

The Essence of Patriotism – A Panoramic View



Probably three quarters of the readers who are reading this now have, in their young school lives, had to undertake an essay on Patriotism. The highlight of it was some typical (but significant) examples of great leaders and their dedication towards their homeland. It included quotes, segments with the 1971 Liberation War, and an ending with the dream and hope of a better homeland on par with the developed countries. Let us leave it to the young writers of that time whether or not they felt it with the same enthusiasm as the words they wrote. For the sake of a good grade this almost homogenous write-up was the order of the day and it is still happening in this manner.

For now, any word ending with -ism causes slight to visible discomfort. You can be a patriot and express it; but when you talk about patriotism, the air suddenly feels heavy. Amidst the typical living room conversations on price hikes, traffic jams and other real life what-nots, anything of or relating to patriotism sticks out like a sore thumb. Young people in their whirl of selfies and food photos, screen swiping and fast moving small talks have hardly any time to actually discuss about something. And when they do so, it's not always on anything too serious. Whenever 26th March comes and goes, another debate starts and ends if it IS the true birth date of Bangladesh, and that sadly happens to be how patriotism is presented to the good people of Bangladesh.

The 21st century is the marked era of mass globalisation; boundaries are treated to be present only if they are thought to be there. This is definitely the time for thinking out loud instead of keeping thoughts and questions bottled up. What really is Patriotism? Is it the national boundary, the flag, the anthem or the sense of being part of a mix of society, beliefs and culture bound by the things mentioned? How come Nationalism and Patriotism are not differentiated in a broader base if they are essentially different? And the

question that should be asked openly instead of being a guarded thought- when someone emigrates, then does his or her sense of patriotism also shift with the emigration process? The binary answer of 'yes' or 'no' is not always applicable here.

Here's some food for thought, what happens if we settle on another planet? Of course that is not in the ten year or even in the hundred-year horizon, but what then? The human race would transcend dimensions and lightyears within the breadth of a couple of millennia, so it brings the question- how would patriotism be defined then? Will it end up as a binary definition or a self-contained concrete concept? Standing in at this point of time, these all are as vague as trying to discern next month's stock market index using the soggy tea leaves from last afternoon's tea pot! Divination and far-fetched speculations aside, we are after all human beings capable of complex abstract thoughts as well as sound judgement. Patriotism is in the hearts of the people cheering on as one in the cricket fields just as much as it is in the hearts of the players. It is in the voices of the fresh faced school children who sing the national anthem every morning as the national flag is raised. It is imbued in every cell of the person who is separated by two continents and three oceans. But as patriotism is projected outwardly in a variety of ways, the essence of it is also interpreted differently. It may as well be as simple as doing the right thing which the situation calls for, ultimately the concept must have a synergistic output. Patriotism is not a word that gains spotlight in specific months only, or just to be thoroughly analysed for an essay. It's time to embrace it as a concept that transcends boundaries and lines of thought which essentially unifies the people for better outcomes without complications.

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