism and Soviet imperialism from a subversive takeover. These fascists had to suppress and sometimes slaughter the communists and their fellow travellers. The alternative was to be slaughtered by the communists. It was an indispensable job which all patriots, who want to save their country’s sovereignty from Moscow’s strangle- hold, have to perform sooner or later whenever the communist conspiracy assumes certain magnitude.<sup>[27]</sup>
- In China due to strong resistance by Nationalist Army of Chang Kai Shek, Communists had struggled to establish their empire despite attempts for more than two decades. However, they gained strength when Chang Kai Shek’s Nationalist Army had become weaker as it was busy stopping Japanese invasion during World War –II.





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