

Call it patriotism or nationalism – but we must inculcate this emotion

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The news of Shrinivas Rao Dadi, a 12th passout and self-taught cybergeek, has come as a shocker. He is reported to have been making Rs 3-5 crore per day through scaring women about fictitious recovery of drugs in their courier packets. Money thus fleeced was converted into cryptocurrency and sent to some Chinese nationals through an elaborate network of Indian crooks. It is not for the first time that we hear of the Chinese nationals and their Indian proteges indulging in such nefarious activities. Not long ago, action was taken by the central government against certain Chinese nationals staying in India under the cover of businessmen or company executives and many Chinese apps were banned. It was learnt at that time that they had floated multiple Indian companies, collected thousands of crores in revenue using 100+ Chinese mobile apps and lured people on the pretext of soft loans, blackmailed them and repatriated the data along with the money to China. Indian chartered accountants helped such set ups with dummy directors who were replaced later with the Chinese.

Incidents like these make one sit up and think of the reasons behind these cheating operations. Though cheats and thugs are common to every society, yet what makes them dangerous is their collaboration with an enemy country. The lure of the lucre has crossed all boundaries in our times. Clearly, making money at the cost of national security points to the absence of the feeling of love and allegiance for one's own country. This fast-fading feeling of patriotism needs to be re-inscribed in public life. It is the emotion that fired people to wage war to secure independence. If patriotism were not a worthy value, no one would respect national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Bose, Tilak, Bhagat Singh, Savarkar, et al.

In our times, a fine line of distinction between nationalism and patriotism is sought to be drawn by some avant garde intellectuals. One might wonder if it's possible for one to be a patriot without thinking of one's nation. While nationalism is now defined as a collective sentiment generated through common language, race, culture, history and destiny that motivates people to call themselves a nation; patriotism is the love for one's country and the passion to serve and defend it in their own interest.

A section of intellectuals in our country seem mesmerized by certain western ideologues who suspect the very concept of nation and call it an imaginary community. Well, for that matter, every value, idea, icon or symbol is abstract and intangible and therefore imaginary. But do we not swear by them or fight to sustain them? Are not our ideals and even our goals in life imaginary though we struggle to achieve them through our life? The distinction between patriotism and nationalism is no better than a wordplay. The moot point is to have it in practice. One may ask these armchair philosophers as to whether any nation has made progress without this emotion of patriotism or nationalism in its people. After the World War II, Germany and Japan would not have been able to stand on their own feet and make the progress that they have made without this feeling. While America was rocked by 'America First' slogans during the last elections, even in China, Xi Jinping is on record having pitched for patriotism in the Chinese youth. Even though an imagined community, it has in practice very strong status.

Even though in the past, Congress party supported the shaky line of distinction between nationalism and patriotism and favoured patriotism, considering nationalism to be the USP of BJP, yet it decided two years ago to train workers in 'nationalism', along with 'the struggle for the idea of India' and 'Congress ideology'. Around the same time, Delhi chief minister, Arvind Kejriwal announced through TV ads: "Now every child in Delhi will be a patriot; we'll teach them patriotism in schools." It is another matter that the pronouncements of political parties lose lustre when we see them acting in contrast to what they preach. It is only when the preaching coincides with practice that the words of politicians will impress people, particularly the young ones.

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