

NATIONAL INTEGRATION
OR
REGIONALISM AND NATIONALISM
OR
INDIA'S UNITY IN DIVERSITY
OR
THE DANGERS OF REGIONALISM

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead, who to himself has never said:

This is my land."

— Sir

Walter Scott

By 'National Integration' is meant an innate sense and an abiding feeling of unity and oneness amongst the constituents of nation. It implies a realization on behalf of all the people living in all country that they have a common past, common memories and common aspirations and ambitions.

India is a great country. It is inhabited by people belonging to different castes, creeds and colours. They speak different languages, dress in different ways and worship different gods.

In spite of this apparently bewildering variety, there is an underlying current of life which keeps us united as one nation. In this great land of ours, ideas have flowed from times immemorial; men have come and gone; there have been wars, strifes and turmoils. Still there is one main current of national life which is called the Indian culture. It has preserved our identity as one nation through the long vistas of history.

Our great sages and teachers have nurtured this oneness by various means. The system of pilgrimage, the rituals involving the use of waters from various rivers, the four 'Maths' in the four corners, the recognition of various

thought currents and their integration, all these and many others were the means to cultivate this oneness.

The active realization of this sense of oneness of heart and soul by each and every national, is national integration. Some pessimistic prophets of doom and foreign rulers started telling us that India was completely disintegrated medley of myriad casts, tribes, religious and language group with no sense of unity. We were told that we were never a nation and that India consisted of several nations and religions. Many of us believed this theory and started fighting for narrow, parochial and regional interests on one pretext or another. All this created conditions of chaos in the country.

Soon after India became free in 1947, we could very well see the seeds of discords and disunity fructifying at various places in the country. Some people started putting caste, religion, tribal and language loyalties above their loyalty to the nation. They started fighting for their own interests. They did not hesitate even from burning buses and trains and damaging public property in their blind parochial passion. The national government had to control such misguided elements. Much still remain to be done. We have to chalk out a programme to infuse a feeling of integration and unity amongst the Masses. This is essential if we wish to make India strong and powerful. The first step in this direction is to realize and identify the basic principle of Indian culture – Indian Nationhood. We should have a unified national policy of education with uniform syllabi and textbooks intended to promote a sense of oneness.

Growing fissiparous tendencies in the country must be controlled on a top priority basis. India is one single country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Assam to Punjab. No region is more important than the other. All the communities must learn to live together in a spirit of co-operation and mutual goodwill.

Recent government investigations have revealed that some foreign government are encouraging and helping the undesirable elements in our country with funds and weapons and are fanning the flames of violence and disruption. Maharashtra, Punjab and Kashmir have been special targets of these elements. Pakistan's open and naked infiltration in Kargil proved the truth of this statement beyond and doubt. Such elements should be singled out well in time and given a deterrent punishment. The national newspapers and periodicals and the radio and television should gear themselves to the needs of the country and inculcate a spirit of unity and integrity amongst the people.

Recently, regionalism has come to dominate several states in the country. Slogans like 'Punjab of Punjabis' 'Maharashtra' for the sons of the soil

only' and the growth of powerful regional parties in states like Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Assam are ominous signals. The state assembly in Jammu and Kashmir has gone to the extent of passing a resolution asking for greater autonomy for the state. We must nip the evil in the bud. Regionalism and parochialism can only lead to the disintegration of the entire country.