

Nationalism, Christians and Freedom in India

The *Hindutva* movement in India has made inroads capturing the most of the Hindu people with their ideology, programmes and politics. It has also thrust its understanding of nationalism. Kindling the religious sentiments of the Hindus; polarized approach, negative tactics and violence are used to define nationalism with Hindu religion, thus marginalizing or naming the other religions as foreign, colonizers and alien. Thus, nationalism is pelted out with narrow mentality and definition, even to the extent of negating the existence of others. The support to this narrow nationalism by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party as well as some fringe political parties, make the situation more complex, more so, the double talk of these politicians create more difficult situation for the other religions.

Christians have become vulnerable in this situation, their missionary activities are obstructed, more fear has set in due to violence to our institutions and personnel. Although many people have gone through our education institutions, they turn against us now. In this context of the woundedness, our freedom according to the Constitutions needs to be asserted and the Christian mission needs to adopt new paths of mission. Christian community participation in mission needs urgent attention; training of lay leaders in social, religious and political areas needs new orientation, understanding patriotism and nationalism; Inter-religious dialogue has to raise its level more than just dialogue approach; and the Church has to draw plans to counter the narrow nationalism. At the same time, witness to faith, spirit of sacrifice, conviction and commitment to serve the people, especially poor and marginalized should be core of our mission.

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