

The Virus of Communalism and National Integration

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Communalism and misuse of religion in politics have been proved an amassing Volcano. The virus of communalism and misuse of religion in politics can be prevented only by a relentless crusade against these evils at the grass-roots level. The experience of Russia and other former soviet re-public is an eye-opener in this regard. Religion made a roaring comeback in these countries as soon as the Marxist ideology crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions.

Religion is powerful medium of promoting unity among its adherents. But in a society with many religions, formulating common values for people of all religions is a difficult task. This task becomes all the more complicated when people having faith in the same religion are divided on basis of caste and kinship and economic degradation. Ideological conflicts are inevitable in societies with religious pluralism. This is because in such societies ideologies are based on deep rooted dislike for values of other groups caste which is an hierarchical endogamous, segregated and hereditary unit, is by its nature divisive as it divides people into categories and induces stratification in the society.

The conflicts arising on the basis of religion, community, caste, colour and creed may be termed as communalism. The fanatics never ponder over the situation on national surface. They clash among themselves for the betterment of their particular community. Ultimately they prove themselves an obstacle in the way national integration and neither develop themselves nor make the nation develop. The communal riots of Aligarh, Muradabad, Jamashedpur, Meerut, Ayodya, Kashi and Muzaffarnagar are eye openers in this regard.

National integration is a complex concept. It is dependent upon structural, cultural and ideological congruity among different sections of a given society.

National integration has some very positive aspects which makes it an absolute necessity for every nation. National integration fasters the feeling of emotional oneness. It provides strength to fight against disruptive forces. The socio-cultural and economic disparities are minimised in a situation of national unity and the pace of social change is accelerated. Infact the wheels of progress can be set into motion only when a nation is integrated.

Integrating diverse cultures in a common body is a difficult proposition. This is because unity has to be sought amidst this existing diversity. The national identity in a multiethnic society can not be achieved by supplanting or assimilating the local identities. The uniqueness of each group has to be preserved while healthily knitting it into the national main stream.

Political integration is perhaps the most essential concomitant of national integration. India became a single political entity only under the British rule, yet the idea of such unity was definitely present in the traditional concept of Ashwamedh Yagana and Chakravarti Raja.

Economic integration is yet another important dimension of national integration. Balanced economic development removes the feeling of relative deprivation and promotes the sense of security which assists in national consolidation.

This is not to deny the importance of preventing misuse of religion for political purposes, like communalism. Caste conflicts have been taken by our electoral forces. The political forces have tended to exploit consciousness of separate identities in quest of easy electoral gains and thereby weakened the national cohesion.

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Regionalism is antagonistic to the process of nation building. The demand of independent Tamilnadu, the demand of banishment of the dwellers of other states in Assam, the declaration of Khalistan and Nagaland are the issue of regionalism.

Linguistic diversity in terms of national and state languages divides into sub-areas. The feeling of separation can lead to an inter-group conflict if a particular group struggles for the superiority of its language to other groups. The conflict between Marathi and Kokani in Goa or the vehement opposition of the acceptance of Hindi in southern-states is not due to their dislikes but due to the fear that its acceptance may cause submission to the hegemony of their states.

India is a melting pot of races and cultures. For national integration no policy of exclusion and partial exclusion of the groups can be accepted. National integration can only be achieved when along with the political integration the cultural, economical and communal integration also takes place. For this, it is necessary that there should be a government which is viewed as legitimate by the masses. The electoral process should be free and fair. Democratic decentralization and greater autonomy to the states in administrative matters can be helpful in improving centre-state relationship. Redtapism must be removed and administration must be made more responsive to the grievances of the people.

The role of mass media in national integration is to be mentioned as important. They are powerful instruments of shaping the public opinion and can be used as the agents of social cultural and economical integration. The effectiveness of media lies in its authenticity.

Nothing is more distressing for a person than the delayed justice. In fact justice delayed is equal to justice denied. It is therefore quite essential that the judicial system must be made quick, fair and responsive.

The aforesaid measures if strictly taken, can pave the way of a strong united and cohesive nation. In Indian reference it can be said that they represent the stepping stones for realisation of true Ram Rajya-the one of Gandhi ji's dream.

