

Indian Nationalism: Concept and Reality

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Nationalism is a wider concept, which explains the relation between state and its people; it takes an important place in the life of a human being. Nationalism is a type of feeling, when a human being to do everything for his/her nation. In the past time, nationalism was based on race, color, religion, culture, language. But these days these factors also important yet these days, due to information development and globalization, all world has changed into a global village, where people are connected each other with the help of communication means, such as Email, Facebook, Fax, Internet, Messenger, TV, Radio and so on. Even these days inter-states marriages are increasing. So due to these factors, purity of race, culture, religion, values is not possible. Now, this is also a duty of state to works for nationalism. In the context of India, nationalism is a concept, which is growing continuously and Indian freedom fighters such as Gandhi, Bhagt Singh, Shukhdav, Raj guru, Vivekananda, Dayananda Sarsvati, B.R. Ambedkar, Nehru, and Bikam¹¹ etc. have played a great role for nationalism. In this research paper I will discuss about the nature of nationalism, types of nationalism, and in a part of paper will discuss about the Indian, western, roman, Greek nationalism.

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Nationalism both as an ideology and political process is of Western birth and has

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a history chequered by time and space. In all its forms it is distinctly different from its character in India or for that matter in any former colony. Gregariousness or love for individual or group possessions follows from human nature, and it cannot be equated with nationalism.

In the context of the varied developments of nationalism, both theoretical and Practical, it is important to clear the concept before we embark on a full scale discussion of nationahsm in the West and in India. Theoretically nationalism is a collective state of mind that pushes groups of men and women living in a definite territory or dispersed or scattered in different lands, (like the Jews) forget their points of difference in race, language, religion, caste and community, drives them to get united politically and forces them to vow allegiance to the laws of a state, already established or yet to be established, they may be called a nation. This state of mind may be a natural outgrowth of common history or culture or artificially created by some political leaders as Mazini, Cavour or Garibaldi, or by some princely houses as in Britain, France and Spain. Against colonial rulers people may be organised in the war of political freedom, may even lay down their lives but still they are not a nation so long as they are conscious about their basic differences which come to the fore once they win independence. In the West historical developments since the Renaissance and the Reformation movement laid down the foundations of nationalism as a

¹¹. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94) was one of the leading novelists and essayists of the nineteenth century Bengal. He is famous in the history of Indian nationalism for his depiction of the picture of tortured and exploited 'Mother India' and his emphasis on the creation of an organisation of youth dedicated to the service of nation. This dea later on found realisation in the hands of Vivekananda.

political process which culminated in nationalism as a mental state of existence after the emergence of a strong pluralist civil society strengthened by the evolution of Welfare state and democracy.

In Europe nation-states were born since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a reaction against the Pope's idea of Empire-building already translated into reality through the Holy Roman Empire by the strenuous efforts of strong monarchs.

In India, however, the historical process along with the accompanying factors was absent. Indians were not a nation before India as a nation-state was born in 1950, nor was nation-building attempted by the state. Civil society did not come up and the democratic structure was more political and legal constitutional than social, economic and cultural. Against this background it is important that Swami Vivekananda tried to create nationalism through a different process that may be called 'Spiritual Nationalism' through 'Manmaking' by 'Practical Vedanta' in late-nineteenth century.

In all ancient books, scripts, gospels and sermons, be it Western or Indian, we come across high norms of love for indigenous land and its resources, physical, cultural or human. For instance, the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata, and each of the eighteen major 'Puranas' (ancient histories) tell us that Bharata Varsha (North-Central India in those times) was the best of all varshas (lands) in the world; that the four yugas (divisions of cosmic time) obtained only here in India, that people of this land were the most virtuous and the only people who followed moral principles and ethical laws in all walks of life, and finally this is the people who were fortunate enough to reach salvation in life because of their birth in this divine land.

On the one hand, the Church and the Holy Roman Empire continued the old traditions of absorbing diverse groups having faith and pride in their respective resources, material and non-material, at the same time forces were emerging against this type of non-secular consolidation of the religious and temporal authorities under strong territorial monarchies forecasting the coming of the modern state system. Yet nationalism as an ideology or a political process was not found.

Then came the European Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation with a group of thinkers in chronological succession to conceptualize the two movements. But neither Machiavelli nor Bodin¹² or Hobbes¹³ was interested in developing a comprehensive ideology of nationalism. For that reason Renan observed that nationalism was always a myth, because sometimes it was conceived to be the urge for a strong independent state system, free of foreign invaders, while at others it was an instrument for consolidation of state-power by some particular princely house or ruling groups. The mental process was thereby lacking.

Actually strong state system developed in Europe as a historical process and nationalism both as an ideology and a political process was developed later on to legitimize

¹² Bodin was a French thinker of the sixteenth century famous for his definition and description of Sovereign Power and law. He also was a leader of the rationalist group called the 'Politiques' who introduced secular view of the state in the Western thought.

¹³ Hobbes (1588 - 1679) was a political thinker of the seventeenth century Britain, who began individualistic and democratic tradition of Western thought while stressing the need of a strong state against the perspective of civil war.

the state-power. Again it is a myth that has been exploded by historical evidence. Political scientists and philosophers have always held the American and French Revolutions in the eighteenth century as two historic landmarks in the evolution of nationalism both as an ideology and a process. But behind both the revolutions the economic conditions dominated and the exigency of economy far removed the basic considerations of nationalism as a mental or political entity. Actually had there been no trade exploitation of the British over the Americans or the terrible mis-management of the French economy by the Bourbon kings over a big span of time the revolutions might not have occurred at best during that period. The eighteenth century saw the outbursts of individual and group demands for liberty and representation, but it was theoretical, and the Europeans had to wait one full century to come down to the middle of the nineteenth in order to enjoy these rights in some measure. So nationalism could not be equated with democracy or civil liberties.

That nationalism is not a result of blood; race or ethnicity has been amply proved by the emergence of America, the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the emergence of the scores of states in the Middle-East, Central- Asia, in Asia-Pacific Region and in many other parts of the world. Language could not be a factor, otherwise the Swiss, the Canadians, the Chinese and recently the Bangladeshis could not claim themselves as separate nations.

When the people of the same ethnic stock are dispersed or overthrown some sort of oneness is developed with an eye to the formation of a state in future. That is the story of the Jews and the birth of the state of Israel.

So as ideology nationalism could not be defined, because of two fundamental reasons first, it has no common measurable standard and so no definiteness or precision. At different periods of history and with different kinds of people it has been developed with different types of objective.

Secondly, in order to earn a definition an ideology requires a definite conceptual boundary, which nationalism could not claim. Groups of people sometimes think that their own resources have been either drained away or exploited by some people who are quite different from their own identities. It is this sense, basically psychological, that drives the people to some kind of movement, but this is either patriotism or some sort of imaginary good-living, and this could not be considered as nationalism. There are several cases when the people fought united, drove away foreign powers, but later started fighting each other for having separate geographical and cultural entities. So, nationalism could not be defined, for it is a political process no doubt, it is a historical force that sometimes created separate states, sometimes united separate states under one sovereign power, but it is devoid of any concrete, specific ideological meaning.

Though nationalism lacks precise identification it has been theoretically developed by experts. First of all, we may consider the typological frame-work of Hayes[^] who classified nationalism into five divisions: Humanitarian, Jacobin, Traditional, Liberal and Integral. By humanitarian nationalism he referred to the ideas of three thinkers - Bolingbrooke who wanted the consolidation of aristocratic power within a state; Rousseau who wanted popular sovereignty in order to establish the role of the masses in a state, ' Harder who wanted some sort of cultural affinity through national determination in a state system.

The second is Jacobin nationalism which was revolutionary and which was basically anti-humanitarian, because it did not accept any opposition and depended largely on military force. Jacobin nationalism was fully exploited between 1793 and 1814 by Napoleon in order to destroy nationalist aspirations of both the French and the Europeans.

Traditional nationalism, according to Hayes was more humanitarian and clearly anti Jacobin which found expression in the ideas of Edmund Burke. It wanted to establish institutions, religion and natural evolution of the state system on the basis of enlightened justice. This type of nationalism is also found in the writings of Max Weber, when he cited the role of Protestant Ethics in the evolution of capitalism, and even when he rationalized German bureaucracy in the name of legal-rational authority.

Sometimes historical moments give birth to Liberal Nationalism which is midway between Jacobin and Traditional nationalism". Mazzini, Garibaldi and John Stuart Mill and some others wanted to define nationalism as a constitutional government within definite territorial boundary, which tries to combine the interests of the state with those of humanity at large.

Finally Hayes speaks of Integral nationalism of the twentieth century which is based on power legitimised by military force and war. In this mould nationalism loses its liberal and democratic character. The citizens consider it for sometime to be a force of reckoning for their own interests. In the twentieth century Fascism. Nazism and Bolshevism and in the twenty first century

American authoritative uni-polarism are examples of Integral nationalism. Hayes has correctly typified the different forms of nationalism which are both constructive and destructive. At this point we are reminded of an observation by Harold Laski : "It is important first to discuss the two great counter-tendencies of the period, which have united both to strengthen and to dissolve the force of nationahsm. The one is the form taken by modern war-fare, the other is the inherent character of the industrial order. The second is, in some sort, the parent of the first Actually modern industrialism has created a world market, and world market implies foreign competition.

The Englishman who manufactures cars must compete against the American engaged in a similar effort. The power of nation-state is exerted to obtain a market dominated by some groups of industries. What can be achieved by diplomacy the state power observes principles of international law to that extent, but when they could not be achieved in a peaceful way war becomes inevitable. What is true in the writings of Laski has been doubly true in modern times. What we see in Iraq or the American threat against Iran, Libya and North Korea - the Axis of Evil - in the words of American President George Bush are nothing but naked force and self-interest sought to be legitimised by nationahsm in search of world peace and

security. The Anglo-American moves in Iraq were actually for gaining access to its oil-fields and for strategic reasons of overseeing the Central-Asian- Republics but actually they declared noble objectives of making the world safe and secure from the weapons of mass destruction, which have been later proved to be totally false. So, nationalism is again devoid of not only ideological, but also a valid political plank. Philosophers, strategists, leaders appeal to national sentiments in order to serve their own interests.

Sometimes nationalism is conceived to be the synonym for patriotism. Machiavelli, the patriotic Florentine of the sixteenth century has been generally accepted by the political scientists to be the forerunner of the idea of nation-state, but neither he himself nor the Italians in general had during his life-time shown any idea of a national feeling or, for that matter, the urge for having a sovereign nation-state. Machiavelli¹⁴ had given vent to the ruling idea of the Western Europe and the Continent which is nothing but the consolidation of monarchical power as against the Church and the Papacy. Behind this urge had played four factors; First, the pitiable condition of Italy that was constantly invaded and divided by Germany, Spain and France and too often with the unholy alliance with Papacy, second, the low standards of Italian character constantly debased and defiled by the colonial powers.

Similar is the case with Mahatma Gandhi¹⁵ and the national revolutionaries' or the extremists in India some four centuries after Machiavelli, in the twentieth century India. All of them stirred the Indian people to action and Gandhi could garner the active participation of a cross-section of people in the freedom movement, but in no sense it could be construed as national movement, for neither were they consciously tried to unite all the people irrespective of religion, caste and creed, nor did they evince any idea of a united Indian nation." The Extremists and the national revolutionaries were not only confined to select groups and limited areas of the country but in taking oath in the name of 'Kali', the Hindu Goddess or 'Gita', the teachings of Lord Krishna (the Hindu God), or in introducing 'Ganapati' (the Hindu God) worship in Bombay and Gujarat they failed to lay the foundation of one Indian nation-hood. Gandhi's appeal was deep and far-flung but most confusing. One could easily argue with Kenneth MacPherson and Guil Minault' that *Khilafat* movement in the second decade of the twentieth century was actually a Pan-Islamic outburst which was manipulated in India by the Urdu-speaking Muslims among whom Gandhi had no appeal doing 1914- 1942 and it was against the forces of modernization already unchained in Turkey itself. The moment Gandhi combined Khilafat with non-co-operation movement both the Hindus and the Hindi and Bengali-speaking Muslims separated them from it. Ultimately the seeds of Muslim separatism were sown in the Indian soil which was artificially used by Jinnah, who had no original constituency among Indian Muslims because of his Western postures and idioms of politics, in the creation of Pakistan. That religion could not be the main plank of Muslim national feeling had been evident since the creation of Pakistan and ultimately dashed to the ground in 1971 through the creation of the state of Bangladesh. The division of the sub-continent in two nation-states of India and Pakistan proved it beyond doubt that Gandhi was successful in spearheading the freedom movement to its natural conclusion but did never try seriously for creating Indian nationhood free of caste, community and creed. Nor did his followers like Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad represent the Indian national sentiments. Freedom movement could not be equated with national movement.

For a moment at this stage we could consider the submission of Professor Partha Chatterjee who approached the problem from three categories of 'Orientalism', 'Thematic' and

¹⁴Machiavelli (1469 - 1527) was an Italian thinker generally accepted as the beginning of modern political thinking and also the 'Power' tradition of politics.

¹⁵ Mahatma M.K. Gandhi (1869 - 1948), the father of the Indian Nation, remained a pacifist all his life. He practised what he preached and was not ready to sacrifice his ideal for political interests.

'Problematic'. By Orientalism is meant looking into the history, culture, thought-process and the logic of discourse of the thinkers and political activists of the East from the perspective of the West. Naturally there is a hidden under-current of the sense of supremacy, dominance and scorn in this approach.

'Thematic' refers to the theme or intellectual and theoretical structure of nationalism. In other words, it means the rules of reference by which the ideational substance of the national discourse is made in a specific land. 'Problematic' is the translation of the 'thematic' into reality through planning, movements and actions leading to the birth of a nation or a free nation-state.

Chatterjee begins with Bankim holding him as the 'moment of departure'. It is a period of departure from the ruling thematic of the nineteenth century when Rammohan and others accepted the basic criteria of the colonial discourse blowing from British education and enlightenment. Bankim for the first time sought to combine Western colonial thematic with the Indian problematic. He believed in rationalism, scientism and utilitarianism of the European Renaissance and Reformation as well as the materialist and empiricist outlook of the eighteenth century French Enlightenment, but used the criteria with Indian problematic based on religion and spiritualism. To him

'Gita' is the essence of Indian nationalism, not really in a metaphysical or transcendental sense but in a real materialist sense that could stir the people into action. To him Lord Krishna is a diplomat and a political leader and a great warrior. For taking the national feeling down to the imagination of the common man Bankim created the earthen idol of 'Bharat Mata'. Then in the second period, the period of Mahatma Gandhi, Indian nationalism reached its 'moment of manoeuvre'. Gandhi rejected totally the 'thematic' of European nationalist thinking, because to him the growth of civil society in Europe was based on materialism and consumerism. He was critical of everything in Western nationalism-its industrial order, open society, competition in market economy, absence of moral and ethical values. Gandhi even went on criticising the growth of civil society in Europe and the system of parliamentary democracy. So it is a new 'thematic' not at all based on the modified Western one. This 'thematic' is addressed to the entire humanity, not a fragmented part of it identified as Indians and it is based on spiritual and not physical or material power. Partha Chatterjee criticised it as a 'sort of populist utopian moral romanticism'. But his 'problematic' was really a manoeuvre as that could bring together cross-sections of the Indian people irrespective of caste and class, bourgeoisie and peasantry and the into the freedom movement. What is more, he could direct the Indian National Congress without being its member for the most part of his career between 1914 and 1942. All this is a proof of his manoeuvrability that lends a fertile ground for research. Nehru moulded Indian nationalism into a concrete and definite form and Chatterjee described it as a 'moment of arrival'. The bourgeois nationalism has definitely arrived in India from the West through the 'thematic' of Jawaharlal Nehru, but it is a modified one. It begins with 'Orientalism' in its faith in secular society and polity, modern scientific frame of mind, industrialisation and modernisation, but Nehru did not believe in the passive nature of the Indian masses who could not create history on their own. Nehru's thematic of nationalism is based on the reality of a sovereign democratic state and the problematic is heavily bent on 'statism', that the state will spread education and culture, will set up industries and control

private industries. Nehru's national ideal was for the first time totally Indian because there is not contradiction and ambivalence between its 'Thematic' and 'Problematic', both having been drawn from Indian ground realities.

While lauding the originality of Chatterjee's approach Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya criticised him for neglecting relations of production and the class structure in India which have conditioned the dynamics of the nationalist thought in India, as well as for considering it as a 'discourse' derived from the West. In fact Chatterjee did not actually neglect the class structure when he specifically identified Nehruvian ideology as essentially bourgeois in character.

Actually what both Chatterjee and Bandyopadhyaya missed are the caste and class structure of the Indian society together with the fact of an unholy alliance of the land-owning and bourgeois interests since 1950 that had always stood in the way of the 'arrival' of nationalism in India. We could not accept Chatterjee's assertion that Nehru's nationalist 'thematic' and 'problematic' were happily combined and that they were grounded in Indian conditions. What Nehru tried and tried quite unsuccessfully was to super-impose his own ideal of nationalism born of his legal and historical educational training on a mediaeval society and this brand of nationalism was not even bourgeois in the Western sense because Nehruvian 'Problematic' sapped the very process of bourgeois consolidation in India. This is precisely the reason why the myth of Indian nationalism was exploded after the death of Nehru and problems in all fronts were coming out from the wrap.

Nationalism, in the proper sense of the term, had always been absent in India, not actually in the thought-processes of the writers, leaders and the social reformers but in the actual dynamics of the socio-political milieu. In the nineteenth century before the transfer of power to the Crown India was nothing more than a geographical unit internally separated by village communities steeped in ignorance, illiteracy, hatred and segregation on caste, class and community lines. To the people not the Mughals or the British appeared to be exploiters or immediate enemies but actually the locals. In the towns a new middle class was emerging as off-shoots of British land policies and the spread of English education and administrative offices. This class was the harbinger of social and religious reforms but their influence could not steer the imagination and action of even a fraction of the city or town-dwellers, not to speak of the rural folk. In the West just the opposite had happened.

New economic forces emerged in the wake of the rise of the business and trading classes in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Renaissance as a socio-cultural movement was quickly joined by the Protestant Reformation that spread like a wild fire through the length of the European world by the able reformers as Martin Luther, Calvin, John Knox and others. Both these movements joined together heralded a new Europe marked by civil wars and then the rise of strong monarchy which in fact first formed an organ of national unity and the source of modern centralised government.

Strong political system, absolutist or controlled by Parliament and local administration served as the main foundation of geographical identity so much required for national consolidation.

The second stage of national integration came with the evolution of civil rights and democratic institutions, a process essentially bourgeois in character and one that began with the Glorious Revolution (1688) in Britain and strengthened by the American War of

Independence and the French Revolution in the eighteenth century. But the birth and gradual spread of the inventories through the Industrial Revolution during the eighteenth till the middle of the nineteenth century unchained new social forces and the bourgeois democratic institutions began to accommodate and absorb within their fold the emerging forces and pushed them towards pluralism. All these ups and downs, revolutions and reactions touched all the sections of the people and the geographic contiguity of the states of Europe promoted and process of consolidation. The oft-quoted saying that 'France sneezes, Europe catches cold' can be extended to other states of Europe. From the days of the Renaissance and title Reformation down to the mid-twentieth century through cyclical and circular movements of history the transformation of Europe, especially its western, central and continental parts were so much unilaterally directed towards national consolidation and integration that a whole range of mystic and metaphysical ideas were born culminating finally in Hegel thoroughly the application of 'Dialectic and Historical Necessity'.

To draw any similarity from European history in order to examine the rise of nationalism in India, or for that matter, anywhere in the colonial world would be a false and distorted exercise. We could bring into fore Marxian or Gramscian categories to satisfy our intellectual thirst but all our efforts would land in a vortex of confusion. Indians were never a nation, nor did the objective conditions ever exist in India to give birth to a nation - state.

Neither Rammohan, nor Vidyasagar, nor even Dayanand or Brahmo Samaj had cast any influence on the life of the majority of the Indian people. The Indian National Congress and the Indian masses were two unrelated and incongruous poles, one unknown to the other. The conflict within the Congress, the extremists and the moderates, did not promote any kind of social mobility towards either integration or disintegration, both of which are required in the growth of national consolidations. Then emerged Gandhi whose very 'charisma' served as a negative factor for the rise of nationalism in India. Gandhi introduced religion in all-India politics and sought to take both the Hindus and the Muslims alike along the road of freedom. Being himself a devout Hindu the Muslims did not believe him, nor did the finds accept his policy of concessions to the Muslims and the Sikhs. Essentially a spiritualist at heart Gandhi was an autocrat in politics never ready to accept other's point of view. But still he was by far the tallest of all his contemporaries, the wielder of charismatic power who could extract loyalty and faith from the uncritical common masses.

But this sort of 'charisma' could not address the problems at roots. So the post-independent India got a very weak state system. Nehru understood the problem and attached supreme importance to the question of keeping India united as a geographical entity, and made the state too much accommodative, consensual, compromising and 'soft'. The result of this policy is a kind of political and social peace earned by not addressing the basic issues of national integration. The supreme position of the Congress Party both in the Union and the States helped Nehru sidetrack the emerging social points of conflict, which took Himalayan proportions after his death. Indira Gandhi seized upon the popularity following the birth of the Bangladesh state but could not keep up that trend due to the push of the socio-economic forces. Since the eighties of the twentieth century coalition politics had become the natural trend of politics in India which would continue in the near future as the sole political contrive to absorb the forces of social discussion. From this the conclusion that is drawn is that India

did not experience the evolution of nationalism either as an ideal of consolidation and integration or a reference category of nation-state. The Indians are not a nation, psychologically, culturally, socio-economically or even politically. Still they are a geographical entity vowing their allegiance to the Indian state. The reasons are geo-strategic and spiritual. Geo-strategically the natural boundaries stood in the way of separatism and economically any such attempt on the part of any ethnic group or collection of groups would be suicidal. Insurgent groups may operate and create problems and foreign agencies may help them physically, morally and economically but they could not make deep inroads in the security of the Indian state.

The absence of any permanent bond among the Indians and the different patterns of historical process from that of the West led thinkers and social reformers in the nineteenth century to devise some other roots and at this point religion appeared to be most effective. The importance of Swami Vivekananda is born of this absence of nationalism both as an ideology and as a political process in the late nineteenth century when Bengal Renaissance was in full bloom and some brand of reformation movement in the sphere of religion had already set in, but the people was not roused. In fact neither the paladins of Renaissance nor the reformers had any constituency in the common people, nor did they attack the very roots of disunity and poverty that inflicted the majority. Swamiji tried to unite the Indians as the first step towards nationalism by translating into action the teachings of his Guru 'Ramakrishna Paramhansadev' through a revolutionary religious ideology that is called 'Practical Vedanta'.

1. References

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2. Harold J. Laski, 'A Grammar of Politics' (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1938). P-222
3. Ibid, P-224
4. National Revolutionaries were the freedom fighters of India, like the mJgantar and Anushilan Parties, who believed in the politics of 'bomb and gun' against the British power. To the British Government they were terrorists.
5. Extremists- The Indian National Congress was divided into two groups in the early days of its growth (before the emergence of Gandhi) the Moderates and the Extremists, the former preferred legal, constitutional and the latter extra- constitutional method of agitation against the British Government.
6. Gandhi, in and out an orthodox Hindu, always tried to unite the Hindus and Muslims by conceding concessions to the Muslims, that ultimately proved fatal.
7. Kenneth MacPherson and Guil Minault, 'Gandhi and Khilafat : A Milestone in India's History', (Pelican, 1969). P-35.
8. Partha Chatterjee, 'Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World : A Derivative Discourse ? (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1986). P-98-100
9. In his novel 'Anandamath' Bankim created the picture of 'Bharat Mata' in three forms : a) India of the glorious past, b) India of the present totally ruined by colonial exploitation, c) India of the future that is to be born out of supreme sacrifices of her

dedicated sons and daughters. The novel was published in 1881 and Bankim included in it the song 'Vande Mataram' composed in 1875, which in due course became the national song of the Indians fighting against the British.

10. Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya, 'Nationalism Unveiled', (Allied Publishers Ltd., 1990) R 136 - 137.
11. Hegel, the great German philosopher of the eighteenth century develops the concept of the 'Spirit' descending on earth through historical event and ideas following the process of Dialectical Idealism of 'thesis' 'anti - thesis' and 'Synthesis'.