

**A STUDY OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL
OF INDIA**

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Certified that the dissertation entitled "A Study of National Integration Council of India", submitted by Ajay Kumar Singh in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy is his own work and has not been submitted previously in any University for the award of this or any other degree. We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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CHAPTER - IINTRODUCTION : THE CONTEXT OF
NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA

India is possibly the most authentic and complex federal polity in the world. No other country with a continental dimension has been as truly and positively federal in its socio-cultural ecology as the India of today. It is more federal in the cultural sense than in the political sense. India as a nation is an aggregation of several sub-identities of group life like language, culture, religion, ethnicity, region, caste and class. These diversities have made their own contribution to the building up of India throughout its rich and remarkable history. Despite its diversities, India has had a basic unity and a peculiar and distinctive identity which has been confirmed by the achievement of political unity and freedom. This does not mean that there have not been conflicts and differences at the socio-cultural level. But, inspite of multifarious differences, there has always existed, a basic sense of unity among the people of India. That is why S. Abid Husain observes that "... there is a basic unity in thinking, feeling and living of Indians which waxes and wanes with the changing political constellation but never ceases".¹ Of course, it is in the changing

1. S. Abid Husain , The National Culture of India
(New Delhi: NBT, 1987), p.6.

political constellation and political dynamics that the different parochial and particularistic phenomena like communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism etc., manifest with varied intensity from time to time and which weaken the process of national unity and integrity.

Though tensions also prevail in the other dimensions (political, economic) of India's federal polity, but the tensions prevailing in the socio-cultural dimension of our polity cause a concern to national unity and integrity. Because, excessive and increased socio-cultural assertiveness turns eventually into political assertiveness, which often suffer from myopia of sectarianism, separatism and divisiveness, weakening the bonds of cohesiveness and harmony. Assertiveness becomes pernicious when violence is infused in it. Violence and terror weaken the process of national integration.

Let us recapitulate briefly the meaning and concept of national integration, especially in the context of India.

In the recent political theories emphasis has been put on the study of the processes of modernization, socialization, development, nation-building, integration, etc. And the problem of national integration "has been either linked with the developmental process, or considered as a part of the identity crisis, measured in terms of self-image, image

identification and image conflict".²

The creation of national identity among diversities is considered as an important pre-requisite of the process of national integration. Here national identity means "political centrality around which the different integrational aspect gain content and form... depending upon historical antecedents and anticipated political goal".³ Binder considers national integration as a process of reconstruction of tradition and sub-systems working in the society and fitting it together with general system and modern values cohesively. For him, nationalism is the legitimizing force of national integration. For Edward Shils the closing of gaps between elite and mass is the pre-requisite of national integration.

Myron Weiner in a comprehensive study on National Integration writes: "National integration covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes - the integration of diverse and discreet cultural loyalties, and the development of a sense of nationality, the integration of political units into a common territorial framework with a government which can exercise authority, the integration of

2. K.J. Azam, Political Aspects of Integration (Meerut: Peoples Publishing House, 1963), p.1.

3. Ibid., p.2.

the rulers and the ruled, the integration of the citizens into a common political process, and finally, the integration of individuals into organizations for purposive activities".⁴

In a broader perspective, Weiner suggests that national integration will imply several things. He writes that it is a process of "bringing together culturally and socially discreet groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity".⁵ It is also, he says is "the process of establishing a national, central authority over subordinate political units or regions which may or may not coincide with distinct cultural or social groups".⁶ He further says that it is the problem of binding government with the governed; and evolving "the minimum value consensus necessary to maintain a social order referring either to the norms and processes to be accepted or to the goals to be achieved".⁷

Defining national integration in India's context Rasheeduddin Khan writes, "In the semantics of functional politics, the term national integration means, and ought

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4. Myron Weiner, "Political Integration and Political Development", The Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science, 326, March, 1965, pp. 54-59. Quoted in K.J. Azam, op.cit., p.22.
5. Ibid., p.22.
6. Ibid., p.22.
7. Ibid., p.22.

to mean, cohesion but not fusion, unity but not uniformity, reconciliation but not merger, agglomeration but not assimilation, solidarity but not regimentation of the discrete segments of the people constituting a political community/State".⁸

National integration signifies a condition of unity in diversity in which both are inter-dependent. Unity and diversity are symbiotically linked and they support and sustain each other. Any attempt to overemphasize either of these will disturb the delicate balance. In India, unity is itself a federal concept. Therefore, national integration, as Rasheeduddin Khan observes, "is not a process of conversion of diversities into a uniformity but a congruence of diversities leading to unity in which both the varieties and similarities are maintained".⁹ Thus, the process of national integration starts with the basic presumption that diversities are reconciliable. Therefore, emphasis is put on the cooperation, coordination and accommodation among the people belonging to different faiths, religions, regions, languages etc. Existence of sub-group,

8. Rasheeduddin Khan, "National Integration", Seminar, April 1970, p.21.

9. Rasheeduddin Khan, "National Unity: Dimensions and Problems", Mainstream Republic Day Special, January 1986, p.8.

or sub-regional identities should not be considered as a negation of national unity and integrity. These identities can co-exist with broader national identities.

National integration as a politico-economic process aims at the maintenance of balance in the system so that lop-sided and privileged growth of any particular segment can be checked in favour of universal growth of the system as a whole. Political stability and avoidance of disorders are the essential objectives of national integration in a federal democratic system.

While addressing the national integration conference in 1961, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said - "National Integration cannot be built by brick and mortar, by chisel and hammer. It has to grow silently in the minds and hearts of men. The only process is the process of education. This may be a slow process, but it is a steady and permanent one".¹⁰ Here, we can say that an important objective of national integration is the creation of a consensual value-system to stabilize the foundations of national integration.

The National Integration Council (NIC) perceives national integration as a social and educational process of creating

10. Read the statement issued by the National Integration Conference, p.4.

consciousness among the people of India where people can identify themselves with the broader territorial national identity. In other words, making primordial loyalties subservient to the broader national loyalties. The Sub-Group of NIC defines national integration in the following words -

"The concept underlying national integration , shorn of all verbiage, is to attain a particular kind of consciousness in every citizen of the Republic of India which will enable him or her to feel that he or she, transcending the primordial divides of our ancient society thinks and acts as a citizen of India first. This in turn means territorial identification with the whole of India. It also means primary loyalty to Indian nationhood and a refusal to agree to that primary loyalty being corroded or eroded by considerations of caste, religion, region and language".

"In brief it means that the citizens of India should be the promoter of the idea of nationalism based on civic consciousness rather than narrower consciousness implicit in our history and geography".¹¹

The Sub-Group observes that the creation of common consciousness of nationhood is being eroded by the political exigencies which perceive nationhood in terms of religion, caste or regional particularism. And for the creation of this kind of consciousness of nationhood among the people, the Sub-Group puts emphasis on the "... consistent and

11. Cf. The Agenda for the Meeting of the Standing Committee of National Integration Council, June 23, 1987 (New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs), p.4.

persistent efforts through educational processes, media projections, political processes and processes of economic development".¹² In short, we can say that national integration is perceived by the NIC as a process of creation of the feeling of nationalism among the people of India.

From the above discussion we can summarise national integration as a continuous and ongoing dynamic process of harmonization of diversities and adjustment and readjustment of loyalties - primordial with national - for national unity and solidarity.

After briefly discussing the meaning and objects of national integration it would be proper to say something about the study. The present study is based on the primary and secondary sources.

In so far as the study of National Integration Council (NIC) is concerned, it is primarily based on the reports, statements, resolutions of the NIC, verbatim records of the proceedings of meetings of NIC and the agenda of the different meetings of the Standing Committee of NIC. For the critical evaluation of the role of NIC and for the chapter 'suggestions for the effective working of NIC', the personal conversation with its members, the papers

12. Ibid., p.4.

presented by the members at the Council's meetings, and the news paper clippings which include critical writings on NIC proved very useful. Besides, this study is also benefited from the annual reports of the Minorities Commission and the reports of the Emotional Integration Committee etc.

The second chapter 'Problems of National Integration' deals mainly with regionalism, linguism, communalism and casteism. And the basic concern is to discuss these phenomena from the perspective of national integration and to make clear what do they basically imply and for which do they stand. The study of 'communalism' in this chapter also includes a brief discussion on the connotation of 'secularism' and the perversion that has taken place in its meaning and practices in India.

Communication is considered as an important factor for the promotion of national integration. Therefore, discussion on 'linguism', instead of focussing on the different linguistic movements, centres around mainly the official language policy and an attempt has been made to trace out the different levels at which our diverse linguistic society lack direct communication. The sub-title 'casteism' in this chapter discusses the nature and characteristics of the caste-system in India. This

chapter also briefly discusses the problem of tribal integration with the mainstream of society and nation.

The third chapter deals with the 'Origin, Growth, Composition and Objectives of NIC'. Though the decision to set up NIC was taken at the National Integration Conference held in 1961, it seems essential to go back into the earlier conferences and meetings on national integration because they throw some useful light on the various dimensions of the national integration. Therefore, in this part of the chapter, some important decisions, taken either at the Chief Ministers' Conference (1961) or at the National Integration Conference (1961) have been mentioned. These conferences also serve as a background study of the NIC. This chapter also includes a brief analysis of the nature and limitations of NIC.

The fourth chapter critically evaluates the role of NIC and in the fifth, some suggestions for the effective working of NIC have been given.

CHAPTER - II

PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA

Several fora set-up by the Government of India, over the years, like the Committee on Emotional Integration, the National Integration Conference(1961), the National Integration Council, etc. for promoting and protecting National Integration have, from time to time, identified the following phenomena as the critical problems of national integration, viz regionalism, linguism, communalism, casteism, and the problems of integrating the socio-economically and culturally underdeveloped and backward segments of the society with the rest of the society and with the mainstream of national life.

In fact, the problems of national integration in India stem from the combination of several factors: (i) continental dimension of polity consisting of heterogeneous population and regions; (ii) existence of dichotomies, such as upper caste-lower caste, majority-minority, and rich-poor, at the socio-cultural and economic levels; (iii) existence of dichotomous social structure which enforces and perpetuates inequality in the society; (iv) existence of competitive pluralities at the socio-cultural and religious level, where competition

usually results in the mutual antagonism weakening the unity-fabric of the society and nation at large. It is at this level where different phenomena like communalism, casteism and other fundamentalist creeds and 'isms' emerge and conflict like Ram Janam Bhumi - Babri Masjid and linguistic controversies etc. occur; (v) existence of organizations, especially political based on the segmented primordial loyalties. As a result, political conflicts, characterized by segmental cleavages, are intense and disruptive. What is remarkable here is that these cleavages are mutually reinforcing to each other; (vi) existence of wide economic disparity between castes, classes and regions; and (vii) the existence of federal imbalances in terms of governance, administration, economic growth and development, giving birth to the federal-tendency like regionalism, localism etc.

In short, we can say that the problem is inherent in "some of the basic contradictions and glaring paradoxes in the Indian situation. It can be stated that India is: (i) an ancient society and a new nation; (ii) a communal society and a secular state; (iii) an industrial society with an abiding feudal culture; (iv) a democratic polity with pronounced pre-democratic, tribal bases of allegiances; (v) a federal polity with centralised politics; and (vi) a decolonised state with pronounced colonial

mentality".¹

Let us discuss the problems of national integration under separate major aspects.

REGIONALISM

Regionalism and regional movements are sometime perceived by political leaders in the centre and others belonging to certain political parties as a threat to national unity and integrity.

This kind of perception does not seem to be valid in a federal system like that of India. The different regional movements currently undergoing are not necessarily separatist, that is those seeking separation from the Union of India, but seek to redress their demands or grievances within the framework of Indian federal system. A close analysis of the demands made by regional movements suggests three things: Firstly, most of the regional movements stand for the creation of different structures at the local/regional level with sufficient amount of autonomy and resources in order to facilitate the effective participation of the local people in decision-making process at the grass-roots. Secondly, some regional movement seek secession from the existing States in which their regions are included, due to their

1. Rasheeduddin Khan's Paper, "Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Quest for Secular Identity," presented at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Niwas Shimla, from 9th to 12th April, 1987, p.7.

grievance of neglect and discrimination in the general process of development. Thirdly, most of the regional movements seek to preserve and to protect their ethnic and cultural identity within a well-defined territory which in certain case, they feel, are being threatened by the changing demographic composition of the region, due to inflow of migration from other regions.

In fact, regionalism is a federal phenomena. 'Nothing is more basic to the very concept of federalism than regionalism'. It has been rightly pointed out by Carl J. Friedrich that "India is clearly undergoing a federalising process in the course of which federal diversity is increasing. It is... a recurrent process that in the course of democratization and high politicization of a society, the regional, linguistic and cultural communities become more and more articulate and demand recognition in the form of a set of political institutions, including safeguards to their particular identity."²

The problem inherent in the socio-cultural content of regionalism is the problem of legitimization. Once the pluralities are legitimized by the new political culture

2. Carl J. Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Democracy. (Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., 1974), p.216.

and by the system, they in no way pose threat to national integration. And the real issue involved at the politico-economic level of regionalism is the issue of centralization versus decentralization, where it stands for the restructuring of centre-state relations.

Thus, regionalism in its different variations and manifestations cannot be always characterized as negative. Often it is an unavoidable and in several cases a positive federal phenomenon, which stands for the encouragement and development of indigenous culture and institutions within a specific region. It is also not antithetical to national unity. In fact, in India, as Rasheeduddin Khan writes, "unity itself is a federal concept. It is certainly not the unity of a unitarian polity. It is the unity born out of the inter-dependence of diverse socio-cultural entities that pass through the stages of competition, conflict and reconciliation, and realise the fatal truth that in mutual confrontation they might themselves destroy each other, while in reciprocal co-operation they can thrive, jointly and severally".³

3. Rasheeduddin Khan, "National Unity: Dimensions and Problems", Mainstream, Republic Day Special Number, January, 1986, p.8.

In popular parlance regionalism is also supposed to be synonym of 'provincialism', which breeds localism, based on the Son of the Soil concept exhibiting and spreading isolationism and separatism. But our experiences show that when the region's genuine grievances are not removed, regionalism acquires a subversive form, resorting to violent means for their redressal. But once the region's legitimate grievances are removed, regionalism in its various forms and manifestations has a propensity to settle down in a pattern of mutual co-operation and co-existence in a federal system. It is also equally true that in a country with tremendous diversity, region's political aspirations are bound to find periodical expression and it is almost always based on primordial impulses and parochial considerations. Thus, from the perspectives of national integration there should be a healthy reconciliation of regionalism with nationalism in which both can sustain and re-inforce the dynamic process of national unity and integrity.

From the above discussion, we can, now, conceptualize regionalism as 'a multi-dimensional composite phenomena as well as built-in process within nationalism.'⁴

4. Arun K. Chatterji, "Sociological Context of Regionalism in India: A Conceptual Framework," in Satish Chandra, K.C. Pande, and P.C. Mathur, eds., Regionalism and National Integration(Jaipur: Allekh, 1976), pp.30-32.

As a tendency this implies several things:(i) decentralization of decision-making and administration on a regional and sub-regional basis within a nation against the excessive centralization of decision-making at one pole only.

In other words, it means the devolution of powers from centre to periphery, accompanied by a high degree of structural differentiations, which maximize the opportunities of popular participation of citizens in the system;

(ii) a political movement for the assertion of more and more autonomy, i.e., to delimit the centre's areas of influence. In this respect, it stands for the restructuring of centre-state relationship; (iii) a socio-cultural counter-movement against any monolithic imposition in the field of language and the specific socio-cultural patterns of a region in the name of national integration;

(iv) an avenue to power and high political offices for an ambitious person or group of persons who invoke identity (particularistic) factors for the political (sometimes personal) cause;(v) inter-state rivalries over distribution of river waters in general and border disputes(for example, Maharashtra-Karnataka, Punjab-Haryana over Chandigarh etc.) in particular; and

(vi) intra-state regionalism for the secession from the existing state and the creation of new state. Here, Jharkhand, GNLFF, Uttarakhand and other regional movements can be cited as examples of intra-state regionalism.

Since regionalism is almost always aligned with language demands, it entails the restructuring of internal boundaries on the principle of maximum linguistic homogeneity in order to seek a homogeneital expression of socio-cultural peculiarities. This would also enable the development of regional culture through the use of native skills, instrumentalities and potentialities.

LINGUISTIC

Language, which is the vehicle of communication and medium of expression, is the most important manifestation of social cohesion of a group. There are four principal linguistic families in India: (i) Indo-Aryan or Indo-European, the first major family accounting for 74.24 per cent of the total population; (ii) Dravidian, the second major linguistic family accounting for 23.86 per cent of the total population of India; (iii) Austro-Asiatic, the third major language group, spoken by 1.16 per cent of the total population. It is also, perhaps, the oldest linguistic family of India; and (iv) Tibeto-Burmese, the fourth linguistic family, spoken by 0.62 per cent of the total population.

Further, each major linguistic family, as enumerated above, includes within it scores of languages and

dialects. This is evident from all census records.

Language families	No. of languages
Indo-Aryan	20
Dravidian	17
Austro-Asiatic	14
Tibeto-Burmese	53
Total	104

Note: This table is based on the Census of India, 1981.

And, these languages are further marked by scores of variations in form, style, speech and script. Grierson records 179 languages and 544 dialects and the Constitution of India recognizes 15 languages as the official languages of India.

It is here also important to observe:(i) that there is no common language in India. Even Hindi, according to the Census report, 1981, is spoken by only 39.94 per cent of the total population;(ii) the sociological relevance of the language lies in the fact the each language forms an important part of a particular culture. Therefore,

people want to retain their particular language for cultural expression; and(iii) language serves as an important basis of identification and identity formation for the general people of India. These things should be kept in mind while discussing the linguistic dimensions of national integration.

The Official Language Policy stands for the use of Hindi in Nagri-script as the official language of the Union and the regional languages as the official language of the States. Regarding English, which serves as a means of communication between Hindi speaking states and non-Hindi speaking states or between Centre and States, it is stated that it would continue for the transitional period and would be progressively replaced by Hindi or by the regional languages as the case may be.

But, this compromise formula meant different things to different people. The supporters of Hindi considered it to be 'the first step to provide Hindi a dominant position as the language to the exclusion of English and other Indian languages'.⁵ The over-zealous

5. C. Subramaniam, "Integration Through Language", Mainstream, February 22, 1986, p.30.

supporters of Hindi facilely equated 'patriotism' or 'nationalism' only with Hindi and considered other languages as they are insufficient expression of patriotism. And non-Hindi speaking people took up the position that English should continue indefinitely for All-India purposes until the full growth of their respective regional language. In effect this implies indefinite postponement of the decision to make Hindi the link language for All-India purposes.



The three language formula in the field of education stipulates the following situations:

Situation First (i.e. in the Hindi Speaking regions) L 1, Hindi, L 2, English and L 3, any of the South Indian language or other non-Hindi language.

Situation Second (i.e. in the non-Hindi speaking regions) L 1, regional language as the case may be, L 2, English and L 3, Hindi.

The situation today, however, is that in Hindi-speaking States, people learn only Hindi and English and Sanskrit, as the third language. In the non-Hindi speaking states (mostly the South Indian states), on the other hand, it provides extra-burden of learning three

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language at the secondary stage, finally drifting towards bi-linguism to overcome the extra load of the third language. Thus, in both the situations, the three language formula has transformed into a bi-lingual formula, which is an utter violation of the spirit and mission with which it had been formulated and implemented. In fact, the three language formula has been observed more in its breach than in its observance.

The bi-lingual dichotomy in multi-lingual State cannot serve the purpose of national integration. Therefore, from the perspective of national integration the emphasis should be given on the learning of many languages through the policy of effective persuasion, not coercion or imposition, because, much of the militancy is against the imposition of Hindi in the South. Multi-linguism cannot be considered as divisive or antithetical to the growth of nationalism. One can find exuberant writings in Indian literature fostering unity in diversity (characteristic of India's composite culture) and contributing to the richness of Indian life. What is here important from the perspective of national integration is that if the writings in the regional languages tend to emphasize commitment to agreed values of national life, like democracy, rule of law, egalitarianism, secular values, toleration of diversities,

composite culture etc., this would eventually bring in being a sense of commonality and sharing of ideas. A multi-lingual approach or framework to strengthen national integration would also require the building of bridges across different Indian languages, in order to establish inter-communication among the various Indian languages through sharing of form, content, themes and vision of the future. "Facilitating inter-communication among the multi-lingual masses of India will be the biggest single step for bringing about emotional integration and building up a common sentiment of Indian nationality".⁶

It is necessary for us to realize that in India we lack direct communication, either orally or in writings, among the masses at various levels: (i) at the inter-regional level, especially when the language spoken by the people living in two different regions or States are different; (ii) at the intra-regional level, especially in a situation when mother tongue spoken is different from the State official language; (iii) at the level of elite-mass interaction. At this level interaction is generally indirect through interpretations or conversions; (iv) at the level of interaction between migrated population and native population within a linguistically defined territory; and (v) at the level of tribal and non-tribal interaction in the tribal belt.

6. V.K.R.V. Rao, National Integration : Some Unsolved Issues(Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1985), p.45.

COMMUNALISM

Religious pluralism is another important characteristics of India, where different religious communities have lived together on the pattern of mutual co-existence and accommodation, based on the principles of 'mutal tolerance', 'universal brotherhood' and the 'commonality of interests'. The Census of India, 1981, records six major religious communities - the Hindus(82.64 per cent of the total population), the Muslims (13.35 per cent of the population) the Christians (2.43 per cent) , the Sikhs(1.96 per cent), the Buddhist (0.71 per cent) and the Jains (0.48 per cent) of the total population.

There are certain important features of religion which need to be mentioned here. One of the most striking features of religion in India has always been that religion is intimately related with every affair of human conduct, ranging from temporal to spiritual. Every religion lays down certain 'codes of conduct' to its followers who should observe them in order to maintain order and stability in the society, organised on the basis of religion. Religion forms an important part of the culture, art, aesthetics etc.

It should be evident that even religious communities are not monoliths. Each major religious community is

further divided over the forms of faith, pattern of worship or prayer, rituals, rites and social customs, even interpretations of personal laws etc. There exist different schools of thought within a religion and the religious community. In India, religion is an all pervasive system, deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people.

Having stated some basic features of religion , we must now take into account the concept of secularism, the secular practices and the perversion which has occurred in India.

The Preamble of Indian Constitution declares India as a secular State. A secular state has been defined by Donald Eugene Smith as "... a State which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with individual as^a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to any particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion".⁷

7. Donald Eugene Smith, India as a Secular State (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964), p.4.

The above definition sets out three principles of secularism: (i) freedom of religion; (ii) absence of discrimination on the ground of religion; and (iii) separation of state from religion.

In India, the State does not uphold any religion or provides official patronage to any religion. The State is separated from religion in the sense that there is no State (official) religion of India. Different constitutional provisions, such as Article 14, lay down the principle of absence of discrimination on the ground of religion. The Constitution also guarantees freedom of religion to the people (Article 25 to 28). The freedom of religion is subject to State interference on the grounds of 'public order', 'morality', and 'health'. The Article 25(2) (a) empowers the State to regulate or restrict any economic, financial, political or other secular activity associated with religious practices. Thus, the Constitution seeks to draw a demarcation between religious and secular activities. The freedom of religion also means freedom not to believe in any religion. A person cannot be compelled either by State or by any religious organization to believe in any religion. To believe in religion is a matter of personal choice. But in actual practice, the scenario is quite different.

While in the West, secularism implies the separation of the religion/church from the body-politic or state, in India, we often define secularism very loosely to mean 'tolerance of religious and cultural differences' and for 'equal respect for all religion', based on the principle of 'live and let live'. Thus, in India the State claims to be secular by apparently maintaining 'equal distance from each religion' and protecting each religion from its votaries undue discrimination. In other words, the State in India despite claiming to be secular overlooks the basic universal ingredients of secularism like separation of State from religion, religion from education and adherence to nationalism, humanism and scientific temper. On the contrary, we almost define secularism as Rasheeduddin Khan points out "to mean some sort of multi-communalism. In the name of toleration of all communities and their eventual harmonisation what we finally achieve is reconciliation of multiple communalism, promotion of multiple obscurantism, universal superstition and cheerful mixing of all mythologies".⁸ Thus, in the name of 'religious tolerance', we have allowed religion to

8. Rasheeduddin Khan, "Menace of Many Facets," Patriot (New Delhi), August 16, 1986.

pervade every sphere(social, economic and political) of life. This has blurred the boundary which should essentially exist between secular and religious activity.

We observe that the religious considerations influence public functions and activities in India. Religious rituals are sometime performed during official functions as well. We also observe that on certain occasions persons holding purely religious offices do the job of political recruitment and therefore in civic activities. They take the decision on behalf of a community as is becoming agonizingly evident in the role of the so-called 'Sikh panth' vis-a-vis the politics in Punjab.

Now the basic and the first question that should be asked about religion vis-a-vis secularism is what role should religion play in society? Because, we have experienced that the organized and institutionalized religion tends to make caste, sub-sub caste system more and more rigid, religious dogmas and rituals more formalistic. By the narrow political use of religion by those who consider religious community as a political constituency, it is sad to realize that religion is being utilized no longer as a moral spiritual order but

as an instrument of temporal and material convenience . Religion has been commercialized for mere petty economic gains.

From the perspective of national integration and secularism a sharp distinction should be made between religious faith and rituals. Religion as a 'system of faith' is a personal affair where one may believe in the transcendental powers or may not believe in the existence of any supernatural power. But the performance of rituals and religious practices are a matter of social concern. In this regard, the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court in the State of Bombay vs. Narasu Appa Mali case observed that " ' a sharp distinction must be drawn between religious faith and belief and religious practices. What the State protects is religious faith and belief'. In regard to religious practices, he went on to say that if they 'run counter to public order, morality or health, or the policy of welfare upon which the State has embarked, the religious practices must give way before the good of the people of the State as a whole' ".⁹

9. Quoted in P.C. Chatterji, Secular Values for Secular India (New Delhi: Privately Published by Lola Chatterji, 1984), p.45.

Secularism, especially in the Indian context, does not negate the existence of religion as a 'system of faith'; rather, it wants to confine religion to the 'voluntary sphere of private or individual belief, activity and life'.

A person can be secular even when he is religious. What is required to become a secular person is to confine the religion into private life, where it may have metaphysical or spiritual significance.

A person can be secular even when he is a religious, having no particular affinity with any religion, but is not averse to religion.

A person can be secular even when he is irreligious, having no faith in any religion, but upholds the modern values like democracy, socialism, humanism etc.

The very word 'secularism' implies several things:(i) it is a negation of the theocratic and communal assumption that religion governs every sphere of human life, including politics, law and economics. Religion may govern the individual's spiritual entity but not his social, political and economic existence. In other words, it means the separation of religion from body politic and from the socio-economic and educational process of the country;(ii) it also means

the negation of the superstitions , obscurantism, orthodox value system and other harmful religious practices. This requires the promotion of scientific knowledge and the habit of scientific enquiry among the people. This means the inculcation of scientific spirit and temper among the people; (iii) relegation of religion to private life; (iv) the genetical promotion of humanism, rationalism and fraternity among the people; (v) existence of common civil laws instead of personal law system; and (vi) the absence of discrimination in any form.

In the Indian context, "Secularism", writes Rasheeduddin Khan, "as an instrument of social change and political transformation has at least three operational dimensions; (i) as a process of inter*communal political integration (as between religion-based segments such as the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc); (ii) as a process of inter-community social integration (as between the varna-cum-jati segments of the Hindus and the social strata among the Muslims, Christians, etc); and (iii) as the dominant political idiom, method, and objective of generating socio-political changes in order to transform a religion-dominated ethos into an ethos of enlightened humanism."¹⁰

10. Rasheeduddin Khan, "Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Quest for Secular Identity," op.cit., pp. 29-30.

In India, politics has transformed into a number game - a mechanical contrivance for grabbing and sustaining oneself in the power structure of the country - which has given rise to what Rajni Kothari terms as 'ethnic calculus' and ultimately to communal politics.¹¹ This is nothing, but the growth of 'sectoral' politics and the exploitation of socio-cultural cleavages for political ends or goals. He writes: "such an ethnic orientation of the number game has two prominent features. One is the rise of new political organizations that are sometimes blatantly and sometimes not so blatantly communal. This happens at the local levels or starts at the local levels or starts at that level and then moves up. Shiv Sena is an excellent example of this but there are many other examples too. Secondly, there takes place a capture of specifically political organizations like parties by cultural and sectarian organization. What started as non-political organizations take on a political role. RSS is an excellent example of this. So is the Jamaat-e-Islami".¹² Thus the net result of the ethnicisation of the political process is the growth of 'backlash politics' and a number of communal organizations.

11. Rajni Kothari, State Against Democracy (New Delhi: Ajanta, 1988), p.242.

12. Ibid., p.243.

There are different schools of thought on Communalism. One school of thought considers it as a political doctrine where it simply means the political exploitation of religion for electoral gains. "It is only when a deliberate choice is made by a community to initiate political demands on the basis of religio-cultural differences that communal awareness turns into communalism in the form of political doctrine".¹³ And as a political strategy, communalism is "opposed to nationalism as an aggregation of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual communities."¹⁴

Another school of thought such as the Marxist school of thought treats communalism as a modern phenomenon and a colonial gift. Accordingly to Bipan Chandra, "communalism is basically and above all an ideology, of which communal violence and communal riots are conjectural consequences. Communal ideology can prevail even without violences but communal violence cannot exist without communal ideology".¹⁵ According to Bipan Chandra,

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13. Prabha Dixit, Communalism - A Struggle for Power (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), p.1.
14. Rasheeduddin Khan, *Ibid.*, p.21.
15. Bipan Chandra, "The Wayout", Seminar, June, 1986 p.35. Cf. also his book Communalism in Modern India (New Delhi: Vani edu. Books, 1984).

communal ideology consists of three elements or stages.¹⁶
 At the first stage, the religion based society is advocated. The second stage is that of 'liberal communalism' or 'moderate communalism' where it is advocated that the secular interests (socio-economic, political) of a particular religious community are different from other religious community. And the third stage is that of extreme or 'fascistic communalism'. At this stage of growth, it is said that the secular interests of two communities are not only different but are hostile to each other.

Communalism arises out of the conflicting, stagnant and competitive nature of the capitalist development - "in a situation of scarce resources and relatively stagnant economy, the generation of competition for jobs etc. along communal lines benefit some of the individual or group of individual from the particular class of the society".¹⁷ Bipan Chandra traces

16. For this, read his paper, "Communalism: the Way Out", in R.C. Dutt, ed., Nation-building in India: Socio-economic factor (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), pp. 210-22.

17. "Ideological Combat Against Communalism", Patriot (New Delhi), 28 August, 1986.

the social roots of communalism in the individuals belonging to the middle class or the lower middle class of the society.¹⁸ In a scarce and underdeveloped economic situation, the most affected strata of the society is the middle class or the lower middle class. In order to sustain their class character and individual identity, the individual belonging to this class resorts to existing socio-cultural cleavages in the society in order to compete for jobs, trades and other professions. In this way, the competition is generated along the communal lines.

From the above discussion we can conclude that communalism implies:(i) that religion is the basis of social identity formation and the sole determinant of social relationships. Thus, religion determines the person's social identity;(ii) that society can be organized on the basis of religion;(iii) that each religious group is homogenous in nature and has common socio-economic and political interest, but dissimilar, divergent and different from the interests of other religious groups. Therefore, each religious group

18. Cf. "Social Roots of Communalism" in his book Communalism in Modern India, op.cit.

is opposite, hostile and antagonistic to each other; (iv) that the interests of one religious group can be protected only at the cost of another religious group; (v) that religion is the only basis of political recruitment. And the communal organizations or organization based on religious considerations are the only legitimate organization to promote, protect and to articulate the interests of the community which they tend to represent; and(vi) that religion is a means, not an end.

Lastly, communalism is an exclusive ideology and its extreme manifestations may lead to theocracy resulting in virtual breakdown of the social system. When communal demands are not realized, the communalists, try to seek a reactionary solution such as 'Khalistan', 'Hindu Rashtra' or 'Darul Islam' by waging communal warfare. Generation of hatred among the common people, belonging to different religion is the first step in the communalist's strategy, disrupting the social harmony, peace and tranquillity. From mutual hatred proceeds the communal violence and communal riot which weaken the process of social integration, adversely affecting the national unity and integrity.

CASTEISM

Casteism is an extension of the base of communalism from religion to caste, with similar objective of procuring maximum benefit from system (social, economic and political) along the caste lines. In other words, it means the organization of different caste or caste groups for economic and political purposes and the generation of competition - for jobs, economic resources and political power - along caste lines. Since the competition is based on the segmental considerations, competition usually transforms into a caste-conflict and caste-war. The net result of a caste-conflict or caste-war is the further consolidation of caste-system in the society. Sometimes, caste-conflict results in sharp polarization among the different caste groups and in a growth of class like organizations. But the caste based organizations are often mutually repulsive, hostile and antagonistic.

The caste serves as an important basis of primordial social organization, determining the social station of a person on ascriptive basis. At the existential level of analysis caste refers to 'Jatis', which is further divided into a closed system of sub-caste or sub-sub caste or 'Gotras'. Caste system is studied both as a structural and as a cultural phenomena.

Structurally, the caste system is an institutionalized system of inequality based on and enforced by the hierarchical organization of hereditary groups for varied purposes such as marriage, occupation, division of labour etc. As a structural phenomenon, the caste system manifests two tendencies - segmental and organic. "As a segmental reality, each caste or sub-castes tends to articulate mutual repulsion, social distance and social inequality. But as an organic system, the caste segments are mutually interlinked by a principle of reciprocity, through the Jajmani system".¹⁹ But as a system of institutionalized inequality, it tends to perpetuate the domination of certain caste-groups over other caste groups.

On the other hand, those who view (such as G.S. Ghura, M.N. Srinivas and others) caste system as a cultural phenomenon underline the following features of caste in India:

Segmental division of society: Membership of a caste is determined by birth and not by selection. Therefore, it is hereditary.

19. Yogendra Singh, Social Stratification and Change in India, 1977, rept. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1980), p.11.

Hierarchy: A system of social precedence putting 'Brahmin' at the top and 'Sudras' at the bottom. It still operates more rigidly in the rural areas than the urban areas, where emphasis on occupational mobility and economic possession, under the impact of modernization and industrialization have made it somewhat flexible. Hierarchical division is made in order to determine what one should have and what one should not have. Thus, the eligibility of a person to perform socio-cultural, political and economic action is not determined by his competence or merit but by his place in the hierarchy.

Restriction on feeding and social intercourse: It shows the social distance that exists between two different castes.

Pollution: It refers to civil, ritual and religious abilities and disabilities of different castes. In fact, it is a system of physical and ecological segregation between two persons belonging to two different stratum in the caste hierarchy, especially between higher castes and lower castes or 'Sudras'. In short, pollution refers to the existence of 'ecological space' between two persons belonging to different stratum.

Endogamy and hypergamy: It refers to restricted mobility of a person for marriage within a specified group.

Occupational Association: It refers to hereditary association of caste with an occupation.

The cultural universalists regard caste group as 'status-group'. This view is held by the sociologists like Andre Beteille and others. Andre Beteille says that the castes can be best understood as status-groups, sharing a distinctive life style, exclusive and rigid in structure. He sees the emergence of new caste like status-groups in the crystallization of the professional groups, which are quite 'elaborate', 'exclusive' and 'rigid' in structure.²⁰

After discussing the nature and characteristics of the caste system it is essential to focus our analysis on the operational side of the caste-system. The working of the caste-system reveals that it has been both an 'open' and a 'closed' system. As an open system, there has been mobility in the caste structure and the

20. Cf. Andre Beteille, "Caste and Social Status," in Romesh Thapar, ed., Tribe Caste and Religion in India (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 59-65.

urge for mobility comes from 'Sanskritization'²¹ for status and rank improvement. And as a closed system mobility is often protested by the reference group, for which the mobility is opted. The mobility has been both vertical and horizontal.

Though "the process of modernization brings together the structurally adjacent castes, it also creates vertical differentiation within each caste. Each caste tends to become increasingly heterogeneous in terms of occupation, income, education and rural-urban residence".²²

The segmentation of caste is not free from conflict and tension. Conflict sometimes occurs when an attempt is made by the lower caste to seek parity (generally cultural) with adjacent upper caste. In most of the cases, accommodation and acceptance are not quick and spontaneous.

Conflicts also occur among the upper castes out of competition for vertical proliferation in their

21. The term 'Sanskritization' has been coined by M.N. Srinivas. Cf. Social Change in Modern India (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), pp. 1-45.

22. Andre Beteille, *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

position and status in terms of occupation, income, education and material possessions. Conflicts are both positive and negative. It is positive in the sense that it aims at lowering of distance among the various divisions of castes. And it is negative in the sense that conflict sometimes degenerates into caste-war, disrupting the cohesion and harmony in the society.

The phenomena of caste has pervaded the entire secular working of our system, manifesting in the form of nepotism , and vitiating the process of objective selection and recruitment.

The caste system operates at different levels for varied purposes. At the social level, it attempts to maintain and to perpetuate the existing structural distance or ecological space among the various castes through strict adherence to the rule of endogamy, pollution etc. At this level it is governed by the superiority-inferiority complex.

At the political level, it stands for the preferential system of power allotment. The protagonists of this creed hold the view that the basis of political recruitment and power transactions should be the caste and caste only. Caste has pervaded the entire political

process of the country. This is evident from the fact that the 'electoral arithmetic' is often based on the caste equations. Political recruitment, such as the appointment of ministers, chief ministers, or even the membership of a political organization is based on the caste equations or on the caste considerations. Thus, as a result of it, the decision-making system of State, which is supposed to be a secular network, has eventually transformed into a casteist network operating on caste lines and serving the sectoral interests in the society.

At the economic level, the caste-system operates for the differential allotment of economic resources along caste lines. At this level, it operates for the 'distributive injustices'.

The major incompetence of caste as a system of 'institutionalized inequality' is the existence of schedule castes or 'untouchables', which is technically outside the purview of the fourfold 'varna' scheme. Their occupation is considered as the lowest in the normative hierarchy which led to their ecological segregation in most of the villages and townships.

"Traditionally", writes Yogendra Singh, "the scheduled castes were integrated into the economic system

of the upper caste in an extremely asymmetrical manner so that the high degree of integration also meant a high measure of economic dependence and exploitation. The ritual and social disabilities were a 'backwash effect' of this economic dependence and servitude".²³ Therefore, to integrate the scheduled caste with the mainstream of society requires not only a change in the attitude of other caste groups (such as upper caste) to accommodate them in the society and to accord them a respectful place under the humanist urge, but the scheduled castes should also be made economically independent.

TRIBES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Tribes are yet another important primordial factor in Indian Society coming next of 'Jatis', posing a baffling problem of social adjustment, of integration, value-contradiction and accommodation.

In order to integrate tribes with society and with the mainstream of national life, it is essential that their cultural and linguistic identities, and their

23. Yogendra Singh, op.cit., p.26.

socio-economic system should be protected. For any attempt to supplant their identity, alienates them further.

For a long time, there had been a frictionless coexistence between the tribal folk and the Hindu society. They remained in seclusion, except for a few cases of assimilation into the Hindu society. But with the openings of modern communication system they willy-nilly began to interact with the neighbouring population and exhibited two syndromes - either the tribal society disintegrated and was finally absorbed by the surrounding population, or it preferred a conscious and self-chosen seclusion. Many factors are responsible for the seclusion of the tribals. For example, the missionary action aimed at transforming their socio-cultural identity with a new set of identity, which was alien and not akin to them. Also, their socio-economic system based on the community ownership of the property was replaced by the system of private ownership of the property. This was introduced and effected by a rich commercial class, called 'Mahajan' in local dialect, who exploited their way of life and value system for economic benefit. This point needs to be elaborated a little further. Certain rituals, customs and consumption

pattern of tribes are highly expensive. And in order to perform them, they have to take loan from local moneylenders. This puts tribals in a vicious circle of debt. The high interest rates on debt and the non-payment of it generally result in the alienation of their property. The net result is that the 'Mahajan' becomes the real owner of their property. The commercial class and other settler population have not only exploited tribals economically but also subjected them to cultural onslaughts. This trend should be checked forthwith.

Protection of tribals' identity does not mean the continuous of the same state of affairs. Rather, it should mean the promotion of tribals' cultural heritage as well as the correction of their evil practices and belief-patterns, inherent and embeded in superstitions and 'taboos'.

Thus, tribes should be provided socio-economic security. Their culture should be protected and their socio-educational lot should be upgraded. The opening to education will enable them to internalize the modern values. And the acquisition of scientific knowlege would enable them to test and to contradict their

belief pattern, based on superstitions and taboos. Also, the tribal-non tribal relationship should be based on the model of mutual cooperation, accommodation and inter-dependence, instead of the existing domination versus dominated model, which is highly exploitative in nature.

CHAPTER - III

ORIGIN, GROWTH, COMPOSITION AND OBJECTIVES OF NIC

When India became independent one of the major tasks facing it was to integrate the enormously intricate and diverse social structure and to mould pluralities based on religion, language, region etc., in a pattern of 'unity in diversity'. The policy makers realized that national integration was not a static or a one-time one-stroke affair but a dynamic process. This meant that in a society with huge diversities, different disruptive forces might emerge from time to time which might weaken social cohesion and unity; therefore, this needed to be checked and corrected from time to time. Thus, with the purpose of locating the problems and devising measures -- both short term and long term -- to combat centrifugal forces, emphasis was put on the initiation of discussions, organization of forums, and setting up of permanent committees.

Growth of institutions, structures, forums etc., are not always sudden or spontaneous, but they are conceived and conceptualized in a long course of time. This is also true in the case of the National Integration Council (NIC). Though it was set up by the National Integration Conference, its background can be traced back to 1958 when the UGC organized a seminar on national integration.

In 1960, the Congress Party at its Bhavnagar Session appointed a National Integration Committee with Mrs. Indira Gandhi as the Chairperson. The recommendations of this committee were classified in four parts, namely:

- i. "Promotion of national outlook in the fields of education and other spheres;
- ii. Promotion of opportunities for minorities in the economic field;
- iii. Maintenance of security of person and property; and
- iv. Role of the Congress organizations".¹

This was followed by the Chief Ministers' Conference to consider the question of national integration. This conference was headed by the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. In this conference ministers from states also participated. This meeting was convened in 1961 (31st May, 1st June, then on August 10th, 11th and 12th). The conference unanimously took the decision "to check disruptive tendencies which were opposed to the very basis of the Indian Constitution, and to provide

1. National Integration, Decisions Taken by the Chief Ministers' Conference, 1961, (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting), pp. 2-3.

equally for the growth of all minority communities in India, whether religious or linguistic, and thus give a solid basis for national integration".² This conference was the first official conference dealing concretely with the problems of national integration. The Conference accepted the report of the National Integration Committee with minor modifications and changes. The major recommendation of the Conference was the simplified three language formula, applicable at the secondary stage of education, which was as follows:

- a. "The regional language and mother tongue when the latter is different from the regional language;
- b. Hindi or, in Hindi-speaking areas, another Indian language; and
- c. English or any other modern European language".³

Besides , the Conference also emphasized that English and Hindi would be the official languages of the Union. The need for a common script was also emphasized by the members of the Conference. The meeting was of the opinion that a common script for all the Indian languages was not only desirable, but would

2. Memorandum, Chief Ministers' Conference, p.1.

3. Statement, Chief Ministers' Conference, Para 9, p.15.

be a powerful link between the different languages of India, and, therefore, of great help in bringing about integration. It stated: "Such a common script in India in existing circumstances can only be Devanagari. While it may be difficult to adopt a common script in the near future, this objective should be kept in mind".⁴

The year 1961 was a very significant year from the perspective of national integration. Major efforts towards national integration were made this year. One of such efforts was the setting up a Committee on Emotional Integration, headed by Dr. Sampuranand, to examine the role of education in strengthening and promoting the processes of emotional integration in national life and to examine the operation of tendencies which come in the way of their development and to suggest suitable programmes thereupon. In its report, submitted in 1962, this Committee suggested for having a common pattern, instead of differential patterns, of education throughout the country. This Committee made detailed and exhaustive recommendations with regard to education in order to bring emotional unity in the country. Here it is essential to point out that national

4. Statement, op.cit., Para 8.

integration at that time was perceived merely as educational and psychological process. The political aspect of national integration was rarely emphasized. It is why, much of the emphasis was put on the emotional integration.

Another notable effort towards national integration was the convening of National Integration Conference by the Government in the same year (from 28th September to 1st October) to discuss the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism etc., which undermine unity and integrity of the country. This conference was attended by the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Chief Ministers, leaders of political parties in Parliament, Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of Universities, prominent educationists, scientists, industrialists and few prominent citizens. Addressing the participants Nehru said - "We ventured to ask you to attend the conference not because some sudden catastrophe was overhanging us, or the country was on the verge of disintegration and that it should be pulled together but because we thought that at this moment in our history we should lay some stress on this problem and turn the people's mind in a particular direction".⁵

5. Quoted in D.C. Gupta, Indian Government and Politics (New Delhi: Vikas), p.609.

This Conference also viewed national integration as "a psychological process involving the development of a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people, a sense of common citizenship and a feeling of loyalty to the nation".⁶

The Conference formulated a significant code of conduct for political parties to check their alignments with the segmental cleavages existing in the society which aggravated the problems of communalism, casteism, regionalism etc. The Codes of conduct state that the political parties should not "indulge in any activity which would aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or create tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic".⁷ Political party, while launching any agitation, should "ensure that there is no incitement to violence and that no acts of violence are resorted to. If ... there is any outbreak of violence, it should be forthwith condemned".⁸ Political parties should also not "resort to agitation for seeking redress against any grievances relating to communal, caste, regional or linguistic issue,

6. Statement, National Integration Conference, p.6.

7. Statement, National Integration Conference, p.6.

8. Ibid., p.6.

which is likely to disturb peace or to create bitterness or increase tension between the different sections of the public, before exhausting all methods of conciliation and mediation".⁹

The Codes further provide that the "political power at any level should not be used for furthering the personal interests of members of one's own party or to harm the interests of members of other parties".¹⁰ And "the Government, while taking measures to maintain law and order, should take care not to impose undue restrictions on civil liberties and should not employ such measures as would interfere with the normal functioning of political parties".¹¹

It was this Conference in which the proposal for setting up the National Integration Council(NIC) was made. It was established with a view to working on a permanent basis and was assigned a 'watch dog' role to locate the problems of national integration and to suggest measures to combat the various disruptive tendencies working against national unity and integrity.

It is important to make it clear here that NIC is not a statutory body but simply a forum consisting

9. Ibid., p.6.

10. Ibid., p.6.

11. Ibid., p.6.

of nominated representatives from different walks of life. Its decisions, therefore, lack executive sanction. The implementation of its decision is voluntary, and not obligatory. It is neither an executive nor a legislative body. It is simply a deliberative body. Speaking in its first meeting, Jawaharlal Nehru said - "We can hardly give executive functions to this Council but there are the representatives of all parties here who will agree with them (the recommendations). Presumably, they will influence their parties. There are the Chief Ministers here who will presumably give some executive shape to what they agree to here ... This Council as such cannot take any executive action. That must be made quite clear. Just it cannot. You cannot convert it into some kind of super-Government sitting all over India. But, nevertheless, it can have a good deal of influence on Governments, on political parties and on the general public".¹²

When we speak of any Council it generally denotes an institution, but, it is not true in case of

12. National Integration Council, Questions and Aspects Relating to Procedure, in papers for 1968 meeting of NIC, p.9, emphasis added.

National Integration Council. It is a 'forum' served by a National Integration Cell, created specifically for this purpose in the Central Ministry of Home Affairs. This 'cell' is headed by a Secretary who is assisted by a few auxiliary functionaries, who perform the procedural functions for the Council. The NI cell keeps up the records of the NIC's deliberations and decisions. And it is also expected to keep track of the progress made by the States in implementing the decisions of the Council.

GROWTH

In the wake of the National Integration Conference's resolution, a 39-members NIC was constituted in 1961. Its first meeting was held on June 2 and 3, 1962, in New Delhi. NIC has set-up the following committees:

A seven-members committee, headed by Dr. Sampurnanand was set up to consider the problem of language, especially the place of English, Hindi and regional languages in University education, 'with particular reference to the need for the preservation of a link language between the universities and the

teaching of English as a language of international importance for the enrichment of Indian languages in science and technology'. This committee was asked to submit its report on 3rd June, 1962.

The second Committee was to look after national integration and regionalism. It consisted of 6 members and its Chairman was C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar. The third Committee was on national integration and communalism, consisting of 7 members and its Chairman was Asoka Mehta. These two Committees were asked to submit their reports in the next meeting of the Council. The fourth Committee was set up to examine the question of evolving a "code of conduct not only for different grades of students but also for the teachers and the various educational institutions and political parties".¹³ This Committee consisted of five-members and its Chairman and Convenor was Dr. K.L. Shrimali.

Though NIC was envisaged as a continuing body, but its work was suspended a year later when the Chinese aggression generated a spontaneous feelings of

13. Proceedings of the First Meeting of the NIC, p.8.

patriotism and emotional oneness among the people. The decision-makers felt that this revived national spirit would endure. But the disastrous experience during the years of 1966 and 1967, which witnessed communal, linguistic and regional violence in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, shattered the earlier confidence. It appeared as if the country was going to disintegrate and tear apart. This compelled the Government of India to revive and to reactivate the NIC. Its size was increased from 39 to 55 in order to induct persons coming from several fields of activities such as industry, trade unions and business. A meeting was convened in Srinagar from June 20 to 22, 1968. In this meeting "a Sub-Committee was set up to review the communal situation periodically and monitor the progress made in removing the irritant that stood in the way of communal harmony".¹⁴ This Sub-Committee had the advisory role vis-a-vis the Government in this regard. During the months following the Srinagar Conference of NIC, communal riots remained unchecked. It became very serious in Ahmedabad.

14. Read editorial, Hindustan Times(New Delhi) , July 24, 1980.

Thus, on October 16, 1969, the Standing Committee of the Council asked the different political parties to educate the people to foster communal unity.

In 1971 and 1972, communal violence again took place in some states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The Council meeting was convened in the second week of January 1974 at New Delhi. The Council adopted a resolution calling for banning communal organizations like RSS, Shiv Sena, Jamaat-e-Islam etc. The NIC also asked the All India Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee to launch a multi-directional attack on the evils like communalism.

Though the incidence of communal, caste and regional violence and conflict was kept under the constant review by the Standing Committee, Steering Committee and by a Working Group of NIC, set up during the Emergency period, headed by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the NIC virtually became a defunct Council.

In 1980, communal violence broke out from Moradabad in U.P. and regional movements like Assam agitation etc. became more and more violent. The situation became very grave. Repeating history, the

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Government revived and reconstituted a 53-member NIC in 1980. The meeting of the revived council took place in New Delhi. The Council in its meeting decided to set up a Standing Committee to keep a watch on the activities of communal and other divisive forces posing threat to national unity and integrity. The Standing Committee was also entrusted with a task of monitoring the progress of implementation of the decisions taken by the Council. The Chairperson of the Council, Mrs. Indira Gandhi also announced the setting up of two more Committees - "one to make an in-depth study of the causes of the frequent communal flare-ups and other to devise plans to reorient the educational system so as to make it a potent instrument for promoting secularism and national unity".¹⁵ The Committee on communal harmony was renamed as 'Committee On Communal and Caste Harmony' and the other Committee was named as Committee On Education.

After a lapse of four years the next meeting of the Council took place on 21st January, 1984. Again, after a lapse of two years, the Council's reconstitution took place in 1986. The reconstituted Council consists of 52-members. The Council was revived in the wake of terrorism in Punjab. The revived Council met on

15. Hindustan Times(New Delhi), 13th November, 1980.

7th April, 1986 and on 12th September, 1986. The Council, as the sentinel of the nation's unity, appointed a 21-member Standing Committee to function on a permanent or continuing basis. The Standing Committee is entrusted with a task of formulating both short-term and long-term measures for preserving national integrity in its various aspects all over the country. This was a follow-up action. In its meeting the NIC decided to set up a Sub-Group of NIC to suggest points for further follow-up action after going through the verbatim proceedings of the meeting. This Sub-Group consisted of 5-members and its Convenor was P.N. Haksar. The members of the Sub-Group were drawn from NIC. The group was also entrusted with the responsibility of submitting proposals to the NIC for discussion on matters affecting or pertaining to national integration.

From the above discussion of the growth of NIC two things are obvious. Firstly, the NIC has not been evolved on a permanent basis as a continuing body, but, its growth pattern follows an intermittent path; and secondly, it has been revived only during the time of grave crisis when the communal and caste violence and regional conflicts take an ugly turn. It has been revived from time to time only to serve as 'fire extinguishing machinery' or as a 'crisis-management mechanism'. It has never worked as a continuing body.

COMPOSITION

It was laid down by the National Integration Conference that the NIC should consist of the Prime Minister as ex-officio Chairman of the Council, the Union Home Minister, the Chief Ministers of all States, seven leaders of political parties represented in Parliament, the Chairman of the National Integration Committee of the Indian National Congress (then Smt. Indira Gandhi), the Chairman, University Grants Commission, two educationists, the Commissioners for linguistic minorities, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and seven persons nominated by the Prime Minister.

Its size has been varying from 39 to 55 in the subsequent reconstitutions of it. The Council's size has been increased with a purpose to seek representation from different fields of activities, including trade, industry, business etc. Now its composition also includes Union Minister and Minister of State for Human Resources Development, the Presidents of FICCI, ASSOCHAM and INTUC. It also includes eminent persons from the fields of art, painting, literature and journalism. Besides, special invitees also take part in the Council's meetings. In 1986, the special invitee included the Minister of State for Welfare, the Cabinet Secretary and Information

Adviser to Prime Minister. It is due to this broader base of the composition that the Council becomes a comprehensive organization, which is expected to review the process of integration and its various dimensions from different perspectives and thereby make comprehensive and pragmatic suggestions.

But the composition of the Council is not free from criticism. In 1980, the opposition parties had strong reservations about the manner in which the Council was constituted, for many of the political parties did not find representation at the party level. The CPM's grudge was that, as a party, it had not been represented on the Council and those of its members who were included were there in their capacity as Chief Ministers of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura. Many of the opposition parties such as CPM, the Akali Dal, the National Conference and the AIADMK were not represented in the Council at the party level, even the Congress was represented at the official level and not at the party level. But actually the intention behind not granting representation to political parties was to prevent the Council from becoming an unwieldy organization which might lose its compactness. The then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, said that the intention was not to

exclude any party but to include many right thinking people who were outside the Council. Therefore, she said, some methods should be devised to associate them with the work of the Council. However, in the reconstituted Council of 1986, representation even at the party level was given, thus overcoming the earlier criticism of the political parties.

OBJECTIVES OF NIC

At its Srinagar meeting in 1968, the Council declared and adopted the objectives of the Council. It reiterated Council's faith in the 'common citizenship, unity in diversity', 'freedom of religion', 'secularism', 'equality', 'justice - social, economic and political', and 'fraternity' among all communities. The Council dedicated itself to achieve these objectives and to build up national life on these foundations. The declaration also notes with concern the repeated occurrences of communal violence and other conflicts and the operation of such tendencies which 'strike at the roots of national solidarity'; therefore, the Council calls upon the people belonging to different forums, occupations, organizations (political, non-political) and others to bring the working of the disruptive tendencies to a halt:

- a. " by discouraging communal illwill and regional animosities and weaning away the misguided elements of the society from paths of violence;
- b. by active and energetic propagation of the principles, especially of tolerance and harmony for which this nation stands;
- c. by mobilising constructive forces of society in the cause of national unity and solidarity and giving them leadership, encouragement and articulation; and
- d. by devising suitable community activities and programmes for fostering fellow feelings, emphasising the privileges of common citizenship and in general raising the quality of national life".¹⁶

The declaration notes further that "this task is not of Government alone although governments have to play a major role in strengthening the forces of integration and in implementing expeditiously and effectively the recommendations that this Council makes. This task is the collective responsibility of all citizens - politicians, educationists,

16. Cf. the Statement issued at the NIC meeting at Srinagar in 1968, pp. 1-2.

artists, writers, teachers, parents and students, intellectuals, businessmen and trade union leaders".¹⁷ Therefore, the Council invites all people regardless of their many and varied affiliations 'to join in this great and urgent task of promoting national unity and solidarity'.

We may summarize that the Council is entrusted with the following tasks:

- i. to promote secularism and community living, based on the principles of mutual tolerance and fraternity. To secure this objective, the emphasis in Council's meetings has been put on reconstructing and moulding educational system to this desired effect;
- ii. to protect minorities which includes not only providing physical security but also ensuring them the socio-economic and cultural security;
- iii. to combat communalism and check communal violence through different administrative measures suggested by it from time to time;

17. Ibid., p.2.

- iv. to check regional animosities through different political methods and economic measures; and
- v. to promote link language and the strict observance and effective implementation of the three-language formula.

Therefore, as a 'watch dog' of national integration its functions range from suggesting long-term measures to short-term measures, to help combat terrorism and other disruptive and secessionist tendencies working in the society. Its function is to give suggestions. The implementation of its suggestions, however, is left to the Government. It may be added that its suggestions are not constitutionally or legally binding upon the Government. The implementation of its proposals depends upon the will of the Government, both at the Central level and in the states.

CHAPTER - IVEVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL

NIC was constituted as a non-statutory advisory body with the purpose of reviewing the different dimensions of the problems of national integration and for suggesting measures for strengthening it. Its decisions however lack executive and legislative sanctions, therefore they are not binding. Originally it was envisaged as a body that will function on a permanent basis. It is supposed to play the role of a 'watch-dog' for the protection and promotion of national integration. Thus, it has been assigned with the paramount task of keeping a vigil on the anti-~~inter~~national tendencies and to suggest different measures for the prevention of the growth of such phenomena as posing threat to national unity and integrity.

It has also been charged to suggest administrative and punitive measures, for drafting of different codes of behaviour to regulate the activities of different organizations (political or non-political such as political parties etc.), media and people towards national unity and integrity. It has been given the task of recommending ^{measures} for the protection

of minorities and for their welfare. Further it has been charged to suggest ways and means of maintaining communal harmony and promoting such national values as secularism, equality, democracy etc., among the people.

Firstly, let us take up the issue of Communalism and Communal violence. The recommendations of the Council in this regard include different preventive and punitive measures for the prevention of communal violence. Since communal disturbances result from building up of communal tensions, therefore, Committee on Communal Aspects in 1968 recommended that "(a)" a special intelligence unit should be constituted at the state and central levels...; (b) intelligence agencies should furnish their reports and assessments to the District Magistrate and District Superintendents of Police regularly and without delay; (c) the District Magistrate and District Superintendents of Police should be charged with personal responsibility for scrutinising these reports and taking preventive action promptly to forestall any communal disturbances; and (d) a close watch should be kept on rumour-mongering".¹

This Committee also recommended that the "Government should have power to prevent the publication of

1. Cf. the Recommendations of the Committee on Communal Aspects as adopted by the NIC On 21st June, 1968, p.2.

alarming, incorrect or provocative news or of views likely to disturb communal harmony. This power can be taken on the lines of provisions of Section 2 of the Punjab Special Powers(Press) Act, 1956."² It also recommended that the District Magistrate and Superintendents of Police should be made personally accountable for the prevention of communal disturbances, and "failure to take prompt and effective action should be considered as a dereliction of duty and the officers concerned should be dealt with accordingly. Service Rules should be amended, if necessary."³ The Committee also suggested for introducing a "system of suitable recognition of services tendered in preventing or dealing with communal disturbances..."⁴ The Committee's other recommendations include:(i) setting up the 'special courts with summary powers to deal with offences connected with communal incidents; (ii) a special inquiry

2. Ibid., p.2. "This Act provides that the State Government if satisfied that action is necessary in the interest of maintenance of communal harmony may by order prohibit the printing or publication of any matter for a specified period not exceeding two months", Ibid., p.2.

3. Ibid., p.3.

4. Ibid., p.2.

should be made immediately after every communal disturbance;

(iii) "Citizens Committees may be constituted as consultative bodies at the State, District and Thana levels to promote and maintain communal harmony. Their function should include the holding of advance consultation with leaders of religious groups to ensure peaceful celebration of festivals. They should endeavour to promote joint participation by all communities in the festivals."⁵

On the question of use of religious places, members of the Council in its meeting held on Sept. 12, 1986 were unanimous in their view that "places of worship should not be used for the purposes other than religious activities especially political purposes and provoking communal hatred among masses".⁶ In order to prevent the misuse of religious places, the Sub-Group of NIC pointed out that the Section 153-A of IPC deals with the misuse of places of worship.⁷ Sometime communal tension proceeds from an organized attempt of religious conversion. In this regard, the Sub-Group of NIC is of the opinion though Article 25 of the Indian Constitution permits a person to propagate his or her religion by converting

5. Ibid., p.3.

6. Agenda for the Meeting of Standing Committee of NIC, June 23, 1987, p.21.

7. Cf. Ibid., p.21.

people belonging to other religious faith, but it should not be done forcibly or by the employment of 'force intimidation or fraud'. The forcible conversion can be checked by invoking different provisions of the IPC and through different executive actions.⁸

These days it is being observed that the religious processions are often organized by the communal elements with vested interest of creating communal tension in the society. Organization of religious procession is nothing, but an aggressive exhibition of 'religious symbolism'. Symbolic and psychological factors are generally exploited by the communalists in order to generate mutual hatred between two different religious community. On this dimension of the problem, the members of NIC, in its meeting held on 12th Sept. 1986, expressed different views. While some were of the opinion that the religious processions should be totally banned, others held the view that some restrictions should be imposed, instead of a total ban. In his consensual and concluding note, the Prime Minister observed that it was better to leave this matter to the local administration to decide. "But some guidelines

8. Cf. Ibid., pp.21-22.

can be prescribed regarding routes. Number of vehicles should be limited and in the processions people from all religions should participate. No new processions should be allowed where they do not exist."⁹

On the question of observance of religious ceremonies in State function, the Prime Minister in the Council's meeting held on 12th Sept. 1986 said that "... Government - Central or State - should not have religious ceremonies at all of any sort..."¹⁰

The Committee on Communal and Caste Harmony formulated certain do's and don'ts for the maintenance of communal harmony which may be enumerated as follows:

Don'ts

- a. Do not show disrespect to or belittle, or, ridicule, tenets or observances of any religion in a way which may hurt religious sentiments.
- b. Do not use loud-speakers and amplifiers in public places, especially in places of worship, in such a way as to cause nuisance to others and, in particular, not to hurt the religious feelings of other communities.

9. Cf. Ibid., p.23.

10. Ibid., Annexure-II, p.11.

- c. Do not use places of worship for any purposes other than that of worship.
- d. Do not do anything to start or re-establish places of worship contrary to provisions of law.
- e. Do not take part in or encourage any display of group conversions from one religion to another; but treat religion as a matter of private conscience.
- f. Do not circulate any news which may provoke or aggravate communal disharmony.
- g. Do not give credence to rumours.
- h. Do not canvass for votes on grounds of caste, creed or religion.
- i. Do not utter anything which may encourage bitterness or spread hatred or enmity on grounds of caste or creed.

Do's

- a. Speak appreciatively of the common points of various religions and of features, which unite all Indians.

- b. Do mix with people of different persuasions and visit their religious places if there is no objection and, if not objected to, on social and other occasions.
- c. Articulate the contributions of writers, poets, authors professing various religious and speaking different language to the unity of India.
- d. Condemn writings which are scurrilous and are likely to wound the religious feelings of others.
- e. Strengthen the hands of local government functionaries in their efforts to promote the communal harmony.
- f. Familiarise yourself with Constitutional objectives, as found in the preamble to the Constitution, with the Constitutional obligations of the State, as found in the chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directives of State Policy, as well as with obligation of citizens as found in Chapter IV(Fundamental Duties) of the Constitution.
- g. Help in every possible way the due observance of Fundamental Rights and Duties of citizen by all.¹¹

11. Cf. Annexure XVI, Sixth Annual Report of the Minorities Commission for the period from 1-4-1983 to 31-3-1984.

On the question of senseless terrorist violence in Punjab, the Council, at its emergency meeting held on 7th April, 1986, adopted a three pronged strategy for fighting terrorism in Punjab. The resolution calls for an end to misuse of places of worship, particularly the illegal occupation of the parts of the Golden Temple Complex by Sikh terrorists, sealing of the international borders to prevent infiltration by subversive elements and punishment of those guilty of disruptive and violent acts.¹² Besides, the members of the Council were of the opinion that there should be a Political solution of the Punjab Problem.

Often criticism is made that the Council has never carried out any investigation of communal riots such as Meerut etc. This does not seem to be valid in the light of the fact that the Council has only advisory jurisdiction, and the investigation of communal riot does not come within its jurisdiction. Its jurisdiction is limited. It is often said that the Council has not been able to check communal violence. Again, it should be made clear that the Council is not an executive body. It does not have any power to check communal violence. At best, it can suggest only measures to check them, but

12. Cf. National Integration Council Verbatim Record of the Proceedings of the meeting held at New Delhi on 7th April, 1986, pp. 1-2.

the implementation of its decision is left with the Central and State Governments. Since its decision is not legally binding upon the Central and State Governments, therefore, the implementation of the Council's decision depends upon the discretion of the Government.

On the minorities issue, the Council adopted a 15-point programme, initiated by Indira Gandhi in 1983. Welfare measures for minorities were discussed specifically in the Council's meeting held on Jan. 21, 1984 under the Agenda itemⁿ Measures to Promote Communal Harmony and National Integrationⁿ. In her concluding address in that meeting of the Council the then Prime Minister observedⁿ... lack of education in some minority communities is a very serious matter, and it does affect the Muslim minority, because when we are trying to put them on to things, of course, there may be people making trouble at the lower level which we are trying to check, but quite often for particular jobs just no names come... I would like to say once more, let us concentrate on what we have in common rather than on our differences and specially where such questions are concerned such as national integration, national unity, for which the welfare of the minorities and weaker sections is so important."¹³

The problems of minorities were again discussed under the

13. Quoted in Agenda and Notes for the meeting of NIC, Sept. 12, 1986, Annexure II, p.14.

Agenda "Welfare of Minorities" at the Council's meeting held on Sept. 12, 1986.

If we closely scrutinize the 15-point programme, it contains 7 specific points relating to communal riots and their prevention, 5 specific points relating to the recruitment of minorities in the Central and State Services and 3 points relating to other measures for the welfare of minorities. A close analysis of the programme suggests three objectives of the programme: (i) maintenance of communal peace and harmony; (ii) to provide minorities their fair share in the process of development; and (iii) upliftment of the weakest among the minorities.

The other important points of the programme are : (i) setting up special courts for the trial of communal offences; (ii) to provide immediate relief and adequate economic assistance to the victims of communal riots; (iii) special consideration should be given to the minorities in the recruitment of Central and State Police forces; (iv) large scale employment opportunities should be provided to minorities in the Railways , Nationalized Banks and Public Sector Enterprises; (v) initiation of coaching classes for students from the minority communities in order to

make them able and competent for competing on equal terms with other privileged section of the population in the society, in those of competitive examinations which are conducted on the basis of merit and efficiency; (vi) setting up ITIs and Polytechnics for minorities by the Government to impart technical knowledge and skill among them; and (vii) problems relating to minorities need to be attended on a continuing basis so that apprehensions are allayed and genuine grievances are redressed."¹⁴

In order to implement 15-point programme for the welfare of minorities, the Ministry of Home Affairs circulated the 15-point directives to all State Governments and Union Territory Administration. The State Governments were also asked to submit a quarterly report on progress of implementation of the programme to the Home Ministry. A minorities' cell was also created in the Ministry of Home Affairs to monitor the implementation of these directives. This cell is further entrusted with the duty of compiling reports, sent by the State Government,

14. For detail, Cf. Ibid., Annexure I, p.12.

and "submitting a consolidated quarterly progress report on progress of implementation to Prime Minister's Office and has also been taking up cases, where necessary, for corrective action on deficiencies noticed in the implementation of the programme with the authorities concerned through meetings, discussions and field visits."¹⁵

At the State level, the Nodal Officers for Minorities Welfare have been nominated in order to coordinate the implementation of these directives by various State Departments and field agencies. In most of the States the Minorities' Cells have been set up to ensure expeditious action for redressal of minority grievances.

In the implementation of these directives, the Home Ministry is also coordinated by various Central Ministries such as Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Welfare etc.

Agenda for the Council's meeting held on 12th Sept, 1986 notes that "although substantial efforts have been made by various Central Ministries and State Governments and Union Territory Administrations in pursuance of the

15. Ibid., p.4.

15-Point directives, the position continues to be far from satisfactory in many respects. We have had recurrent communal disturbances in various parts of the country... A basic problem is that some sections of the minorities continue to lag significantly behind in education and socio-economic development. Certain sections of minorities are also underrepresented in Central and State Police Forces in Nationalised Banks, Public Sector Undertakings and other Government Services... A study of certain institutions gave the impression that the intake of certain minorities in ITIs and Polytechnics is extremely low. Their literacy rate, especially of women, in these communities, is extremely low and drop out rates for primary and middle level education are also much higher than the national average."¹⁶ For the lag in the implementation of the above mentioned programme, the Council cannot be blamed. Because Council can suggest measures, review overall situation and at best, can draw the attention of the Government and other implementing machinery towards this. These directives are good in mission to check communal violence and to the welfare of the minorities.

16. Ibid., p.4.

Regionalism is considered as another important dimension of the problems of national integration. On this issue the opinions of the members of the Council differ sharply. While the ruling party (Congress-I) treats regionalism as anti-integrational phenomenon, others, especially the opposition parties (non-Congress-I), treat it as a manageable federal phenomenon which stands for the balanced economic development of all regions, for the restructuring of Centre-State relations and for the reversal of the present trend of over-centralization.

On the question of removal of regional and economic imbalances, the Committee on Regional Aspects recommended in 1968 that "the role of Central financing agencies including banks, the industrial licensing and grant-in-aid should all be so devised as to subserve the goal of doing away with the imbalances and disparities. In particular, distribution of aid should not be on the basis of population alone, but on consideration of existing backwardness and the extent of leeway that remains to be made to bring all the States to a minimum standard of development and living".¹⁷

17. Recommendations of the Committee on Regional Aspects as Adopted by the NIC at its morning session on June 22, 1968, p.2.

The Committee further recommended that the qualified local persons should be given due weight in the employment by the Public Sector and Private Sector as well.

One of the factors responsible for the inter-state regionalism is the river-water disputes between two or more States. Thus, in order to resolve disputes, the Committee recommended that the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956 should be unhesitatingly pressed into service and "all issues which have been alive for more than three years should be referred to the Tribunal immediately after it is set up under the Act."¹⁸ The Tribunal should, in the opinion of the Committee, consist of 'at three members who should all be judges'.¹⁹

On the linguistic Border Issues, the Committee was of the view that "uniform general principles applicable to the country as a whole should be formulated by the Government of India for the solution of linguistic border issues on a well understood basis. There should be a time limit within which this formulation should be

18. Ibid., p.1.

19. Cf. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

completed. The question of language, however, will have to be gone into carefully, giving due weight to the percentages of the different linguistic groups."²⁰

In this connection the Committee further recommended for setting up of machinery by the Central Government 'to which linguistic border issues could be referred for expeditious solution'.

From time to time, it has been emphasized in the Council's meetings that the educational system should be reconstructed in such a way as to promote national unity and integrity. In this regard, the Committee on Educational Aspects and Mass Media, in 1968, was of the view that the educational system, from primary to the post-graduate level, should be reoriented: "(i) to serve the purpose of creating a sense of Indianness, Unity and solidarity; (ii) to inculcate faith in the basic postulates of Indian democracy ; and (iii) to help the nation to create a modern society out of the present traditional one".²¹

20. Ibid., p.1.

21. Recommendations of the Committee on Educational Aspects and Mass Media as adopted by the NIC at its morning session on June 22, 1968, p.1.

Other important suggestions of the Committee include: (i) appointing of Expert Committees by the State Government to organize the preparation of text-books for Schools; (ii) removal of regional imbalances in the field of educational facilities in rural and other backward areas; and (iv) the organization of inter-university meets for various purposes with a view to furthering national integration.²²

Besides, the Council, from time to time, reiterated its decision to revise books on history and literature with a view to make them free from communal bias. It also suggested for the effective implementation of the three-language formula. On the question of link language, the Council in its meeting held in 1961, had the opinion that English should serve as an international link language at all time, and it should be gradually replaced by Hindi as an internal link language.²³

In 1961, the Council adopted a Draft Code of Conduct for the Press and recommended its immediate implementation. This code of conduct lays down that the press should : "(i) take all active steps to develop a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people and to create a sense of

22. Cf. Ibid., pp.1-2.

23. Cf. Proceedings of the first Meeting of NIC held at New Delhi on June 2 and 3, 1962, p.5.

common citizenship and a feeling of loyalty to the nation; (ii) subordinate group loyalties based on caste, community, religion, region or language to national interests; (iii) condone no move of any person, party or group to divide the country, or to create tensions between its people; (iv) condemn unreservedly incitement to violence or any advocacy of violence as a means of settling conflicts; (v) withhold publication of unverified news which would tend to create discord, and refrain from giving prominent display to such news; (vi) contradict or rectify all inaccurate reports or comments relating to such news; and (vii) highlight all activities, whether of the State or of the public, which promote the progress of the nation and unity of the country."²⁴ The Council further recommended that the journalists should observe restraint in reporting those items which might create tension in the society. They should disseminate only accurate information and should uphold the fundamental national values etc.²⁵

From the above discussion, we may now conclude that the Council's role ranges from suggesting short term measures such as prevention of communal violence, to providing guidelines on important issues,

24. Ibid., Appendix II, p.15.

25. Cf. Ibid., pp. 16-18.

such as welfare of minorities, regionalism, communal harmony etc., related to the process of national integration. It would be quite simplistic to say, as some members of the Council opine, that the Council has failed totally in discharging its responsibilities. Most of the criticism of the Council is due to the non-implementation or partial implementation of its decisions. For this, however, the Council can hardly be blamed. It does not have any authority to implement its decisions. Its jurisdiction is limited only to giving suggestions to the Government from time to time on different matters pertaining to national integration.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE EFFECTIVE WORKING OF THE COUNCIL

The National Integration Conference of 1961, has set up the National Integration Council as a continuing body to review matters pertaining to national integration and to make recommendations thereon. But, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the Council did not work as a continuing body, as envisaged, but lapsed into inactivity periodically and was revived only when the communal situation or other conflict situation became very serious. Thus, the Council was revived in effect to serve as a 'crisis management mechanism'. Otherwise, in normal situation, it was left to remain dormant. The basic reason for this has been the lack of political will on the part of the Government, to make proper use of the Council. With the result that the Council could not perform its assigned task to acting as the 'watch-dog' of the process of national integration. It has all but lost its effectivity and purposefulness. That is why, one of its members pointed out that the Council has become merely a formal structure performing ritualistic lip service to national integration, whenever acute crises emerge. Even the present Chairman of the Council has observed that "... in the past this Council has been used as a sort of referral body when there is a serious problem. It is not used on

a regular basis".¹ Therefore, the first important suggestion that one can make, is to emphasize the necessity of its working on a regular basis. There should be regular periodic meeting of the Council, besides special emergency meetings when necessary. The present Chairman expressed the opinion and it was supported by many of the members of the NIC that the Council meetings should be held once every six months. In other words, the Council should meet twice in a year in normal situations. And during its interregnum the Standing Committee should function on a permanent basis. If this is done, the Council may be able to serve the purposes with which it has been set up. This will also fit logically with the assumption that national integration is not a matter of few hours or few years, but, that is a continuous dynamic process that requires continuous vigilance by a regular body.

We have also noted that the Council has been often convened to do a post-mortem exercise. But, if the Council works on a regular basis it can do a pre-survey of the problems of national integration. The obvious benefit will be that the problem can be anticipated, tackled and managed at the initial stage.

1. NIC, Verbatim Record of the Proceedings of the Meeting held at New Delhi on 7th April, 1986, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, p.111.

When the Council begins to work on a permanent basis, its membership should be partially changed every two years. In other words, some of its members, say one third(as in the case of Rajya Sabha), should retire after every two years, and every member should be for a term of six years. This will enable the Council to induct fresh members periodically. Also, its membership should include persons from different voluntary organizations comprising women, youth, social workers engaged in the field of constructive national activity. This will be an exercise towards making the Council a ground assembly of cross-section of public opinions pertaining to the gigantic task of national unity and integrity.

Of course, this should not make the Council an unwieldy body. But, the Council can be energized more effectively through manageable Standing Committees and Working Groups. Standing Committees should cover a defined aspect of integration, like communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism etc., and Working Groups attached to these Standing Committees should do the spade work for the Council. The members of the Working Group should be drawn partly from the Council and partly from outside. This Working Group should serve on the day-to-day basis.

The main function of the Working Group should be to do primary research in the field of national integration. For this, the Working Group will organize seminars, discussions, workshops etc. throughout the country with the purpose of eliciting different opinions and the views pertaining to national integration, and for mobilising citizens for action. This will be a useful exercise because, the question of national integration goes beyond the frontiers of executive thinking and action, and requires public participation as an essential input.

There can be many Working Groups under different Standing Committees. And these Working Groups, when required, should operate cooperatively or jointly. These Working Groups should send their reports with recommendatory notes, to their respective Standing Committees. The Standing Committees will go through the Working Group's reports and thereafter will suggest appropriate measures. The report and recommendations of the Standing Committees should be put before the Council's periodic meeting, where the Council should deliberate over reports and recommendations referred to it by the Standing Committees. The Council, with or without amendment, should then approve the recommendations and this should be considered as the

policy of the NIC on that particular subject.

The Working Group or the Standing Committee should also be entrusted with the task of taking out different enquiries into communal riots, caste animosities, regional movements, and other disturbing issues like Ram Janam Bhoomi - Babri Masjid controversy. The recommendation of the Standing Committee after getting it approved by the Council, should be treated as the national and official policy on those issues.

If during the interregnum of the Council, any communal or caste riots break out, it should be the duty of the Standing Committee to suggest immediate measures to check them.

While reviewing any matters pertaining to national integration, the Standing Committees and its Working Groups should take into account the specific socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions of the problem concerned and suggest measures for its amelioration. Thus, any policy decisions with regard to national integration should be taken only after taking into account the interlinked aspects and the wider dimension of the situation, both in the short-term and the long-term perspectives.

Members of the Standing Committee should be drawn from the Council itself, and it should be fully representative of the total membership of the Council.

Each Standing Committee should be staffed with some official personnel who should perform procedural work, like keeping and maintaining records etc., to facilitate the smooth and effective functioning of the Standing Committee.

The Standing Committees should function in close cooperation and consultations with other agencies, institutions, forums, organizations or commissions engaged in the same field of activities. For example, Committee on Communal Harmony, while framing out a policy matter on the protection and welfare of communal minorities should also consult the Minorities Commission and the Ministry of Welfare. This would help the respective Standing Committees in the task of preparing a national consensus in their respective fields of activities.

In the earlier meetings of the Council it was decided to set up Integration Committees at the State, district and thana levels. Here, it can be suggested that there should be a proper feed back between the Standing Committees and the Committees at the levels of state, district and thanas in the States.

The decisions of the Standing Committees and the Council's resolutions should be given wide publicity. This will help in arousing consciousness among the people

towards national unity and integrity.

One of the members of the Council pointed out that the Council is a diffused body. It lacks capacity for a pin-pointed discussion. Many deviations take place in the Council's meetings. Here it can be suggested that the agenda for the meetings of the Council should be decided by the Standing Committees. The agenda and the purpose of the meetings should be circulated among the members of the Council in advance so that members can get enough time to prepare themselves for the meeting. Also, the members should not make it a forum for airing grievances against each other and each other party, or it should not be reduced to the level of criticizing and abusing each other. The members should strictly stick to the agenda and the theme under discussion.

One of the lacuna in the functioning of the Council is that its recommendations lack executive sanction or even political sanction behind it. Therefore, usually its recommendations are not implemented properly. Its decisions are not constitutionally or legally binding upon the decision-makers. That is why one of its members, Nikhil Chakravarty pointed out that the Council is largely an exercise in futility. The Council's role has been

reduced to passing resolutions and issuing directives without enjoining any compliance. In the first meeting of the Council, Nehru said that "the role of the Council will be entirely advisory and its prestige will mainly derive from the association with it of the Prime Minister, some of the Cabinet Ministers, the Chief Ministers of States and some of the eminent public figures in national life, and the fact of its composition rising above party politics and representing all interests".² Therefore, it was hoped that the representation given to Chief Ministers of all States and some of the Central Ministers, which have a great deal to do with measures for national integration, would ensure its recommendations being given due weight for speedy implementation. But in actual practice, this is not the case. Much of its recommendations are left without being implemented.

From time to time, NIC members had suggested that the Council should be a statutory body to ensure its continuity and to facilitate implementation of its decisions. In this regard, the opinion of the Government that the Council cannot be given executive powers does not seem valid, or logical. Because, when the Council is

2. NIC, Questions and Aspects Relating to Procedure, in papers for the First Meeting of the Council, held on June 20, and June 21, 1968, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, p.9.

entrusted with such an important and onerous task of building national integrity and protecting it from various disruptive tendencies or phenomena emerging from time to time, its recommendations cannot be allowed to remain on paper only. If it is set up under a statute, this will ensure not only the continuity of the Council but also effective implementation of its recommendations. In this regard, the Standing Committee of the NIC can also be entrusted with the task of monitoring the programmes and its implementation. It should collect information regarding the implementations of the Council's decisions from various states and they should be placed before the Council's meetings. On the other hand, the Chief Ministers of States and the respective ministries at the Union level should be made responsible and accountable for the implementation of the decisions of the NIC.

The implementation of its decisions should not merely depend on the State Chief Ministers and on the various Central Ministries, but also on the various agencies (voluntary or non-Governmental) engaged in this field. The statute should also clearly define the scope and function of the Council.

If the above mentioned suggestions are effected, the Council will become a live body with sufficient authority to supervise the major national goal of national integration.

CONCLUSION

National integration is a continuing process of harmonizing socio-cultural diversities and adjusting primordial loyalties, so that they should not be dichotomous or inconsistent with the broader territorial national political loyalty. Integration does not deny the existence of pluralities or diverse group existence, but seeks to coalesce them in a pattern of 'unity in diversity' where both the varieties and similarities can be maintained. In other words, ethnic, religious, cultural, social, and regional identities should not only be made compatible with national identity but they should also ensure composite national unity.

In a competitive democratic set-up and during the course of nation-building, many fissiparous tendencies are bound to emerge which may ruin social cohesion and undermine national unity. Therefore, need for integration is required all the time. Hence, it should be remembered that integration is a continuous process of educating people in the art of community living, based on mutual cooperation and co-ordination, ensuring mutual coexistence.

At the initial stage of nation-building, the problem of national integration is primarily sociological,

i.e. the need to integrate culturally and socially discrete groups within a broader territory thereby establishing national identity among them. And at the later stage of nation-building, the problem becomes basically of a politico-economic nature.

Though regionalism or regional particularism sometimes promotes an inward looking consciousness based on 'homeland' concept or on the concept of 'sons of the soil', which implies discrimination between so-called original inhabitants and immigrants or outsiders, though regionalism is not always pernicious. In fact, regionalism is a legitimate federal phenomenon which includes several things. It implies a search for local identity and its recognition. It seeks legitimization by the system at the socio-cultural level. It is a political movement for the assertion of greater state autonomy or for the restructuring of the Centre-State relations. It is also a politico-economic movement for more developmental resources etc. Regionalism also stands for the structural differentiation, i.e. the creation of different structures at the local/regional levels, which would enhance and maximize the participation of the people in the decision-making process and in the system as a whole. This would check the alienation of any segment, cultural or social, from the broader system and help

in the promotion of national unity and integrity.

The most detrimental and pernicious factor from the perspective of national integration is the growth of religious communalism and communal violence. It is divisive ideology which conceives nationhood exclusively in terms of religious identity. It is negation of secularism. The preamble of the Indian Constitution declares India as a secular State. But, secularism in real practice is construed as 'religious tolerance' or 'equal respect for each religion'. In the name of 'religious tolerance' and 'non-discrimination' between religions we have allowed religion to pervade our social, political and economic life, which has finally resulted in the communalization of the socio-economic and the political process of the country. This has led to the growth of religious fundamentalism, which undermines secular fabric of our polity.

Secularism essentially means and ought to mean the separation of States and polity from religion, and religion from the politico-economic and educational process of the country. Secularism does not negate the existence of religion, but seeks to confine it in the private life of a person. Secularism in another sense is also the negation

of the dogmatic, ascriptive and superstitious value system. To combat this in the process of building a modern rational polity, it is necessary to promote scientific spirit and temper among the people.

The practice of caste-system or casteism is another impediment, which promotes division and inequality in the society. Casteism basically stands for serving sectional and restrictive interests of a particular ascriptive group in the politico-economic processes of the country. At the social level, the integration of the socially and culturally underdeveloped segments like the untouchables and the tribes, etc. with the general society and with the mainstream of national life is also very essential from the perspective of national integration.

Language is intricately linked up with culture, customs and traditions. It is a means of communication, not only for social transaction, but also for transmission of ideas and values, and cultural heritage of a people. Therefore, every person wants to retain his or her language for cultural expression and identity. Language is a powerful basis of 'identification'. Thus, any attempt to impose any language upon a particular linguistic group cause resentment and militancy. Since India is a multi-lingual State, the problem of reconciling even genuine

and legitimate interests of all the language groups is a difficult task. Indeed one of the major problems in creating a viable edifice of national integration stems from the multi-lingual situation of our polity. Therefore, from the perspective of national integration, emphasis should be placed on learning of many languages. The existence of communication gap between two languages or between two linguistically different regions is a major stumbling block in the process of emotional integration. Therefore, it is essential to bridge this gap through sharing of literature and literary forms, content and themes, through transactions and through learning other languages. Also, the three-language formula needs to be implemented effectively.

In order to monitor and check various disruptive tendencies workingⁱⁿ the society, the National Integration Council was constituted in 1961, to work as a permanent 'watch dog' for national integration. It was entrusted with the task of reviewing all matters pertaining to national integration and to suggest measures (both short-term and long-term) thereupon. Though originally envisaged to serve on a regular basis, it worked by fits and starts, lying dormant most of the time. Periodically it has been revived and its meetings were

held only when the communal strifes, caste conflicts and regional conflicts took an ugly turn. In a sense, it was revived to serve only as a 'crisis management mechanism' whose main concern was to suggest some immediate administrative measures to check communal violence or caste-conflicts. Its function has been reduced to perform a 'post-mortem job'. NIC was permitted only to treat problems of national integration at the surface level. It was never given the authority or jurisdiction to approach the problems of national integration in a deeper and systematic manner. Its recommendations mostly remained on paper, and they have never been implemented properly.

The main reason for the non-effectiveness of the National Integration Council is its non-statutory status. Its decisions lack executive or legislative sanctions behind them. Its decisions are not legally binding upon the Government. Therefore, it would be advisable to make the Council a statutory body, which would ensure regularity in its meetings and proper implementation of its decisions. If this is done, then the Council will really become a 'watch dog' of national integration. Otherwise, it will remain a futile exercise.

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