National Integration and its challenges in 21st century

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Abstract:

This research article outlines the theoretical aspects related to national integration and draws its existence and importance for a democratic society. It binds every segment of a democratic society for a unified cause of serving and development of a nation. The purpose of this paper is to bring attention towards the gravity of the problem which harms the actual objectives of democracy and draws its negative impact on the pluralistic social domain of diverse India therefore, declines national integration. The data was collected from secondary sources which include books, Encyclopedias, research articles, newspapers, etc. Some of the factors which threaten the ideal of national Integration in the 21st century are Unequal distribution of resources, Negative attitude of natives towards people of other religions or castes, Hate Speeches, Insecurity of citizens, Minority problems, Enthronement of a biased leader.

Keywords: Democracy, Diversity, Integration, Nation, Religion, Unity.

Introduction

In democracy, few individuals are elected periodically by a large population of Citizens, who by their votes make one party victorious, over other parties, which symbolizes the opinion and willingness of population to allow them to run the country and take steps to improve the conditions of people and solve their problems which in turn leads the progress of the nation. National integration is an ageless theme because of its significance in the country's development it will always be a goal to achieve, in order to attain peace and stability in the country. Integration means varied clusters of people living in same territory privileged by law with similar rights irrespective of their socio-cultural and educational background (Syed, Jawed, waseem, Ishfaque: 2017, p:37). National integration is a constructive thought to instil a sense of attachment amongst varied sections of society (Naseer Lone, 2018 p.: 3192). It is actually a bonding of love, respect, tolerance and cooperation for fellow individuals of whatever caste, religion, language, region they belong to work unitedly in an atmosphere of peace. It can, therefore, be summarized as an ocean holding rivers and streams of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds

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united together for an ultimate cause of national harmony, unity and pride ((Syed, Ishfaque: 2017, p.: 37). It is a demand from almost all sections of society to give them equal rights to enjoy quite a lot of amenities devoid of any discrimination for fulfilling the purpose of national integration. It is a best way to protect the fundamental rights of people. It helps in strengthening an individual's relation with his nation and his fellow natives. A highly integrated nation is safe from internal and external aggressions. While as the citizens of a less integrated nation remain always in threat and insecurity. Craving for democracy globally is hinged on providing leadership capable of engendering nation-building (Akindiyo Oladiran, 2014 p.:1). Peace and prosperity is the outcome of a highly integrated nation. Thus, promoting national integration means working to create a tranquil atmosphere for diverse groups of people so that they can live together with peace and prosperity.

Historical Background

Set-up of National Integration Council (NIC), a diligent step for promoting National Integration

The leader of a nation is shouldered with the responsibility of uniting and integrating its people that is the reason National Integration Council (NIC) was set up in 1961 with a great mission and vision by the Prime Minister of India with its head. The forum decided to establish a council in order to revive all the concerns relating to integration of the nation and make proposals and suggestions for fulfilling the purpose. On 28th September 1961 Dr. Swami Radhakrishnan, the then Vice President of India while inaugurating the first national integration conference organized by the first Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, said, India had always been a multi- racial, multi-lingual, multi- religious society and there was never any question of boosting or degrading any group, All types of castes, races, faiths, customs, languages and regions need to be accommodated. He strictly banned to obliterate any faith and instruct the authorities to forget about the differences and catch opportunities to serve humanity (Beg, Kidwai: 2013 p: 91). The foundation of NIC intends to search new approaches and techniques to fight the catastrophic events of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism and so on, in order to give a top priority to the integration of the country.

A political system, is a team of the politicians, jurists, administrators, police and the people, they have to work as a team in order to achieve the goal of integration. British policy deliberately arouse disintegrative forces to maintain their hold over India. The final outcome of the British divide and rule policy was the disintegration of the nation and partition on the religious ground (Maniram Sharma, 2015). India has experienced a huge lose because of religion-based partition of the country. The fear deposited in the

minds of people due to partition 1947 which bleeds half a million people and leads immigration of twelve million, turned people's raged feelings in bitter memories and shakes the country now and then on the basis of communalism (Morris, Jones:1987). As per functionalistic approach, society consists of interconnected fragments which adds to the overall stability of the social system. It means that change in one part of system brings normally change elsewhere in the system. Suppose, if the problem occurs in political aspect of the society, it creates problem in almost all other aspects of society like family, state, education, economy, health etc. Without any doubt one can say that any nation-state where peace does not exist can barely observe any progress. It monitors that there exists an unquestionable relationship between peace and development. Business tycoons hesitate to invest in a country where their lives and investments are not safe. Thus hampers economic development. It is the duty of the social and political scientists to ponder over the significance of national integration and work for it because the absence of this pose a threat to the existence of the country. If India is to remain united, strong and a secure country, Casteism, communalism, unequal distribution of resources, minority problems need to be eradicated. Ismagilova (1978) pointed out, the eradication of all types of ethnic oppression and ethnic injustice is part of the national question. It entails the creation of true equality and brotherly collaboration among various communities. Equity and justice develop a sense of brotherhood among people thus, foster national integration (Akwara, Azalahu F, 2016 p. 6).

Constitutional Provision for National Integration

The Indian Constitution places a strong focus on national integration. Its Preamble lists the nation's unity and integrity as a fundamental goal. It also states that every Indian citizen has a basic responsibility to preserve and protect the country's sovereignty, unity, and integrity. The Constitution demonstrates appreciation for the country's diversity while also attempting to maintain unity and integrity.

Important provisions that highlight national integration are as:

Every single individual of India has to abide –

- To protect the country and give national service when called upon to do so;

- To love and follow the lofty principles that inspired our national battle for freedom;

- To adhere by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, as well as the National Flag and the National Anthem;

- To foster religious, linguistic, regional, and sectional harmony,

- To condemn traditions that degrade women's dignity;

- To honor and conserve our rich cultural heritage;

- To struggle for quality in all fields of individual and collective activity so that the nation continues to grow to advanced levels of accomplishment;

- To protect public property and condemn violence;

Challenges for national integration in the 21st century

India is an extremely diverse country, this diversity is no doubt, the national pride but simultaneously put serious challenges to the stability of the country from time to time. Violence in a multi-colored country reveals the incapacity of the leaders to accommodate multiple and diverse aspirations of an extremely heterogeneous society. Each time one watches the news or reads the newspapers, they speak of one crisis or the other in the country. A few challenges that urgently need to tackle are:

Negative attitude of natives towards people of other religions or castes

The negative attitude of fellow beings towards people of other religions or castes downgrades national integration. This negativity develops ill-intention which leads to misdeeds like- murder, kidnaping, rape, harassments etc are mostly communal or caste oriented. Dr. falade suggested that the failure of many citizens to display basic national values like as tolerance, cooperation, honesty, and obedience is one of the major reasons preventing national cohesion and unity. He underlined that instilling these values in residents will help to ensure national cohesion, peace, and unity to a considerable extent. India will not be able to achieve national cohesion that will allow for expected development and transformations unless citizens acquire and display the necessary values and attributes. Only through internalizing these essential values, can make the dream of national integration a reality (Ajere and Oyinloye, 2011 p.: 58).

Unequal distribution of resources

In a country, where there are glaring inequalities in income, status, education and health of people of different strata of society, the goal of national integration would remain an opium pipe dream (Vyas, 1993 p. 24). History narrates that uneven distribution of resources and favoritism/ backdoor entries in political and administrative departments always destroyed the state. For achieving national integration, it is important to stick to political and social justice in order to foster national integration.

Hate Speeches

Hate speech means abusive or threatening language (verbal or written) that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of caste, religion, region or sex. Neuroscientists have found that hate speeches have direct link to violence. Research studies revealed that people lose control over their actions and conduct when exposed to hate speeches. Even the constitution of India permits to impose reasonable restrictions upon freedom of speech under article 19(2) for the promotion of national integration. Section 123B of the Indian Penal Code, bans any speech that promotes communal disharmony or feeling of hatred between different religious, racial, language or regional groups, castes or communities. As hate speech is detrimental to national integration thus, holds them liable for such speech.

Insecurity of citizens

When the state fails to protect life and dignity of people, it loses worth in the sight of the citizens. It constitutes a very dangerous potential which jeopardize national unity. A state has a chief obligation of guarding its citizens from both internal and external threats. The ability to secure national borders is one of the standards used to categorize countries as strong and weak. The success of a government depends on the proper management of its borders by maintaining their boundaries, securing their territories, and protecting their citizens. (Hassan Malami 2016).

Minority problems

Muslims are India's most backward socio-religious community (Hasan and Mehta, 2006; SCR, 2006) (Mirza Asmer Beg, 2013). On several socio-economic development measures, Muslims lag behind the SC and OBCs in terms of access to amenities (Kundu committee report, 2014). According to the Kundu report, the country cannot cherish the dream of national integration unless it solves the problems of minorities.

Enthronement of a biased leader

Integration of the country mostly depends on the attitude of the politicians. Their positive role will lead the country towards peace and prosperity. But if they are unfair and support any particular religion or caste more than it's due, it will jeopardize national integration (Dr. M.S. Ansari, 2016). It is worth to mention that Raghuvir Dayal commission (1967), the Datta commission (1970), and Joseph Vithyasis commission (1971) blamed political parties for accentuating communalism in politics. They are mostly to blame for sowing religious discord in order to achieve their narrow goals at the expense of the nation's unity and integrity (Nurjaman, Asif Md. 2014). Such acts not only

disturb law and order, but also cause the public to lose faith in the system, eroding democracy and national integration.

Reflection

- People crave for peace and non-violence but yet they get involved in pity issues and fight for superiority of their own religion over the other religions, their language over the other languages, their caste over the other castes, and their race over the other races, such attempts make dents in relations and put an end to the feelings of brotherhood (Beg, Kidwai, 2013, p: 92). Spirit of dedication and purity of intentions are needed on the part of people in order to protect and preserve national integration (Shastri, Sandeep: 1990). We all need to sacrifice our ego, which often comes in the way of resolution of most problems of integration.

- The secularization process of India has been derailed and authorities have made compromises with the religion- based politics because of a bulky vote bank. With the result society becomes instable and social disintegration grows because of the growing powers of communalism.

- Personal rivalries, hate speeches and lacerating remarks about each other's caste, community, language and religion hinders peace and unity. People in power must be honest and impartial in their attitude to all citizens.

- The guilty must be brought to book, as peace and unity can come when there is justice otherwise it will create distrust among people regarding judiciary, which is but natural a wrong sign for peace and harmony (Mirza Asmer Beg, 2013).

- Government needs to give due consideration to the voice and aspirations of underrepresented minorities, it helps in strengthening the integrity of the nation.

- The concept of democracy is very soothing but at the same time it has a big disadvantage that it is a rule by the majority. If the majority in the parliament are cruel and rapacious, they may snub any existing law or deny any new proposal to accept, for suppressing the interest of minorities (Rao, Shankar 2006). There is a need to stop political bungling, malpractices and everything that comes in to disturb brotherhood and integration.

Despite these problems, it is assumed that the reform could not fail and if it did, it must have been as an outcome of evil governance, neopatrimonialism and exploitation. The riposte, to this lies in ordainment of impartial governance, transparency and liability (Adeniyi Basiru, 2016 pp.: 150). Democracy aims at welfare of all but if the violence and chaos (killing, kidnapping, bullying) is going on in the name of superiority of one's race,

caste, religion, region, language etc in a democratic society, this indicates that both the natives as well as the political leaders fail to perform their duties being citizens and rulers respectively and thus are unable to follow the values, which are supposed to depict democracy. In democracy both the citizens as well as the leaders have to perform some obligations for making democracy a success.

Suggestions

- At this moment there is a need to pass correct policies that could shrink the feeling of segregation among the marginalized sections of our society and help them to move towards inclusion.

- The election commission or the Court of law should frame a standard eligibility criteria of character and abilities for a leader to run a multicolored country. How can be the voting campaign or justice system fair if political parties permit the entry of people who had criminal records? (Bhambhari: 2005). It will affect the law and judicial system of the country as a whole. After gaining power they can catch an easy way to provide themselves a clean chit for any nasty and heinous crime.

- Federal and state government should work in co-operation and co-ordination for the betterment of nation.

- Religious organizations should use proper ways of disseminating their teachings so as to eradicate misinformation which can harm peace and unity.

- Efforts should be made in inculcating high moral value in every individual. This will undoubtedly give every Indian a hope and improve their future and will surely end the hatred and animosity within the hearts of people.

- The Indian penal code should made stringent rules regarding fostering violence on communal lines.

- The election commission should disqualify those parties which arouse religious and communal sentiments to gain votes and political leaders should be strictly prohibited to intricate religion in the political sphere (Maniram Sharma, 2015).

- Government must keep a strict watch on anti- social and violence erupting factors in order to maintain peace in the society.

Conclusion

Our political system is infested with many problems due to the diverse nature of the country which cannot be solved in a short period of time but, something needs to be

done rather waiting to see the ongoing disheartening practices. It is the present generation who must think and rethink about the better tomorrow which is possible only through unity. There is still a beacon of hope and light even in this darkness. "United we stand and divided we fall" if we fall prey of communalism and casteism it is inevitable we will fall, but if we remain united in diversity we will definitely win, even the weak and thin strands form a firm bunch when stand together. Our country will remain strong only when its people remain intact with each other. Entrench the principle of "unity in diversity" for achieving the national interest otherwise focusing on differences will create cleavages rather than integration. Although, Indian constitution is dedicated to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country yet there is a need to change the attitude of people to stop the unhealthy practices that are going on in the society for that the experts need to pinpoint politically and socially worthy strategies to reverse the current tide of disintegration towards peace by following the compass of constitution as the country is in great need of trustworthy and peace loving people to retain the oscillating pendulum of integration at balance.

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