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## **POSTCOLONIAL INDIA: IDENTITY AS PROCESS AND DISCOURSE**

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Colonialism left a profound mark on India's history, shaping its political, economic, and socio-cultural landscape. British rule, which lasted nearly two centuries, had both destructive and transformative consequences. The attainment of independence in 1947 did not automatically overcome the colonial legacy. Economic inequality, cultural imperialism, political contradictions, and the issue of identity pose significant postcolonial challenges. They continue to determine the trajectory of the country's development.

In the contemporary globalised world, India emerges as a state that combines traditional values with processes of modernisation. The question of postcolonial identity is not only political but also philosophical. It concerns self-determination, cultural memory, and the relationship between the «self» and the «other».

After the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, the issue of Kashmir became a focal point of conflict and a symbol of the problem of national self-identification. The conflicts between the states concerned not only territorial integrity but also religious and cultural belonging. A fundamental question of identity arose: what does it mean to be Indian or Pakistani in a region with a shared historical heritage?

The Cold War confronted India with the necessity of defining its own position in the global confrontation. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru initiated the policy of non-alignment, which became an attempt to preserve sovereignty and avoid a new form of dependence. Such a course reflected the aspiration for an independent path of development and resonated with Gandhian ideals of non-violence (ahimsa) and moral autonomy. The territorial conflict with China in 1962 actualised the problem of correlating

the ideals of peaceful coexistence with the necessity of defending sovereignty. Thus, foreign policy challenges directly influenced the formation of a new national self-consciousness.

In addition to external geopolitical factors, there were also internal ones. India did not resolve the issues of poverty, social inequality, caste restrictions, and regional conflicts. In the philosophical dimension, these problems are connected with the traditional concepts of dharma and karma. Dharma, as a principle of proper conduct, is historically associated with dharma as a social structure. It regulates a person's duties in accordance with status. At the same time, in contemporary India, this system is undergoing transformation under the influence of democratic reforms and legislative initiatives aimed at overcoming discrimination. Karma, as the law of cause and effect, is interpreted in both ethical and socio-political contexts. It implies responsibility for the consequences of actions, shaping notions of justice.

Indian leaders sought to combine traditional ethical foundations with socialist models of development, creating a system in which the state played an active role in ensuring social equality. An important factor in the formation of identity was the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, particularly the concept of non-violence and the ideal of just governance based on morality and decentralisation. However, after gaining independence, India chose a centralised model of parliamentary democracy that did not fully correspond to the Gandhian vision. Contemporary interpretations of Gandhism, particularly in the activities of Anna Hazare, demonstrate the continued relevance of the ideas of social justice and anti-corruption struggle [4].

Simultaneously, the formation of neo-Hinduism was taking place, namely, a modernised form of religious tradition that combines spiritual heritage with processes of modernisation. Nehru attempted to reconcile secularism and technological progress with respect for cultural heritage.

Colonialism caused not only economic or political changes but also a deep psychological trauma. As Ashis Nandy notes, colonialism affected the self-perception of colonised peoples, generating an inferiority complex and a loss of authenticity [3].

Postcolonial theory emphasises the need to deconstruct Eurocentric narratives. The representation of marginalised voices and the restoration of subjectivity to colonised communities constitute an important task of contemporary humanities scholarship [1].

At the same time, the British colonial administration left an institutional legacy, namely, a legal system, a bureaucratic apparatus, and a parliamentary model. This ambivalent influence cannot be ignored, as it became the foundation of modern Indian statehood.

Thus, postcolonial India represents a combination of local and Western elements. This is manifested in the linguistic situation (English alongside Hindi and other languages), the phenomenon of «Hinglish,» cinematography, and literature. An example of this can be found in art. The works of Amitav Ghosh demonstrate the complexity of historical memory and identity. In the novel *The Shadow Lines* [2], the conventionality of borders, the multilayered cultural belonging of the characters, and the intertwining of personal and collective memory are traced. Such hybridity is not a sign of the loss of identity but a form of its new configuration [5].

Based on the conducted analysis, the following features of the formation of postcolonial identity in India can be identified. The search for authenticity – the revival of languages, traditions, and religious heritage. The synthesis of tradition and modernisation – the combination of Indian values with democratic and socialist ideas. Political modernisation – the development of parliamentary democracy, taking into account national specificity. Overcoming social inequality – reforming the caste system and combating discrimination. The trauma of colonialism and resistance – the formation of national pride and an independent economic course (until the reforms of 1991). Multiculturalism – the coexistence of diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups within a single political nation [6].

Thus, India has managed to combine borrowed institutional models with its own traditional values, creating a unique model of development. Therefore, postcolonial identity appears not as a return to a «pure past,» but as the result of a continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity.

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