



National Integration

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India is a land of widespread diversities in terms of religion, language, caste, tribe, race, region and so on. Hence, the achievement of national integration becomes very essential for the all-around development and prosperity of the country.

MEANING OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Definitions and statements on national integration: "National integration implies avoidance of divisive movements that would balkanise the nation and presence of attitudes throughout the society that give preference to national and public interest as distinct from parochial interests" Myron Weiner.

"National integration is a socio-psychological and educational process through which a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion develops in the hearts of the people and a sense of common citizenship or feeling of loyalty to the nation is fostered among them" HA Gani.

"National integration is not a house which could be built by mortar and bricks. It is not an industrial plan too which could be discussed and implemented by experts. Integration, on the contrary, is a thought which must go into the heads of the people. It is the consciousness which must awaken the people at large" Dr S Radhakrishna.

"National integration means, and ought to mean, cohesion not fusion, unity but reconciliation but not merger, agglomeration but not assimilation of the discrete segments of the uniformity, reconciliation but not merger, agglomeration but not assimilation of the discrete segments of the people constituting a political community or state" Rasheeduddin Khan.

To sum-up, the concept of national integration involves political, economic, social, cultural and psychological dimensions and the inter-relations between them.

OBSTACLES TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Among the major obstacles to national integration include:

1. Regionalism

Regionalism refers to sub-nationalism and sub-territorial loyalty. It implies the love for a particular region or state in preference to the country as a whole. There is also sub-regionalism, that is, love for a particular region in preference to the state of which the region forms a part.

Regionalism is "a subsidiary process of political integration in India. It is a manifestation of those residual elements which do not find expression in the polity and national culture, and being excluded from the centrality of the new polity, express themselves in political discontent and political exclusionism".

Regionalism is a country-wide phenomenon which manifests itself in the following six forms:

- (i). Demand of the people of certain states for secession from the Indian Union (like Khalistan, Dravid Nad, Mizos, Nagas and so on).
- (ii) Demand of the people of certain areas for separate statehood (like Telengana, Bodoland, Uttarkhand, Vidharbha, Gorkhaland and so on).
- (iii) Demand of people of certain Union Territories for full-fledged statehood (like Manipur, Tripura, Puducherry, Delhi, Goa, Daman and Diu and so on).



(iv) Inter-state boundary disputes (like Chandigarh and Belgaum) and river-water disputes (like Cauvery, Krishna, Ravi-Beas and so on).

(v) Formation of organisations with regional motives which advocates a militant approach in pursuing its policies and goals (like Shiv Sena, Tamil Sena, Hindi Sena, Sardar Sena, Lachit Sena and so on).

(vi) 'Sons of the soil theory' which advocates preference to local people in government jobs, private jobs, permits and so on. Their slogan will be Assam for Assamese, Maharashtra for Maharashtrians and so on.

2. Communalism

Communalism means love for one's religious community in preference to the nation and a tendency to promote the communal interest at the cost of the interest of other religious communities. It has its roots in the British rule where the 1909, 1919 and 1935 Acts had introduced communal representation for the Muslims, Sikhs and others. The communalism got accentuated with the politicisation of religion. Its various manifestations are:

(i) Formation of political parties based on religion (like Akali Dal, Muslim League, Ram Rajya Parishad, Hindu Mahasabha, Shiv Sena and so on).

(ii) Emergence of pressure groups (non-political entities) based on religion (like RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Jamaat-e-Islami, Anglo-Indian Christians Association and so on).

(iii) Communal riots (between Hindus and Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, Hindus and Christians and so on-Benaras, Lucknow, Mathura, Hyderabad, Allahabad, Aligarh, Amritsar, Moradabad and all other places are affected by communal violence).

(iv) Dispute over religious structures like temples, mosques others (The dispute over Ram Janma Bhoomi in Ayodhya where the kar se vaks had demolished a disputed structure on December 6, 1992).

The reasons for the persistence of communalism include religious orthodoxy of Muslims, role of Pakistan, Hindu chauvinism, government's inertia, role of political parties and other groups, electoral compulsions, communal media, socio-economic factors and so on.

3. Casteism

Casteism implies love for one's own caste-group in preference to the general national interest. It is mainly an outcome of the politicisation of caste. Its various manifestations include:

(i) Formation of political parties on the basis of caste (like Justice Party in Madras, DMK, Kerala Congress, Republican Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and so on).

(ii) Emergence of pressure groups (non-political entities) based on caste (like Nadar Association, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Kshatriya Mahasabha and so on).

(iii) Allotment of party tickets during elections and the formation of council of ministers in the states on caste lines.

(iv) Caste conflicts between higher and lower castes or between dominant castes in various states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and so on.

(v) Violent disputes and agitations over the reservation policy.

BK Nehru observed: "The communal electorates (of the British days) in a vestigial form still remain in the shape of reservations for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They serve to emphasise caste origin and make people conscious of the caste in which they were born. This is not conducive to national integration"

At the state level, the politics is basically a fight between the major caste groups like Kamma versus Reddy in Andhra Pradesh, Lingayat versus Vokkaligga in Karnataka, Nayar versus Ezhava in Kerala, Bania versus Patidar



in Gujarat, Bhumiar versus Rajput in Bihar, Jat versus Ahir in Haryana, Jat versus Rajput in Uttar Pradesh, Kalita versus Ahom in Assam and so on. Itional I

4. Linguism

Linguism means love for one's language and hatred towards other language-speaking people. The phenomena of linguism, like that of regionalism communalism or casteism, is also a consequence of political process. It has two dimensions:

- (a) the reorganisation of states on the basis of language: and
- (b) the determination of the official language of the Union.

The creation of the first linguistic state of Andhra out of the then Madras state in 1953 led to the countrywide demand for the reorganisation of states on the basis of language. Consequently, the states were reorganised on a large-scale in 1956 on the basis of the recommendations made by the States Reorganisation Commission (1953-1955). Even after this, the political map of India underwent a continuous change due to the pressure of popular agitations and the political conditions, which resulted in the bifurcation of existing states like Bombay, Punjab, Assam, and so on. By the end of 2000, the number of states and union territories had reached 28 and 7 from that of 14 and 6 in 1956 respectively.

The enactment of the Official Language Act (1963) making Hindi as the Official Language of the Union led to the rise of anti-Hindi agitation in South India and West Bengal. Then, the Central government assured that English would continue as an 'associate' official language so long as the non-Hindi speaking states desire it. Moreover, the three-language formula (English, Hindi and a regional language) for school system is still not being implemented in Tamil Nadu. Consequently, Hindi could not emerge as the lingua franca of the composite culture of India as desired by the framers of the Constitution. The problem of linguism got accentuated with the rise of some regional parties in recent times like the TDP, AGP, Shiv Sena and so on.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL

The National Integration Council (NIC) was constituted in 1961, following a decision taken at a national conference on 'unity in diversity', convened by the prime minister as chairman, central home minister, Central government, at New Delhi. It consisted of the chief ministers of states, seven leaders of political parties, the chairman of the UGC, two educationists, the commissioner for SCS and STs and seven other persons nominated by the prime minister. The council was directed to examine the problem of national integration in all its aspects and make necessary recommendations to deal with it. The council made various recommendations for national integration. However, these recommendations remained only on paper and no effort was made either by the Centre or by the states to implement them.

In 1968, the Central government revived the National Integration Council. Its size was increased from 39 to 55 members. The representatives of industry, business and trade unions were also included in it. The council met at Srinagar and adopted a resolution condemning all tendencies that struck at the root of national solidarity. It appealed to the political parties, organisations and the press to mobilise the constructive forces of society in the cause of national unity and solidarity. It also set up three committees to report on regionalism, communalism and linguism respectively. However, nothing tangible was achieved.

In 1980, the Central government again revived the National Integration Council which had become defunct. Its membership was made more broad-based. It had three items on the agenda for discussion viz., the problem of communal harmony, unrest in the north-eastern region and need for a new education system. The council set up a standing committee to keep a constant watch on the activities of communal and other divisive forces posing a threat to the national unity.

In 1986, the NIC was reconstituted and its membership was further increased. It recognised terrorism in Punjab as an attack on the unity, integrity and secular ideals of the country. Accordingly, it passed a resolution to fight terrorism in Punjab. The council also set up a 21-member committee to function on a continuing basis. The committee was asked to formulate both short-term as well as long-term proposals for maintaining communal harmony and preserving national integrity.



In 1990, the National Front Government headed by VP Singh reconstituted the National Integration Council. Its strength was increased to 101. It included prime minister as chairman, some Central ministers, state chief ministers, leaders of national and regional parties, representatives of women, trade and industry, academicians, journalists and public figures. It had various items on the agenda for discussion, viz., Punjab problem, Kashmir problem, violence by secessionists, communal harmony and Ram Janmabhomi-Babri Masjid problem at Ayodhya. But, there was no concrete result.

In 2005, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government reconstituted the National Integration Council under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. The 103-member NIC was constituted after a gap of 12 years having held its meeting in 1992. Besides some central ministers, state and UT chief ministers and leaders of national and regional parties, the NIC included chairpersons of National Commissions, eminent public figures and representatives from business, media, labour and women. The NIC was to function as a forum for effective initiative and interaction on issues of national concern, review issues relating to national integration and make recommendations.

The 14th meeting of the NIC was held in 2008 in the backdrop of communal violence in various states like Orissa, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam and so on. Promotion of education among minorities, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; elements contributing to national integration; removal of regional imbalances, caste and identity divisions; prevention of extremism; promotion of communal harmony and security among minorities; and equitable development were some of the important items on the agenda of the meeting.

In April 2010, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government again reconstituted the National Integration Council (NIC) under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. The NIC has 147 members, including Union Ministers, Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the Chief Ministers of all states and union territories with Legislatures. It also includes leaders of national and regional political parties, chairpersons of national commissions, eminent journalists, public figures, and representatives of business and women's organisations. It is chiefly aimed at suggesting means and ways to combat the menace of communalism, casteism and regionalism. In October 2010, the Government also constituted a Standing Committee of the NIC. It consists of Union Home Minister as Chairman, four Union Ministers, nine Chief Ministers of various states and five co-opted members from NIC. It would finalise the agenda items for NIC meetings.

The 15th meeting of the NIC was held in September, 2011. The agenda for the meeting included measures to curb communalism and communal violence; approach to the Communal Violence Bill; measures to promote communal harmony; measures to eliminate discrimination, especially against minorities and scheduled tribes; how the state and the police should handle civil disturbances; and how to curb radicalisation of youth in the name of religion and caste.

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