



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

INDIA'S ENDLESS LINGUISTIC VARIETIES: FROM HINDI TO TAMIL AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a cardinal role in communication and relationship building and creating a sense of community among human beings. It is also considered as a primary tool for expressing something to someone. There are around 6,500 spoken languages worldwide, which act as a medium for communication and to express to the other person or group. Communication is the key component of any society and language is a crucial aspect of that.¹

In the context of our country, we can say that it is full of linguistic varieties. There are around 121 languages spoken in India by different groups. There are several other languages spoken in India that are not encompassed in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution. Each state in India has its own mother tongue, and there are almost 60 languages whose number of speakers are almost more than one million. With more than 1400 million people in India and usage of thousands of languages, India can be said as a multilingual nation. This is also the beauty of our country, as well as trouble for the unity of our country.

DIVERSITY IN LINGUISTICS AS A DISTRESS TO OUR COUNTRY

India is called as a “tower of veritable languages”, because of the nature of diversity and as a land with many tongues. In the early 1950s, the states of India were reorganised on a linguistic basis, as a result, the dwellers of a particular state speak a particular language. At present the linguistic problem is becoming an acute threat to the nation². Most of the time, linguistic threats are being posed in the areas which are bilingual. The area of Belgaum always has conflict between the people speaking in Marathi and people speaking in Kannada, and Assam is confronted with Bengali and Assamese. Although Hindi has been recognised as a national language, these activities have promoted bitter hostilities and animosity, and rancor in the mind of people, specially in South India. Language problem has never been as intensely felt as it is

¹ ‘Language: The Essence of Culture’ (*Greenheart International*) <<https://greenheart.org/blog/greenheart-international/language-the-essence-of->

culture/#:~:text=Language%20is%20one%20of%20the,in%20a%20number%20of%20ways.> accessed 11 July 2023

² 'Essay on Linguistic Diversity in India' (*Your Article Library*, 11 December 2013) <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/language/essay-on-linguistic-diversity-in-india/4030#google_vignette> accessed 11 July 2023 today. There have been anti-Hindi imposition agitations happening in the Southern part of the country, especially in Tamil Nadu. This agitation has been there since the start of the 20th century and it embodies several riots, protests, and political movements, concerning the official status of Hindi in the State.

The first anti-Hindi agitation took place in 1937 when the Indian National Congress introduced the compulsory teaching of Hindi in the school of Madras Presidency. This was immediately opposed by the opposition party and many other people in the state. In the late 1960s, a huge agitation took place between the agitating students and Congress party members because of the official decision of switching over to Hindi as the official language of the State. The riots spread all over the State and continued for over two months followed by lathi charge, police firing, arson, and lootings. The agitation was of such a nature that the Government called the paramilitary forces to control the situation in the State and it also included the deaths of about 70 people including 2 policemen.³

The mother tongue of India is Hindi, but still, there is strong opposition to Hindi in Southern India. The opposition is of such a nature that if the names of banks, Railway stations, or any public places are written in Hindi, then there is turbulence in that place. Due to this reason, the citizens of rest of the India do not feel comfortable in Southern India.

Recently, when Government planned to introduce a new education policy in the country and recommended adding Hindi to primary education, there was a sharp rejoinder in the southern states. The Government immediately informed that this was not compulsory. This attitude is not only present in the Southern States but also to some extent in Maharashtra's Marathi, Odisha's Oriya, and West Bengal's Bengali. This not only hampers the linguistic unity of the country but also diminishes the internal integrity of the Country.

EFFECT OF LINGUISM IN A STATE

Linguism in India gained a spark at the time of the freedom struggle. The prominent persons and freedom fighters thought that dividing the States on the basis of Britisher's road map was not an appropriate idea, so they decided to divide the States on a linguistic basis, which created serious problems in the upcoming years. Not only this created problems for the people residing

³ 'Anti-Hindi Agitations of Tamil Nadu' (*Wikipedia*, 9 July 2023) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Hindi_agitations_of_Tamil_Nadu> accessed 11 July 2023

in that state, but also it hampered the Nation as a whole. Some of the serious problems created by linguism in a State are: -

- It increased regionalism in the state because the people of different linguistic who are concentrated in the state seems to think only for their own state. This also tends to promote the local identity; thus, it has created distinctiveness among the people. These regional differences created has created a huge loss of national

integrity.

- Linguism has led to the formation of regional political parties. These political parties often play a decisive role in forming Government at the state level. The forming of political parties on a linguistic basis creates the problem of political instability and thus crumbles center-state relations.⁴
- Linguism results in the persecution of linguistic minorities in the state. This creates complications and disturbances in the nation and this gives rise to degradation in the unity of the nation. This also erodes the national loyalty of the people in the state, people tend to think more about regional gains and not about national interest. This not only creates disturbances between the center and the state but also between different states.
- Linguism also poses a threat to the sovereignty of the nation. People have become self-centered and they do not think about the nation's prosperity, rather they think about their state's prosperity. In many administrative offices also, the regional language is used for their functioning, where it casts a problem for the non-residents of that region. Like in Odisha high court, many times the judicial proceedings are taken up in the regional language (Oriya). This creates a lot of confusion in the mind of people who are not the resident of that region.
- Another main consequence of linguism is the demand for a separate state by the linguistic minorities of the region. This demand is mainly instigated by the selfish motive of the politicians, they demand for the separation of state on the basis of linguistic lines. These demands by the politicians and linguistic minorities of the state create problems for the concerned state and for the centre on a higher note.⁵

⁴ 'Consequences of Linguistic Division of States - 1the Freedom Fighters Felt That the British System' (*Studocu*) <<https://www.studocu.com/in/document/kannur-university/indian-history/consequences-of-linguistic-division-of-states/31038388>> accessed 11 July 2023

⁵ 'Essay on Linguistic Diversity in India' (*Your Article Library*, 11 December 2013) <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/language/essay-on-linguistic-diversity-in-india/4030#google_vignette> accessed 11 July 2023

NATIONAL LANGUAGE AS A NATIONAL UNITY

The use of a national language is the symbol of national unity. The viewpoint of the framers of the Indian constitution was to achieve national unity through national language. N.G Ranga stated that "I think the function of a national language should be to bring about a national feeling-which we lack so much due to the vast diversity and everything". This sentiment of

N.G Ranga was not shared by everyone and thus it gave rise to lengthy discussions concerning the things which could be declared as a "national". For example: making one religion a national religion would be an unthinkable idea, which will give rise to lots of chaos and riots in the nation.⁶ There are many riots already happening in the name of religion and declaring a religion as a national religion of the country would have a huge impact upon the peace and unity of the nation. Till date, there have been around 19 major riots in India on a linguistic basis and an average of around 125 casualties happen every year due to these riots and linguistic tensions in the country.

MEASURES FOR COPING THE CONSEQUENCE OF LINGUIISM

Developing a national language for the country would be an acceptable idea, but it can create a lot of disturbance in the country as discussed above. Though there is no national language in the Republic of India, Article 343(1) of the Indian Constitution mentions that “The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script”. Another measure would be banning the local regional political parties that try to exploit the sentiments of people for the separation of state on a linguistic basis. Banning the local regional political parties would do a job to some extent.

CONCLUSION

India’s nature of endless linguistic variety is a special feature in itself. It provides the source of expressing the views in a different way and in a most simplified way. By implementing the approach of Hindi as a national language of the country, not only will it cater to the needs of individuals in different regions, but it will create a sense of national unity in the country. It will help to create a future where the integrity and unity of the nation will shine in the entire world.

⁶ ‘A Brief Background of the Language Issue in India’ (*Department of Linguistics - Home*)
<<https://www.ling.upenn.edu/~jason2/papers/natlang.htm>> accessed 11 July 2023

