

The Arrival of Nationalism in Sankrityayan's Ideology: Sankrityayan's literature under the influence of Marxism and nationalistic sentiment

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In the academic discourse about Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963), he appears in different and contradicting guises: as a Sadhu, a Buddhist, a peasant leader or a communist. However, the question concerning the motivating factor and reasoning behind this complex personality and ideology is yet to be answered. What was it that forced him to change his identity so many times? This is the question which I pursue in my study. I argue that nationalist sentiment is a major factor creating diversity in Sankrityayan's ideology. The hypothesis of this study is that the involvement in the Arya Samaj, adventurous journeys to Tibet in search of the lost original Buddhist texts, the initiation as a Buddhist monk, his communist ideology, political activism, literary contributions and support for Hindi as the national language – all this is a reflection of Sankrityayan's particular form of nationalism.

Partha Chatterjee (1986:50-2), in a modified application of Gramsci's framework of 'three movements', defined the understanding of Indian nationalism in three stages. Following Chatterjee's concept I will outline an analytical framework within which Sankrityayan's ideological state and development can be studied as an expression of nationalist sentiment, dividing it in the three phases of departure, manoeuvre and arrival. Considering the changes he longed for, the society he envisioned in the phase of departure was finally embodied upon arrival. These changes concerned development, equality on gender, work and wealth, Marxism, the strengthening of Indian culture, acceptance of Hindi as the national language and Devanagari as its written form. The changes which appeared in imaginative form in the utopian novel *Baisvī Sadī* (1923) became much clearer and more concrete in *Bhago nahīṃ duniyā ko badlo* (1944)¹ which moved from an imaginary vision for the 22nd century to an invocation of the struggle to articulate the goals for which he worked throughout his life. This study will present and analyse the emergence of Sankrityayan's nationalistic views using the example of his first book, *Baisvīṃ Sadi*, and their mature expression with Marxist influences in *Bhago Nahiṃ Duniyā ko Badlo*.

¹ Although this book was written in 1944, the 4th edition, published in 1951 and edited by Sankrityayan himself, also deals with contemporary political issues.