

A STUDY ON CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In India, several obstacles are hindering the development of national sentiment, such as casteism, communalism, linguistic zealotry, social inequality, economic disparities, immorality, and regionalism. India is a diverse nation characterized by multiple races, religions, and languages. Even so, the Indians evolved into a single nation through the impact of shared land, shared history, and a collective struggle for independence from foreign domination. When the British took control of India, they implemented the strategy of 'Divide and Rule' to maintain their dominance over the country. As a result, the racial, religious, and linguistic communities within the Indian nation initially started to break apart emotionally and psychologically and subsequently wished to fragment territorially. This led to the split of India into Bharat and Pakistan. Currently, the integrity of the Indian nation is severely endangered as the communal conflicts are exacerbated by India's antagonistic neighbors. Thus, the need for robust national integration in India has become highly essential at this time.

Keywords: Casteism, communalism, linguistic fanaticism, social disparity, economic inequalities and immorality, regionalism.

INTRODUCTION

The Preamble of the Constitution of India declares: We, the citizens of India, having firmly committed to establish India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic, strive to provide to all its citizens: Justice—social, economic, and political; Freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; Equality of status and opportunity; and to foster among them all Fraternity ensuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.

On this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, in our Constituent Assembly, we do hereby adopt, enact, and present this Constitution to ourselves. The 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 added the term 'integrity' to the Preamble of the Constitution, highlighting the Indian nation's emphasis on the essential integration of the populace. Moreover, specific essential responsibilities were included in Part IVA Article-51A. Every citizen of India shall have the responsibility—

1. To adhere to the Constitution and honor its principles and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.
2. To value and pursue the honorable principles that motivated our quest for independence.
3. To maintain and safeguard the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of India.

4. To foster unity and a sense of shared brotherhood among all Indian citizens, surpassing differences in religion, language, and regional or sectional identities; to reject practices that undermine the dignity of women.
5. To appreciate and maintain the valuable legacy of our diverse culture.
6. To protect public assets and to renounce violence.
7. To aim for superiority in every aspect of personal and group efforts, ensuring that the nation consistently advances to greater heights of work and success.

TOWARD NATIONAL INTEGRATION

National integration involves fostering a sense of unity where differences are acknowledged and valued by cultivating a spirit of nationalism. There exists a level of uniformity in the different efforts to define the idea of national integration. According to Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru stated, "the Indian nation is founded on the concept of unity amidst diversity." Sister Nivedita (1867-1911), an American who was a devoted follower of Swami Vivekananda, wisely stated, "Every Indian should, for ten minutes each evening, reflect on the fact that we Indians are united and will not forsake our spirit of unity." Etzioni (1965) argues that a community is cohesive when it possesses:

- An effective control over the means of violence;
- A centre of decision-making that significantly affected the allocation of resources and rewards; and
- A dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of national citizens who are politically aware.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

- But when India got independence on 15 August 1947, the country was faced with many problems. The national integration faced great challenges. You must be aware that the partition of the country created two nations, India and Pakistan. The partition caused the worst kind of communal violence. A large number of people who were living in an area for generations had to move to the other area as refugees. You may have watched such scenes in some films and documentaries and serials on the television. Besides, the Indian political leaders were faced with complex issues related to integration of Princely States. There were other factors also that had the potential to generate problems for the unity of the country.
- On the eve of independence, India was divided into two sets of territories - the first was the territory known as the British India, on which the British rulers had direct control, and the second being 562 independent Princely States, having indirect control of the British government. When independence was declared, Princely States were given the option to join either of the two nations, India or Pakistan. A few Princely States joined Pakistan, but the rest merged with India. However, there were exceptions like Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, and Junagadh, who wished to remain independent. There were problems with States of Manipur and Tripura also.
- In the above stated background, the Constitution of India lays great emphasis on national integration. Its Preamble includes unity and integrity of the nation as a major objective. It also stipulates that every citizen has the fundamental duty to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. The Constitution reflects respect for diversity of the country, but it tries to ensure that the unity and integrity is

maintained. Which is why, it has made provisions for a centralized federation and opted for a strong central government. You may have noticed this while studying the Lessons on Central government and State governments.

CHALLENGES IN THE WAY OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

1. The Politics of Caste: Casteism is a divisive force. One section considers another section as inferior. They are exploited. Positions and opportunities are monopolized by a particular section. It creates enmity among the other castes. Caste organizations interfere in politics. They function as pressure groups and obtain benefits undeservedly. These factors prevent national integration.

2. Regionalism: The Politics of Deprivation, Regionalism gives more importance to one's own region than to one's nation. When regionalism is linked with language and religion it creates regional interests rather than national interests. This creates parochialism among the people. Another fissiparous tendency is regionalism.

3. Extremism: Extremism is the act of spreading fear by threatening the people through illegal means to obtain selfish interests. It ignores human values. The feeling that they do not get what they deserved, unemployment, lack of proper education and inadequate means of livelihood lead to extremism. National integration fosters nationalism. It is opposed to communalism, linguistic jingoism, regionalism and similar fissiparous forces.

DIMENSIONS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION:

National Integration has several dimensions:

- (a) Political
- (b) Economic
- (c) Social
- (d) Cultural
- (e) Ethical and
- (f) Psychological or Emotional

(a). Political integration involves territorial unity and integrity, political unity and a common Government that can firmly bind together national unity.

(b). Economic integration takes care of the united fight against the hazards and poverty, hunger, homelessness of the down trodden in the Society.

(c). Social Integration ensures disbursement of Social justice, social equality, liberty and fraternity among the people without delay. It also fights against any kind of disintegration, either communal, Social or racial.

(d). Protection of distinct cultural identity in the spheres of language, customs, belief and faith is the basic objective of Cultural integration.

(e). Ethically, national integration; suggests the sanctity of the changing value system of the people of a country. Here is an example-Switching over to Democracy and representative government for Authoritarianism and Dictatorship and taking decisions through consensus is the outcome of the changing value system.

The last one is called the emotional or psychological integration because of which people are united together with their high-emotions attached to their National Song, National Flag, National Anthem, National Emblem, National Bird, National Animal and so on. Like-wise

emotional attachment promoted through the teachings of several Indian mythological epics, like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Ramacharit Manas, Shri Bhagavatam, Shri Bhagavad-Gita and the like People, get emotionally attached to their country's past glory and cultural unity.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIAN CONTEXT:

Indian society is multi-ethnic, multi-social, multi-cultural, multi- regional, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic. Varied socio-economic status accompanied by value-variances in India has defeated the objectives of National Integration. Owing to the aforesaid multiplicities, there have developed in India socio-ethnic-cultural differences, political instability and above all, economic disintegration. People divide themselves into varied groups and fight for their narrow-self interest defying national interest.

Each group tries to maximize its best advantage. The ultimate outcome is a neck-to-neck-inter and intra-group-fighting ready to loss of human lives and property. Violence, extremism and militancy very often disturb the social order, governmental stability and economic development.

These maladies can be overcome through a systematic process of National Integration with the objectives, like, uniting the varied groups, into a functioning whole', reducing old barriers among the warring groups, providing a better and intelligible communication system to understand each other, tolerating mutual differences reciprocally and finally, institutions a political system based on 'shared values and consensus'.

DISTINCT VIEWS:

Three distinct views have emerged out of the debate on the issue of national unity in India. One such view was of John Strachey (the author of INDIA) who wrote, "there is not and never was an INDIA or even a country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity; physical, political, Social or religious'.

John Strachey's view was contested by a group of India's eminent scholars like Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra, Shri Aurobindo, D.R. Bhandarkar who affirmed that there was and (there) always had been an India, attested to by its political, physical, social and cultural Unity.'

An eminent historian, Vincent Smith brought out a compromising view and in his OXFORD HISTORY of INDIA', he wrote, 'India offers unity in diversity'. This view appealed Jawaharlal Nehru so much that he fought for a 'SECULAR UNITY' in India.

FORCES OF DISINTEGRATION IN INDIA:

If process of Integration was to some extent, the contributions of the British Rule in India, so much so was the 'British Policy of Divide and Rule' in India. That had led to India's disintegration in the post-independent years. India is one' is her physical get-up, but, internally she is torn into pieces through caste and communal violence, atrocities on 'Dalits' and OBCs regional antagonism, linguistic and cultural in-fight, economic disparities and the issue of reservation in public services.

Added to the issues like socio-economic exploitation, child labour, sexual harassment, linguistic fanaticism, narrow vested interest of the local inhabitants, more commonly known as "sons of the soil", religious hysteria, growth of militant 'SENAS', terrorist activities and separatist tendencies, problems of disease and hunger and the like. In face of these multiple diversities, the need of the hour, therefore, is national integration founded on the principle of 'Unity in Diversity'.

It is the fitness of the aforesaid situation, Professor Rasheeduddin Khan's emotional but timely remarks suggest that "the term National Integration means and ought to mean cohesion not fusion, unity but not uniformity, reconciliation but not merger, agglomeration but not assimilation etc. of the discreet segments of the People constituting a Political Community or State? (Khan National Integration and Communal Harmony; National Integration of India Vol II-Edited by Sinha)

HOW TO PROMOTE NATIONAL INTEGRATION?

The Government of India in the Ministry of HRD have recommended four approaches to achieve national integration in India: namely,

- (i) Gradual harmonious change
- (ii) Mechanical Solidarity
- (iii) Unity in Diversity and pluralist approach
- (iv) Protective discrimination.

But, for proper implementation of these four approaches, the most important role has to be played by the administrators at large. Law and order authorities must come up to a mark to identify impartially and rationally the problems of mal-integration and to take adequate steps to solve it.

The law and order administrations must act as 'protectors' of the Victims of such atrocities, from among the Harijanas and Adivasis. Adequate and timely relief should reach the victims and aggrieved persons to compensate their loss. Police-torture should be called to a halt. Arbitrary assets of innocent persons, mostly belonging to the minority communities should be checked and stopped at once.

All anti-national activities have to be curbed. Illegal smuggling of deadly weapons has to be prevented. Infiltration across the border has to be checked with the help of well-armed Border Security Force (BSF). Police organisation has to be modernized and strengthened with arms. Intelligence wing has to be adequately trained.

Anti-national propaganda, baseless, yet instigating rumours and gossips have to be censored. Sensitive areas should have able and experienced officers with self- confidence integrity and high-morale. Press and Media have to be impartial in their treatment and publicity of the situation.

PROTECTIVE DISCRIMINATION:

The Government of India in pursuance of the relevant provisions in our Constitution have both enacted several laws and issued many executive directions from time to time to promote the policy of 'Protective Discrimination' or the "Policy of preferences".

Implementation of these policies since 1951 has provided concessions, preferences, reservations in jobs, in the Legislatures, and educational institutions in favour of the S.Cs and ST. The Process has continued till date. Such preferential facilities are available to the S.Cs and S.Ts in matters of promotion in jobs as well.

Similar reservation preferences in jobs have also been extended in India to the other Backward Classes (OBCs) since 1994. In a simple language, people call it 'Mandalisation'. The judgement of the Supreme Court in Indira Shahwney Case and also in two other cases that under no situation should the reservation of posts in jobs shall exceed 50% was of no use.

- Firstly, The matter did not stop there. In Rajasthan and in MP Governments have recently come forward with decisions to increase the reservation quota in jobs beyond 50% for those who are socially or economically backward (SEBC) There is no wrong either to increase the percentage of reservation or to swell up the present list of OBCs by adding a few more castes.
- Secondly , what is more important is that such reservation policies are effectively implemented to the best advantages of the deserving socially and economically backward classes or castes so as to reduce the inequality-gap.
- Thirdly, Education has a vital role to play in promotion of National Integration. The traditional education system has to be reoriented to develop Students' personality and to grow in them a sense of 'tolerance', and a feeling of 'oneness'.
- Fourthly, social economic planning has to be centralized, keeping in mind the demands and needs of each state. Regional economic disparity can be balanced through more inflow of financial help to the under developed states to be at par with the developed ones so that inter-state ill-feeling and animosity can be buried. State's priorities must be taken care of by the National Government forgetting political animosity between the parties in power.
- Fifthly Inter-State Councils and Zonal Councils must be allowed to work to solve inter-state disputes, to rejuvenate Inter-State cooperation and to strengthen national solidarity, not at the cost of democratic governments operating in the States and at the Centre within a federal set up.

Last, but not the least, is the smooth introduction of Official Language Policy in India. Without undermining the emotional touch associated with our regional languages.

ROLE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL: (NIC)

The National Integration Conference held in October 1961 had agreed to set up a National Integration Council (NIC) to review all matters related to National Integration and to suggest measures to the Union Government. Besides the Prime Minister who chairs the NIC, the other members included the Union Minister of Home Affairs Chief Ministers of all States, Educationists, Chairman of UGC, Chairman of SC & ST Commission and a few eminent Party leaders.

It is hoped that the NIC meets frequently, deliberates issues affecting national integration and works for harmonious interstate cooperation strengthening national integration. It is further hoped that the National Commissions for women, for Minorities and for Human Rights should also play a supporting role protects the genuine interest of various groups in our society.

A FEW OTHER STEPS WHICH CAN ALSO HELP PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION ARE SUMMED UP BELOW:

- (a) Cultural plurality has to be respected and tolerated through mutual understanding based on nationality among various culturally diverse groups.
- (b) Nation's ideology is stated in the Preamble of our Constitution ensuring justice, liberty, equality, fraternity and promoting secularism have to be respected and implemented spontaneously, whole heartedly and sincerely with no compulsion and reservation.

- (c) All National symbols have to be shown due respect by every Indian to ensure national unity to promote national integration.
- (d) Much success of National integration depends on the style of functioning of the positive role played by our national leaders including the Head of the State and Head of the Government. In this context let us recall these emphatic words of our first Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru who said, “National integration is our national objective and let us achieve it”.
- (e) Since national integration is a political issue, it is equally necessary that each big or small political party should contribute voluntarily for the promotion of National integration in India. All political differences have to be merged in the national interest.

FACTORS PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Although the above stated challenges do exist, there are certain important factors that provide sound base for national integration. These are:

A. Constitutional Provisions : As we have seen, the Indian Constitution has made provisions for promoting and ensuring national integration. It has accepted socialism, secularism, democracy, liberty, equality, justice and fraternity as the goals of Indian political system. Citizens have been empowered with fundamental rights and their fundamental duties have also been prescribed. The Directive Principles of State Policy directs the State to promote equitable economic development, eliminate social discrimination, and promotion of international peace and security. And above all, the provisions related to various institutions and processes have been geared towards national integration.

B. Governmental Initiatives: The governments have also been making efforts to promote national integration. A National Integration Council has been set up to consider issues related to national integration and recommend suitable measures to be taken. A Single Planning Commission prepares plans for economic development of the entire country and one Election Commission conducts elections.

C. National Festivals and Symbols : National festivals also act as an important unifying force. Independence Day, Republic Day, and Gandhi Jayanti are festivals that are celebrated by all Indians and in all parts of the country, regardless of language, religion or culture. We also observe the National Integration Day on 19 November every year and take a pledge. This day is also known as “Qaumi Ekta Divas”. Moreover, our National Symbols like the National Flag, the National Anthem, and the National Emblem also help to remind us that we all have one identity. For this reason we stress on the importance of showing proper respect to these symbols. These act as strong unifying forces both in times of celebration and adversity.

D. All India Services and Other Factors: Moreover, the All India Services (IAS, IFS, IPS and others), unified judicial system, postal and communications networks, including radio and television, and the internet promote the unity and integrity of the Indian nation. You may be aware that the members of the All India Services are recruited centrally, but they work in States. Many of them, after having long experiences at the state level come to work in the Central government and be a part of policy decision-making for the entire country.

CONCLUSION

In the era of liberalization, globalization and of information and communication technology, the curriculum framers of our nation mostly emphasizing on these dimensions but hardly any effort is being made for the provision of moral, spiritual and on national building education. As there is a dire requirement to take up these dimensions of education on which premise the whole of our student's growth and development rests.

In the competitive world of 21st century, because all are energies our motivated towards more and more economic gains and the centuries old traditional joint family system is dying its own death; as it was the responsibility of the parents and grandparents to inculcate the values of morality, truthfulness, respect, solidarity, spirituality, cohesiveness, nationalism via the medium of the stories, folklores and folktales to its younger generation has no relevance in today's competitive world. Because the students are lacking in these values that's why they are resorting to petty conflicts in/outside the school/college premises and sometimes these quarrels take a violent form by harming one another. In order to teach the students about the practices which we were following since times immemorial we need to teach the related subjects to our rising future generations by taking moral, spiritual and concept of nationalism in view.

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