



Research Paper

Language Problems in Indian Democracy

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ABSTRACT

Democracy means rule by the people to ensure that every citizen takes part in the decision-making process either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. India is the largest democracy in the world. There are some measures that can be taken to sustain a true parliamentary democracy in India. English is spoken as the first or second language by a very large number of people in different parts of the world. In this paper, the author has attempted to study and analyze the existing democratic setup in India to use languages and suggest necessary reforms in order to ensure a sustainable democracy in India.

Received 09 September, 2021; Revised: 22 September, 2021; Accepted 24 September, 2021 © The author(s) 2021. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people." -Abraham Lincoln

Democracy means rule by the people to ensure that every citizen takes part in the decision-making process either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. India is the largest democracy in the world. In the last more than seven decades, it has worked successfully well to some extent. But in modern India it has to face many challenges that need to be tackled in order to ensure true democracy. These challenges may include: social, political, economic inequalities, poverty, unemployment, Illiteracy, ignorance, casteism, communalism, population explosion, regionalism, corruption, terrorism and use of proper language. Therefore, India needs to develop new proposals to reform democracy. The Right to Information Act is the best example that serves as a watchdog against abuse of democratic principles. The challenges to the democracy may be tackled by way of movements of activist or by the politically conscious citizens. There are some measures that can be taken to sustain a true parliamentary democracy in India. It includes achieving 100% literacy, educating the masses, ensuring better protection of fundamental rights, and to ensure freedom of press, use of language etc. In this paper, the author has attempted to study and analyze the existing democratic setup in India to use languages and suggest necessary reforms in order to ensure a sustainable democracy in India.

International Status

English is spoken as the first or second language by a very large number of people in different parts of the world. In some countries English is the first language (mother tongue) e.g. the U.K., the U.S.A., Canada and Australia. In Commonwealth countries like India, English is used as an additional language, i.e., English along with the various native languages of the country, is used for various purposes.

English is a foreign tongue left over from the British Raj. English is used fluently only by a small, privileged segment of the population. The role of English in public life and governmental affairs constitutes an effective bar to social mobility and further democratization.

National Status

www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/india-current-population.html

- xi
Politics of India, Retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_India.
- xii
Ibid.
- xiii
Ibid.
- xiv
Ibid.
- xv
Ibid.
- xvi
AIR 1973 SC 1461.
- xviii
Kumar Hemant, 2013, Ban on Opinion Polls: Boon or Bane, Supreme Court Must Clear the Air, Lawyer's Update, Vol XIX, Part 11, November 2013 issue, at p.18.
- xix
Ibid, at p

Many languages are used in India. For the speakers of the country's myriad tongues to function within a single administrative unit requires some medium of common communication. Central government policy on the question has been necessarily equivocal. The vested interests proposing a number of language policies have made a decisive resolution of the "language question" all but impossible. There are 22 major languages in India, written in 13 different scripts, with over 720 dialects. The official Indian languages are Hindi (with approximately 420 million speakers) and English, which is also widely spoken. 41% of the population speaks Hindi as their mother tongue. Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, and Tamil rank next, each the mother tongue of about 4 to 5 percent of the population. Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, and Oriya are claimed by between 2 and 3 percent of the population. Bhojpuri, Punjabi, and Assamese are used by 1 to 2 percent. All other languages are used by less than 1 percent each. Unity in diversity is the true essence of democracy in India.

Hypothesis

Language is essential for every human being in social life for communication. Learners learn language for various purposes in life can be achieved according to their needs. English, Hindi and regional language (Mother Tongue) are essential for social and professional life.

Objectives

- 1) To use any language in democratic country like India
- 2) To acquire language skills by practice
- 3) To respect all languages of India
- 4) To use languages for the national integration

Views, Use and Acceptance of Languages in Indian Democracy

As a proverb has it, "Every two miles the water changes, every four miles the speech."

The Indian constitution recognizes official languages. Articles 343 to 351 address the use of Hindi, English, and regional languages for official purposes, with the aim of a nationwide use of Hindi while guaranteeing the use of minority languages at the state and local levels. Hindi has been designated India's official language, although many difficulties to its official use exist.

The teaching of Hindi and English is compulsory in most states and union territories. Twenty-two languages are legally recognized by the constitution for various political, educational, and other purposes. They are Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. Numerous other languages are recognized by individual states but not officially recognized by the central government. Indeed, some state borders are based on linguistic lines. In the twentieth century, radio, television, and the print media have fostered standardization of regional dialects. Linguistic standardization has contributed to ethnic or regional differentiation insofar as language has served as a cultural marker. Mass communication forces the adoption of a single standard regional tongue.

Many Indian nationalists originally intended that Hindi would replace English, which is the language of British rule (1757-1947), as a medium of common communication. Both Hindi and English are extensively used, and each has its own supporters. Native speakers of Hindi, who are concentrated in North India, contend that English is a relic from the colonial past and spoken by only a small fraction of the population. So English is

hopelessly elitist and unsuitable as the nation's official language. Proponents of English argue, in contrast, that the use of Hindi is unfair because it is a liability for those Indians who do not speak it as their native tongue. They say that at least English represents an equal handicap for Indians of every region. Sometimes mutual intelligibility is the criterion: if the speakers can understand each other, even though with some difficulty, when they speak the same language with different dialects.

As drafted, the constitution provided that Hindi and English were to be the languages of communication for the central government until 1965, when the switch to Hindi was mandated. The Official Languages Act of 1963, pursuing this mandate, said that Hindi would become the sole official national language in 1965. English, however, would continue as an "associate additional official language." After ten years, a parliamentary committee was to consider the situation and whether the status of English should continue if the knowledge of Hindi among peoples of other native languages had not progressed sufficiently. The act, however, was ambiguous about whether Hindi could be imposed on unwilling states by 1975. In 1964 the Ministry of Home Affairs requested all central ministries to state their progress on the switch to Hindi and their plans for the period after the transition date in 1965. The news of this directive led to massive riots and self-immolations in Tamil Nadu in late 1964 and early 1965, leading the central government, and then run by the Congress, to back away from its stand. A conference of Congress leaders, cabinet ministers, and chief ministers of all the states was held in New Delhi in June 1965. Non-Hindi-speaking states were assured that Hindi would not be imposed as the sole language of communication between the central government and the states as long as even one state objected. In addition, any of the Scheduled Languages could be used in taking examinations for entry into the central government services.

The States Reorganization Commission was formed in 1953 to study the problems involved in redrawing state boundaries. They viewed language, economic viability and geographic realities. The commission issued its report in 1955; the government's request for comments from the populace generated a flood of petitions and letters. The final bill, passed in 1956 and amended several times in the 1960s, by no means resolved even the individual states' linguistic problems.

Even regions with a long history of agitation for a linguistic state sometimes have found the actual transition less than smooth. For example, proponents began lobbying for a Telugu-speaking state in the early twentieth century. In 1956 the central government formed a single state, Andhra Pradesh, composed of the predominantly Telugu-speaking parts of what in British India had been the Madras Presidency and the large polyglot princely state of Hyderabad. Although more than 80 percent of the residents (some 53 million people as of 1991) of Andhra Pradesh speak Telugu, like most linguistic states it has a sizable linguistic minority. In this case, the minority consists of Urdu speakers centered in the state's capital, Hyderabad, where nearly 40 percent (some 1.7 million people in 1991) of the population speak that language. Linguistic affinity did not form a firm basis for unity between the two regions from which the state had been formed because they were separated by cultural and economic differences. Although there were riots in the late 1960s and early 1970s in support of the formation of two separate states, the separation did not occur. At the end, Telangana State was formed on 2 June 2014. Telangana is the 29th state of India.

II. CONCLUSION

English continues to serve as the language of prestige. Efforts to switch to Hindi or other regional tongues encounter stiff opposition both from those who know English well and whose privileged position requires proficiency in that tongue and from those who see it as a means of upward mobility. Partisans of English also maintain it is useful and indeed necessary as a link to the rest of the world, that India is lucky that the colonial period left a language that is now the world's predominant international language in the fields of culture, science, technology, and commerce. They hold, too, that widespread knowledge of English is necessary for technological and economic progress and that reducing its role would leave India a backwater in world affairs. Only around 3 percent of the population is truly fluent in both English and an Indian language. By necessity, a substantial minority is able to speak two Indian languages; even in the so-called linguistic states, there are minorities who do not speak the official language as their native tongue and must therefore learn it as a second language. Many tribal people are bilingual. Rural-urban migrants are frequently bilingual in the regional standard language as well as in their village dialect. Different languages often correspond with different customs, dress, food and cultural expression such as dance and music. Since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, regional languages, such as Bengali, Punjabi, and Marathi, have become relatively standardized and are now used throughout their respective states for most levels of administration, business, and social intercourse. Each is associated with a body of literature. British rule was an impetus for the official codification of these regional tongues. British colonial administrators and missionaries learned regional languages and often studied their literatures, and their translations of English-language materials and the Bible encouraged the development of written, standard languages. To provide teaching materials, prose compositions, grammars, and textbooks were often commissioned and, in some cases, were closer to everyday speech than was

the standard literary language. Industrialization, modernization, and printing gave a major boost to the vocabulary and standardization of regional tongues, especially by making possible the wide dissemination of dictionaries.

Now-a-days in India, though we have accepted Hindi as our national language, it is not fully supported by all the states. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "If you push out English, Does Hindi fully take its place? I hope it will. I am sure it will. But I wish to avoid the danger of one unifying factor fully taking its place. In that event, there will be a gap, a hiatus". The creation of any such hiatus or gap must be avoided at all costs. It is very vital to do so in the interest of the unity of the country. It is this that leads me to the conclusion that English is likely to have an important place in future. English is essential for the national progress, but New Education Policy focuses on multilingualism. The priority is given to regional languages which are the identification of our culture and tradition. It still leads to "Unity in diversity".

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