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What is national integration. Discuss the challenges of National integration in India.

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**Structure:****1. Introduction- Define National integration- 30 words****2. Challenges of National integration- Diversity, Religion, Regionalism, Casteism, religion, regional disparity etc**

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National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one. This kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

**A host of interrelated factors have disrupted efforts to achieve goals of equality and social justice as well as building of a nation-state. The challenges of National integration in India are:**

**Diversity of Constituents:**

- India is a heterogeneous society. It is made of a number of diverse groups. The first potential threat to the Indian nation state lies in this plurality.
- The Indian society was and is divided in terms of religion, caste, language and ethnic origin.
- The British were able to somewhat control the diverse groups by following the policy of pitting one group against the other.
- But the divisive tendencies were sharply manifested even during the nationalist movement when different groups apparently united to remove the British rule from India.
- One of the more serious challenges that Indian national leaders in India face even now is how to integrate the interests of the divergent group.
- Each of them has its own distinctive aspirations, history, and way of life.
- Attempts to minimize confrontation between conflicting groups do not always succeed. As we have already seen, the adoption of an egalitarian model of society is one important strategy to contain the divisive tendencies. It is, of course, necessary that these divisions are not allowed to threaten the nation – state.

**Regionalism and Cultural Identities:**

- Some of the social elements having their separate cultural identity want to preserve it even at a political level and for this purpose some of these segments want further reorganization of the states.'
- We find that national politics in our country is still marked by emergence of regional nationalities.
- This is quite evident in the formation of States on linguistic basis. It is also evident in demands by some regional identities such as the Gorkha for Gorkhaland, for example.
- Creation of Jharkhand State is the outcome of the demands by some tribals. Similarly, the Gorkha hill Council-was created in 1988.
- Despite the early gains of consolidation of the nation – state, diverse cultural identities asserted themselves.
- One example of this is the opposition in the Southern States to Hindi as the national language. Another example is the demand for reorganization of states.

**Casteism:**

- Casteism has always played a dirty role in matters of politics and reservation policy and has created a wide gulf between different segments of society.
- Unfortunately, the caste system has been recognized by the framers of the Constitution by providing a protective discrimination to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Though the reservation was made for a limited period, it is being extended from time to time. '
- The reservation of seats in the educational institutions and jobs on the caste basis has strengthened the caste feeling and resulted in the possibilities of new types of inequalities and caste conflict.
- As casteism is considered a social evil and caste ideology does not go well with the egalitarian model of a socialist society, role of caste in national politics is viewed as a necessary evil.
- It is seen a factor which poses a challenge to the task of nation-building.
- All the same in the absence of an alternative basis for people to come together, caste continues to play a decisive role in Indian national politics.

**Linguism:**

- Due to linguistic and regional loyalties the national feeling gradually erodes.
- Linguistic tensions are manifested in the borders which are bilingual.

- For example, Goans are divided on the basis of Konkani and Marathi Languages.
- There is also conflict between Marathi and Kannada-speaking people in Belgaum.
- Language has become, especially since Independence, a powerful source of political articulation. For instance in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, language sentiments have been propagated among the people for getting power within State politics.
- The people of different linguistic groups who are concentrated in a State seem to think only in terms of interests of their own States.
- This undermines consideration of national issues and causes parochial feelings.
- The erosion of national feeling due to linguistic loyalties threatens the sovereignty of our country.

**Communalism:**

- Broadly defined, communalism refers to the tendency of any socio-religious group to maximize its economic, political and social strength at the cost of other groups.
- This tendency runs counter to the notion of the secular nation – state that India purports to be.
- There is historical evidence to prove that various religious communities in India have coexisted peacefully through time. Of course, there is also evidence that reflects the conflict between religious communities.
- The most well known clashes have been between Hindus and Muslims.
- One of the major social problems of India in the 80s has been the communal divide problem. When one group asserts its interests and identity at the cost of another group, the communal divides emerge.
- Some cities such as Moradabad, Meerut, Aligarh and Boroda etc. has appeared as the centers of communal riots.

**Social Inequalities:**

- In every society there is a system of social stratification.
- Social stratification refers to inequality in society based on unequal distribution of goods, services, wealth, power, prestige, duties, rights, obligations and privileges.
- Take for example, the social inequalities created by the caste system.
- Being a hereditary and endogamous system, the scope for social mobility is very little.
- Social privileges and financial and educational benefits are by and large accessible to

only to upper caste groups. Social inequalities have a disintegrating effect on the process of nation-building.

**Regional Disparities:**

- The unequal development of different regions of India has negatively affected the character of national integration.
- The unequal development has become the major cause of many social movements after the independence.
- For instance, the Jharkhand movements which involved tribal groups from Bihar, M.P. Bengal and Orissa stresses the backwardness of the region among other issues. While demanding a separate State, people, involved in this movement argue that the rich natural resources of the area have been
- The dissatisfaction caused by the perceived and / or actual threat of material deprivation has led people to think that the socio-economic development of their region is not possible if they continue to be a part of the Indian Union.
- Thus the regional disparities in terms of socio-economic development have at times proved to be a threat to the concept of united nation-state.

**Ethnonationality and Ethnic Conflicts:**

- Ethnonationalism and ethnic conflict has hindered national integration.
- Whereas the modern concept of nationalism is closely linked with the concept of nation-state, scholars have described another prevailing notion of nationalism such as religious nationalism, ethnonationalism etc.
- Although nationhood is denied to the Nagas, the Nagas understand themselves as nation in the sense of ethnonationality. The concept of “ethnonationalism” best defines the self-understanding of the ethnic groups in Northeast India in the various forms of their struggle for identity.
- Ethnonationalism is a phenomenon of political movement launched on the basis of ethnic identity. It is to mention that the nation-building came to be challenged by the eruption of ethnic conflicts.

**Role of Political Parties:**

- The regional political parties play a dirty role in exploiting the regional feelings of the people.
- Regional political parties formed on the basis of linguism at times form the

Government.

- The States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Mizoram, Jammu & Kashmir may be cited as examples in this regard.
- It has been experienced that such political parties in power often complicate the Centre-State relationship.

