HOW TO DISCUSS NATIONALISM WITH YOUR STUDENTS

By Subir Shukla | Feb 25, 2016

Whether on the TV or in newspapers or on social media sites – we are today surrounded everywhere by strong views on nationalism. Groups of people are getting angry and upset, calling each other names, being violent. Your students too are caught in this, though they may not fully be aware of it. They will be absorbing views from different sources, all of which may not be reliable. And they may end up adopting strong opinions (or even what you consider misguided ones) without giving them sufficient thoughts. For this reason, we have prepared a discussion guide. It is important that at this crucial time, when they might be making a choice, you, their teacher, reach out to them and help them think things through.

So here are some hints. Use them in the way they work best for you. Drop them or change them or add to them according to your need and situation.

Duration:
01 hours 00 mins

Introduction:
Preliminary – setting the ground
For such a discussion, it would be best to prepare the ground gently rather than rush into it. Here are some questions you could ask.

1. Have you been hearing or seeing the news or reading the newspapers?
2. What are some of the big issues being discussed?
3. What have you read or hear about the 'nationalism debate'?

Provide background
Briefly give a background to the issue. It is possible many may not have heard it or may not have a clear idea of what happened.

**Activity Steps:**

**Discuss the issue**

As students the following questions. Make sure you get everyone’s views, especially those who often don’t speak up. [Some hints are given in the brackets.]

1. So what do you think it means to love your country? [taking care of the environment? Looking after those who are not able to take care of themselves? Singing patriotic songs? Joining the army? Being polite to others? What else? Especially in our daily lives, what do we do (or can do) to show our patriotism?]

2. What are the best ways to show your love for your country? [you can use the list from the previous question to identify 2-3 of the ‘best’ or ‘most important’ ways and discuss why students think they are the best]

3. What are some of the things you would not do if you love your country? [e.g. spitting everywhere as it spreads disease, not dirtying or vandalizing the environment, not jumping a queue or try to take an undue advantage…]

4. Even in a family everyone is not able to agree on everything? Have you seen any example of this? What happens in such a case?

5. So if someone does no agree with you, is it a good idea to beat him or her up? Why?

6. What do you think are the best ways to deal with disagreement?

7. And what if on the issue of loving your country, someone says something you don’t find pleasant? What should you do?

8. What are the best ways of finding out more deeply why people think the way they think? And how can you use that to help them see things differently?

**Afterwards**

Of course, this discussion will not end here. Give students some materials to read. Organize one or two follow up events. Suggest that the students have their own discussion group and contact you for help if needed.

All the best!