There is a new sense of nationalism, or perhaps ‘jingoism’ that is taking the social and political narrative by storm today. With soldiers, enemy states and warfare being mentioned more than often in this election rally season, a wave of nationalism was witnessed in the nation. Before, any discussion of nationalism, it is essential to know what nationalism exactly is.

What is Nationalism?

Nationalism is an ideology that emphasizes loyalty, devotion, allegiance to a nation or a nation-state. This feeling of love and belongingness that we feel for our nation is one that comes from within or is inherently there in an individual.

State’s Idea – Imposition of pseudo nationalism

There is an unreal i.e. a pseudo form of nationalism that the government has been trying to impose on the citizens in the recent past. Thus, this imposition makes this pseudo-nationalism, in itself something that goes against the idea of nationalism. Things which they feel benefit their vote bank politics are given a name of nationalism which is forced upon the citizens. In this imposition of nationalism which is being dictated by the ruling government, there have been various instances of violence as well.

This form of hyper-nationalism where expression of views against the ruling party was termed ‘anti-national’ was witnessed in the JNU incident of 2016. The barbaric violence by ABVP (the student body of BJP) that happened was nothing but a farce to die out the opinion in the name of nationalism. It was clearly witnessed here how ‘anti-national’ was being associated to all those who held their views to be incongruous to the state’s.

Another form of this pseudo nationalism was seen through the government’s advocacy in the 2016 order making it mandatory to play the national anthem in cinema halls. This was clearly a very farcical act by the ruling government done in order to create an image of theirs, synonymous to patriotism. There were instances where people were beaten up brutally in the name of nationalism for not standing up for the national anthem instilling fear in the minds of people where their means to show love to the state was controlled by the government. This is fundamentally against the principle of self-liberty and is clearly a means of thought policing behind the veil of nationalism. Justice DY Chandrachud in his critical views on this order mentioned that there was “no need for an Indian to carry Patriotism up his sleeve” to prove love for their motherland. Nationalism is also being used as a garb to cover the fallacies of the government’s policies. It was clearly used as a means to nullify all objections to the inconvenience caused to the people by demonetization. The government’s propaganda of standing in ATM lines being a ‘national service’ was a preposterous use of this pseudo nationalism.

Hindutva- State’s new nationalism

From creating a nationalistic identity around the food culture to changing the names of cities and monuments in the name of nationalism, the ruling government is trying to bring a shift where they are incorporating the principles of Hindutva into the ideals of Nationalism. This intermingling is systematically distorting the definition of ‘nationalism’. This is an attempt to incept into people’s mind the idea of nationalism where it holds Hindutva at the crux of it. The perception that a beef eater is anti-national and a cow worshipper is the ‘real Indian’ is what the current government is propagating out openly. The subtle imposition of the Hindi language and its propagation as the ‘national language’, throughout the nation is also an indicator of the same. By systematically adjusting this definition of ‘nationalism’ according to their own terms and making it something sacred, vote bank politics is taking new turns with a ‘national’ party being the only true party.
Why unjustified?

Nationalism is neither a disease nor a medicine that can be injected into people. It is sense of association that people themselves feel towards their nation. Just like every other emotion, nationalism is also an emotion or an ideology that lies deep in our soul. Imposing it on people is no less than killing freedom of thought and liberalism. Being unmoved by the violence done in the name of this self-created and forcibly imposed idea of nationalism is a form of legal extortion we are consenting to.