

INDIA AND THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL INTERGATION: AN HEURISTIC ANALIYSIS

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"The problem of national integration is...not peculiar to India. It is a global phenomenon varying in its nature and intensity from country to country.... It is a human problem for it is caused due to sense of "exclusiveness" and "separateness". —Mr. Brahmanand.

A Prelude:

Each and every morning the dailies supply us with the news of separatist movement, communal riots, violence and looting and also of Center-States conflicts, inter-state contradictions and so on. To speak very frankly, India is now really passing through all these critical problems, and she has never fac such a horrible terrorism of the crises and violence -- communal, sectarian, and separatist or otherwise -- which she has been largely facing at present. All these terrible crises assuming the headlines of the dailies, on our own part believe really signify the basic problem of national integration which is certainly in a road to shatter peace and prosperity of the life of India society. Though India has been experiencing this crucial problem of integration since the periods of Mauryas, Mughals and Britishers, yet now in the post-independence period the problem has assumed a dangerous shape. It is, however to be remembered in this regard that attempts were simultaneously made in the past, and are also being made at present to achieve and maintain integration of India as a nation. In fact, our history is the history of conflicts between and among national communities and their reconciliation sigfying national integration. And that's why Indian nationality has not yet been perished altogether, rather remains alive with the slogan of 'unity in diversity'.

National Integration: An Heuristic Study:

However, before entering into the full-fledged discussion of the problem of India's national integration, it would be better, we think, to clearly know first what is meant by term 'national integration'.

This term, needless to say, carries two woes: 'national' and 'integration'. And if we sufficiently clear the meaning of these words, we will then automatically come to know the real meaning of

national integration. So let us explain, in brief, the ideas of 'nation' and 'integration'.

Nation and National:

Generally 'a nation' is a group of people within a definite territory with common style of living and common mental feeling. In the view of Joseph Stalin, nation is an historically evolved stable community of territory, identical mental make-up and identical economic life either independent or seeking to be so through nationalist movement⁶. J.S. Mill is thus often right when he identifies the basis features of a nation as — 1) Similarity of descent, 2) Community of religion and language, 3) Definite geographical boundary and 4) Identity of political antecedents⁷. Besides these four features, two more are at least to be enlisted in the panes of the characteristic features of a nation: they are: 1) Common economic life and 2) Common psychological make-up⁸. Needless to say that common psychological make-up, i.e., common attitude of belongingness to a community is the basic criterion that creates national spirit and thereby helping much in the formation of a nation. Viewed in this perspective, a nation, says E. Renan, is a 'spiritual whole' and nationalism an emotional feeling of belongingness to it.⁹

Integration: Now coming to the word 'integration', it generally implies the unity of diverse elements within a group of people. In fact, it is used to mean "a harmonization of loyalties and interests in contradistinction to the concept of a monolith and the lust for uniformity in matters of social, political and religious life" of a community¹⁰. Integration is thus nothing but an adjustment between and among the disintegrated forces of community seeking to create in them the common attitude of belongingness to it. It is thus "a quest for wholeness"¹¹. In this sense, integrity results from the sense of 'inclusiveness' and also from the sense of surety and security of identity of all the diverse forces of the community life.

National Integration: A Conceptual Ideal:

Viewed in this angle, the term 'national integration' obviously indicates the solidarity of all national communities—regional, ethnic, religious or linguistic whatsoever. The main thing to be carefully observed in the question of national integration is simply to see whether each and every sub community of a mother community 'participates in the mainstream of the national life with the same sense of pride and self-confidence as characterizes any of the rest'¹². National integrity thus can only be maintain when "feeling of insecurity must be removed from members of minority communities through positive actions rather than by using shibboleths and platitudes"¹³. H.M. Masud in thus often right when he says, national integration is such a phenomenon which brings about "a social and religious climate in the country wherein it may be possible for all citizens, irrespective of religious differences or social status, to live a life of peace and tranquility devoted

entirely to a common purpose of building up a strong, prosperous and forward-looking society which can contribute its own share to the peace of the world"¹⁴.

India and National Integration:

Now, if the idea of 'national integration' is so viewed, a serious but timely question then arises as to whether India does really have this integration or whether she is a nation at all.

Needless to say we, the Indians, have a long history of stable community which has survived, while many other civilizations have disappeared. We are certainly in a well-defined geographical boundary. We have been initiating the forces of identical economic life through well-planned economic development. We have fought for our freedom against the British colonial rule for a long time¹⁵; through which our common psychological make-up, i.e., 'we feeling' has developed. It is thus quite natural for us to believe that India does have national integration¹⁶. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar : "India may be really a huge country, but geographically and culturally she is one, India may speak a multitude of different tongues, but her heart is sound and her soul in one. The fact of Indian unity is a positive faith with most Indians..."¹⁷.

India and The Question of Disintegration:

But we are really sorry to say that India could not at all achieve her expected national integration till now; she rather suffers from the disintegration disturbances. It is, however, true that during the period of freedom movement against the British rule, the people got united¹⁸, and it is the present generation which is really lucky to taste the fruits of independence. But this generation, practically speaking is now really frightened to leave this mess into the hands of future generations; for "instead of creating a better world for them to live we (i.e. the members of this generation) are passing on them a big junk of disintegrated values and practices"

Causes of Disintegration in India:

To speak very frankly, with the achievement of long-cherished independence, a perceptible decline in national through structure, public spirit and also in common emotional feeling of attachment to the nation has been gradually evident, for it is quite natural for people to become per-occupied in the time of peace, stability and tranquility, to a certain extent, with personal, local or regional interests, rather than the broader national interrests²⁰. In fact, India is such a country where the local, regional and many other micro interests have got, especially in the post-independence period of less politico-economic anxiety, an opportunity to play their disintegration real in her national life, for she a mixes society of diverse ethnic sentiments, religions, languages, cultures and also political thoughts, each finding a meaning and a place only in its total life²¹. Naturally there is a crisis in India of common attitude to the nation, resulting in the absence of feeling of 'belonging to the whole'. And that's why India's nationhood is in question today.²².

Notes and References

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19. Brahmanand, op.cit., p.9.
20. Ranade, Shobhana, op.cit., p.168.
21. Brahmanand, op.cit., pp.8-9.