

**“IDENTITY CRISIS AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NORTH-  
EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM”: A  
CRITICAL STUDY**

**Bodising Narah, (M.A., M.Phil., NET)**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Education  
Purbanchal College, Silapathar  
Assam (India)

**ABSTRACT**

*Generally, identity can refer to a social category defined by being a part of a certain community and its characteristics, in which an individual takes pride in being associated with or biological features that an individual takes, which might be naturally endowed, having social consequences. An individual's self-identity plays a very important role in a society. It is through this conception that a person associates oneself with society.*

*The Northeast is considered to be one of the most densely ethnically diverse regions in the world. Northeast India and specifically Assam is the homeland of different ethnic groups with a variety of cultures and speaking different languages and dialects. Ethnic identity aspirations and claims are capable of influencing, inspiring and mobilizing communities in pursuit of various political agendas. This is the political history of the region and continues to be so. Caste politics are largely absent in the Northeast, especially in Assam unlike in the rest of the country. So, in our state like in Assam the identity crisis is deeply play the role as obstacle for the different people.*

*The feeling of oneness among all the people of the nation is called National Integration. It is nothing but achievement of unity in diversity. National integration includes political, economic, social and emotional integration. National integration aims at unifying the people and not making them conform to one pattern. It is a harmonious and healthy blend of sentiments. So, for the development of a state or development of a country, the role of national integration is very necessary. Specially, for North-East India, this matter is very serious.*

*In this paper ‘**descriptive method**’ is used as methodology and an attempt has been made to discuss on identity crisis and national integration in North-East India especially in*

*Assam. Also required information are collected from different secondary sources like - Research articles, Books, Journals and other related sources.*

**Introduction:** Identity crisis and national integration is the most significant aspect in North-East India as well as overall India. Without national integration we cannot think about the development of a state as well as development of a country.

Ethnic identity as a collective phenomenon provides for a political platform, but it is inherently located in the individual identity. "Identity crisis", being a situation in which an individual perceives certain aspects of oneself which he/she dislikes. North-East India, especially Assam is one of the most disturbing states because of different ethnic identity with a variety of cultures and speaking different languages and dialects. Inter-ethnic conflicts and struggle for identity among the ethnic groups too are not new but it is now seen occurring in a more and more prevailing way. The cause of it can be said as over politicalization of the factors and over population that migrate from different places of India as well as from Bangladesh. Today, the indigenous people of Assam have become more and more educated and conscious for their own identity in respect of their languages and cultures. Now, the different ethnic identity of Assam thinks that if they do not try for their identity of languages and cultures, it will be lost (extinguished) in a near future.

On the other hand National Integration means the feeling of oneness among all the people of the nation. It is nothing but achievement of unity in diversity. National integration includes political, economic, social and emotional integration. National integration aims at unifying the people and not making them conform to one pattern. Instead of aiming at lifeless uniformity in thought and action, it gives the progressive realization that there can be similarities among differences. It is a harmonious and healthy blend of sentiments.

**Methodology:** The fulfilment of a study work as well as research work is mainly depends upon the adaptation of an appropriate study method. The present study is mainly based on *Descriptive* method, which provides a method of critical study. Also methodology in this seminar paper basically secondary data collected from various sources like - *Thesis, Books, Dissertation, Internet, Newspapers* etc.

The present study deals with the Identity Crisis and National Integration in North-East India especially in Assam.

**Elaboration and Explanation of the Critical Study :**

Northeast India and specifically Assam is the homeland of different ethnic groups with a variety of cultures and speaking different languages and dialects. Ethnicity stands for a group's way of conceptualizing and relating to society. It welds together individuals who share a history, culture and community, who have an amalgam of language, religion and regional belonging in common and perhaps most critical of all, they feel that they come from the same stock.

**Identity Crisis in Assam** : Assam is one of the most disturbing states because of different ethnic identity with a variety of cultures and speaking different languages and dialects. Present day Assam roughly covers the area ruled by the 'native' ethnic identity, the Ahoms, Bodos, Mising, Koch, Matak and Chutiya and different branches of Kacharis such as Dimas, Sonowal and Thengal. Opinions on the nation today range from those who subscribe to the view that there is no Assamese identity to those who claim that such an identity to those who think that it is in process of formation or those who say that it is not restricted only to the native speakers of the Assamese language but embrace all those who come within the broader fold of Assamese culture and those who think that it belongs only to the ethnic Assamese.

The Northeast is considered to be one of the most densely ethnically diverse regions in the world. Ethnic identity aspirations and claims are capable of influencing, inspiring and mobilizing communities in pursuit of various political agendas. This is the political history of the region and continues to be so. Caste politics are largely absent in the Northeast, unlike in the rest of the country. Here politics is built around tribes, though nationalities, Indian and from neighbouring countries, are sometimes summoned into the political crucible.

Tribal politics in the region differs from tribal politics elsewhere because in other states tribals are in a minority, unlike in the Northeast, where tribes are in a minority only in Assam, Tripura and Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram have tribal majorities. Even in Assam, tribal politics have led to the formation of autonomous district councils. In other states of the country, tribes are low value groups compared to the dominant populations. Belonging to a majority group gives tribal leaders much more political clout and leverage.

However, the social minorities within Assam felt discriminated against. They struggled against the British colonialist as well as the Indian dominant groups among whom were the ethnic Assamese. The dominant classes in mainland India as well as in Assam thought that this colonial history of separation and isolation from the rest of India created a problem for the national formation and integration of independent India. In the region, a sense of incompatibility grew into one of resentment against being made a part of India, and an anti-India sentiment emerged among some communities. Thus, the process of alienation did not stop after independence. To deal with this feeling of discrimination, the Constitution of India contained a special provision in the form of the Sixth Schedule for the administration of the “tribal” areas. It was meant to protect their communities in the Hill areas of the Northeast. Under it, the “tribal” areas in the Northeast were divided into two parts, Part A and Part B. Part A has autonomous Districts administered by the Government of Assam, with a limited representation in the State Legislative Assembly and in the National Parliament. Part B was administered by the Governor of Assam acting as Agent of the President of India. The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District, the Garo Hills District, the Lushai Hills District, the Naga Hills District, the North Cachar Hills District, and the Mikir Hills District were placed in Part A and the North East Frontier Tract, the Balipara Frontier Tract, the Tirap Frontier Tract, the Abor Hill and Mishmi Hills Districts and the Naga Tribal Area came under Part B. Tripura and Manipur were made special administrative regions under the control of the central government. The reorganization of the states on linguistic terms further aggravated the scene. The tribal areas under the 6th Schedule got statehood one by one. Thus, Assam was broken up and Northeast India became 8 states.

On the other hand, identity assertions in their chauvinistic expressions can subvert democratic processes and have the potential to undermine stable power structures. Ethnic identity struggles are rarely waged by isolated communities, but by politicized communities already exposed to modernity. Many of these struggles are to gain equality and respect within the larger political framework and against competitors who are perceived to threaten the well-being or progress.

A positive ethnic identity has been linked to happiness and a sense of well-being. Numerous studies show many positive outcomes associated with strong and stable ethnic identities, including increased self-esteem and improved mental health. We need more leaders to inculcate and tap positive ethnic identities for the good of the tribal communities.

**Significance of National Integration:** In simple words, we know that national integration means the inculcation of spirit and feeling that would help react in terms of oneness irrespective of caste, colour, creed, language, region or religion of the people concerned. It implies social, political, economic, linguistic and cultural unity. It is a feeling of oneness which transcends all groups or cultural differences and synthesis the different religions, castes, linguistic communities into and compacts whole.

National integration is of paramount for the security of the country in a nation like India where one finds people with different religions, castes, creeds and languages. While variety enriches and helps the development of a country, misguided and unscrupulous hands sometimes misuse it to threaten the very existence of the nation. India is the second biggest democratic country in the world. It is surrounded by theocratic, totalitarian and war-monger countries. These are great menace to her security and integrity. Without national unity these external threat and challenge cannot be met successfully. National unity is a production for our national progress in all directions. The need and importance of national integration therefore, cannot be over emphasized national integration, can be achieved through a sound system of education of right from the nursery to university. A national system of education always aims at national welfare.

**Obstacles of National Integration:** North-East India with special reference to Assam, face the various obstacles of national integration. These obstacles are - *Communalism, Casteism, Regionalism, Language Issue, Economic Inequality, Narrow politics, Lack of leadership, and Prejudice and Fanaticism* etc. Above mentioned obstacles are clearly elaborated as follows -

**a) Communalism:** In North-East Indian specially in Assam ‘Communalism’ is one of the important obstacles on the way of national integration. The various commercial regional, linguistic and tribal groups and parties are trying their best to snatch the fruit of independence to satisfy their own selfish desires. Therefore, the greatest task before in Assam is how the people should be integrated into a national solidarity and how they are to be sealed into a fraternity of national integration.

**b) Casteism:** In North-East India specially in Assam, there are various castes living together. So, casteism is another obstacle in the way of national integration for Assam. In ancient time Indian society was divided into a number of castes, sub-castes and sub-castes based on birth. The people of high castes develop a feeling superiority and the low caste

inferiority among themselves. As a result of these feelings, a kind of social civil war is raging all over the state as well as the country.

*c) Economic Inequality:* Economic inequality is one of the main causes of social tensions specially for Assamese people. At one end are those millions who suffer from poverty and on the other those who live a life of economic sufficiency. So, attempts should be made for the removal of economic disparities through intelligent planning in order to integrate our nation.

*d) Regionalism:* In North-East Indian especially in Assam 'Regionalism' is one of the important obstacles on the way of national integration. Conflicts and rivalry take place between different States and also within the State. Political parties are formed on regional basis who look to the interests of their own region. Now there is a conflict in the North-Eastern regions of India. The people of Assam have started agitation against the outsiders living in these States. They demand a total withdrawal of these outsiders from their native States. These regional considerations go against national integration.

*e) Lack of Leadership:* In our state i.e., Assam, for want of ideal leadership, we are facing problems of communalism, regionalism, castesim which works against national integration. Hence education should take the lead to produce ideal leaders. Leadership is a quality by which an individual. Good leaders desire high praise and appreciation as they have qualities of organization and planning.

*f) Prejudice and Fanaticism:* Generally, failure in integration arises because of liberal mind in our age and decline of liberal mind and development of prejudice and fanaticism among the people. They also lack tolerance and critical judgment. Our people do not have sufficient knowledge about cultures, religions and ways of life of others and become suspicious of them, and hate them. Besides, their exists economic and social inequality. This goes against the development of a healthy community life.

#### **National Integration through Education:**

For the people of North-East India especially for Assam can develop national integration through education. Specially, education helps in the fostering of national integration by inculcating the true patriotic outlook and fashioning the national character of the younger generation. It helps them in comprehending and assimilating the national culture, national ideals and national greatness. This complex sentiment of patriotism is to be developed by the process of education which will result in emotional cohesion in the nation.

Education also helps in the cultural integration by improving the inter-state understanding, mutual cultural appreciation of literary works, exchange of cultural delegations, exchange of scholars, and celebration of cultural festivals in common.

**Conclusion:** From the above critical study about of the “*Identity Crisis and National Integration in North-East India with special reference to Assam*”, now I would like to conclude that Assam is mini India in respect of different languages and cultures of the people residing in Assam. Now the different ethnic groups of Assam are in fear and apprehension for their language and culture. Due to dominating role played by the migrants in different parts of Assam, they think that they may lose their identity at a time. At the same time the smaller and weak ethnic group of people think that they are being exploited by the strong and dominating ethnic groups. Now, the movement for ethnicity crisis is seen in a more forceful way in Bodoland, Karbi Anglong, in Goalpara by Rabha and in Mising, Deuri, Sonowal Kachari dominated areas of Assam.

On the other hand national integration aims at unifying the people and not making them conform to one pattern. Politically it has attained integration soon after the attainment of independence and the acceptance of democratic ideology is passing its way to its realizations in social, economic and cultural field. This is the very serious as matter. Because nation building is not possible without recognizing the specificities each component. Anyway, through national integration we can acquire the unity of the people as well as unity of the society. Therefore, without unity of the society or people we can think about of a development of a state as well as of a country. So, in our North-East India especially in Assam, for the overall development of the state the national integration is very necessary.

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