

Language Problem

PIVOTAL ISSUES IN INDIAN
EDUCATION.

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Language Problem

Historical Perspective. The Linguistic Picture of India. Complexity of the Language Problem. Which Language should be the Medium of Instruction at the Various Levels ? Which Language should be the Official Language of the Union ? Which Language should be the link Language? What should be the place of English? The Three Language Formula. What Needs to be Done ? Summary. Evaluation.

"The language problem had become a 'hump' in India's progress in the field of education. The only way to get over this (hump) is to put this controversy behind us and take clear and unequivocal decisions and implement them in a sustained manner."

Dr Triguna Sen

"Language is the armoury of the human mind and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests."

Coleridge

THE language problem has been a perennial trouble-spot in our educational history. The issue is so mixed up with fads and fanaticism and so vitiated with action and reaction over the years that it has shaken the whole country. It is further complicated by the fact that it is inextricably interwoven with politics and sentiments. We hear and read of noisy discussions in Parliament and the State Assemblies, strikes, and protests in colleges and universities, 'bandhs' and 'ghe-raos' in big cities, rioting and arson in different parts of the country, over this baffling question. As a matter of fact, the language question has remained the most complex and intractable problem since Independence and is virtually a headache for educationists, politicians and even ordinary people.

The main point at issue is that it is the political decision in regard to the official language which is going to regulate the nature and

number of languages to be taught in educational institutions. Naturally, therefore, a bold, clear, definite and final formation of the state policy, in regard to language is as much needed today as ever.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. *The roots of the problem* : The roots of the language problem in India go back to 1835 when on Macaulay's recommendations English was made the main language of study and the medium of instruction after the primary stage. The major motive of introducing English into India was to create an English knowing minority which would be cut off from the rest of India and remain loyal to the British for at least a century. In other words, this was the first application of a 'Divide and Rule' policy which the British had so successfully employed resulting in the partition of the subcontinent.

2. *Knowledge of English made essential for entry to Government service* : In 1844, Lord Hardinge declared the knowledge of English essential for entry to Government Service. No wonder the entire education field was pervaded by a sense of Englishness.

3. *Vernacular substitute English as medium of instruction in some schools* : This continued till 1937 when the movement for Independence awakened a sense of consciousness for Indianness and the voice for the development of Indian languages and a common link language for the whole country—ultimately to become the National language of India—grew very sharp and strong, as a result of which the Indian vernaculars substituted English as the medium of instruction in some schools. The Swadeshi movement and Gandhiji's call further goaded people to adopt and to enrich the vernaculars and develop more and more the common link language.

4. *Linguistic chaos in 1947* : The British left India in 1947 in a linguistic chaos. None of the major Indian languages, each rich in its own way and spoken by millions of people, was in a position to make undisputed claim to being the *lingua-franca*, and only after prolonged and most heated controversies was Hindi elected to be the federal language of the majority. Articles 343 and 344 of our Constitution provide that Hindi written in Devanagari script will be the official language of India. It was also laid down that the switch-over from English to Hindi should be made after 15 years that is, by the year 1965.

5. *Constitutional provisions* : The main provisions dealing with the official language of the Union as embodied in Articles 343 and 344 are as follows :

- (i) Hindi written in Devanagari script will be the official language of the Union.

- (ii) For a period of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, however, the English language will continue to be used for all official purposes of the Union. But during this period, the President may authorise the use of Hindi in addition to English.
- (iii) Even after 15 years, Parliament may provide for the continued use of English for any specific purpose.
- (iv) At the end of 5 years from the commencement of the Constitution, the President shall appoint a Commission to make recommendations for the progressive use of the Hindi language and on the restrictions on the use of English and other allied matters. The President is obliged to appoint such a Commission at the end of ten years after the commencement of the Constitution for the same purpose. While making their recommendations, the Commission should give due regard to the industrial, cultural and scientific advancement of India, and the just claims and all interests of persons belonging to non-Hindi speaking areas in regard to the Public Services.
- (v) The Commission's recommendations will be examined by a thirty-man committee of Parliament (20 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha) elected in accordance with the system of proportional representation and the committee will make a report to the President. The President may issue directions on the basis of the report of the committee.
- (vi) Each State Legislature is empowered under Article 345 to adopt any one or more of the languages in the state for all or any of the official purposes of the state concerned. But so far as communication between a state and the union or between one state and another is concerned, the official language of the union will be the authorised language.
- (vii) In order to protect the linguistic interests of minorities in certain states, the Constitution incorporated a special provision. The President empowered under Article 347 to direct a State Government to recognise a particular language for official purposes either for the whole or part of the state, if he was satisfied, on a representation made to him in this regard, that a substantial proportion of the population desire such recognition. This power in the hands of the Centre was intended to curb any tendency towards linguistic fanaticism and the domination of a majority over linguistic minorities in different states.
- (viii) Under Article 348, the Constitution makes a special provision for the retention of the English language if Parliament so decides even after the fifteen-year period, for the following purposes :

- (a) All proceedings in the Supreme Court and the High Courts;
- (b) Authoritative texts of Bills, Acts, Ordinances, Orders, Rules, regulations and bye-laws issued under the Constitution or under any law.

6. *The University Education Commission Report 1950 :* The Commission suggested that the medium at the University stage as at the elementary and the secondary will have to be the regional language. However, to ensure for Hindi the status of federal language, it clearly states :

"We should like to see the introduction of the federal language in all schools at the secondary stage, and the teaching should be continued at the university. This will ensure a general knowledge of the federal language of use for all practical needs. In addition, for those who desire to attain greater mastery over the federal language, facilities should be provided for intensive study."¹

The Commission also pointed out "that the Universities should have the option to use the federal language as medium of instruction either for some subjects or for all."²

7. *The Mudaliar Commission's Report 1952-53 :* The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) under the chairmanship of Dr Laxmanswami Mudaliar made the following recommendations :

- (i) The mother-tongue or the regional language should generally be the medium of instruction throughout the secondary school stage, subject to the provision that for linguistic minorities special facilities should be made available.
- (ii) During the middle school stage every child should be taught at least two languages, English and Hindi should be introduced at the end of the Junior Basic stage, subject to the principle that no two languages should be introduced in the same year.
- (iii) At the high and higher secondary stage at least two languages should be studied, one of which being the mother-tongue or the regional language.

The languages to be studied in the secondary stage should be :

- (i) Mother-tongue or regional language or a composite course of the mother-tongue and a classical language.

1. The Report of the University Education Commission, pp. 321-322. Govt. of India Publication, 1950.
2. *ibid.*, p. 323.

- (ii) One other language to be chosen from among the following :
- (a) Hindi (for those whose mother-tongue is not Hindi);
 - (b) Elementary English (for those who have not studied English at the earlier stage);
 - (c) Advanced English (for those who had studied English at the earlier stage);
 - (d) A modern Indian language (other than Hindi);
 - (e) A modern foreign language (other than English);
 - (f) A classical language.

Thus this Commission recommended two-language formula.

8. B.J. Kher Commission, June 1955 : In accordance with the constitutional provision, in June 1955, at the end of five years after the commencement of the Constitution, the President appointed a Commission under the chairmanship of B.J. Kher.

The Commission submitted its report to the President by the middle of 1956. The report is a valuable document for understanding the immensity and complexity of the language problem of India.

9. Report of the Committee Feb. 8, 1958 : As provided in the constitution a thirty-member committee of Parliament, with the Home Minister of the Union Government as its Chairman, examined the recommendations of the Commission. The report of the committee was submitted to Parliament on 8 February 1958. While the committee expressed the definite opinion that adherence to the constitutional settlement which envisages the replacement of English by Hindi for Union purposes and by the regional languages for the official requirements of the states is the only safe and practical course to adopt, the approach to the question of final change-over has to be flexible and practical. Thus, the committee endorsed the recommendations of the official language commission except that it emphasised the necessity for flexibility in the change-over.

10. The Three-Language Formula : In the year 1956 the Central Advisory Board of Education originated the Three-Language Formula. This formula was approved in 1961 in the Chief Ministers conference. According to this formula, the student is to learn his mother-tongue as the regional language, Hindi as the national language and English as the international language.

11. Official Language Bill 1963: This Bill was introduced in Parliament on 13 April 1963. The need for the introduction of the Bill seems to have arisen due to two main reasons : firstly because Hindi had not grown sufficiently during the last 13 years to be able to replace English after 1965 and secondly because the existent

emotional climate in the country was far from favourable to any such change-over in the near future. This Bill provided that English should continue to be used as associate federal language after 1965 and that ten years later, a parliamentary committee was to be appointed to review the progress made by Hindi.

12. Recommendation of the Indian Education Commission 1964-66 : The Indian Education Commission tried to cut the Gordian knot and present a workable and generally acceptable formula. It adhered broadly to the three-language formula devised by the C.A.B.E. in 1956 but in a modified form based upon actual experience gained during the last ten years. The modified formula runs as follows :

- (i) The mother-tongue or the regional language;
- (ii) The official language of the Union or the associate official language of the union so long as it exists; and
- (iii) A modern Indian or foreign language not covered under (i) and (ii) and other than that used as the medium of instruction.

The formula itself is somewhat vague but it has been clarified by the detailed recommendations of the Commission which is as follows :

(i) Lower Primary Stage (Class I-IV)

One language—the mother-tongue or the regional language at the option of the pupil.

(ii) Higher Primary Stage (Class V-VII)

Two languages :

- (i) the mother-tongue or the regional language, and
- (ii) Hindi or English.

(iii) Lower Secondary Stage (Class VIII-X)

Three languages : In non-Hindi speaking areas, these languages will normally be

- (i) the mother-tongue or the regional language;
- (ii) Hindi at a higher or lower level; and
- (iii) English at a Higher or lower level.

In Hindi speaking areas, they will normally be ,

- (i) the mother-tongue or the regional language,

- (ii) English (or Hindi) if English has already been taken as the mother-tongue; and
- (iii) a modern Indian language other than Hindi.

(iv) *Higher Secondary Stage (Class XI-XII)*

Any two of the three languages studied earlier or any two languages, including any modern foreign language and classical language, Indian or foreign.

The Commission has made some valuable suggestions regarding the solution of some taxing problems :

- (a) As regards the medium of instruction is concerned, the Commission states "As we have already adopted the regional languages as the media of instruction at the school stage, it follows logically that we should adopt them increasingly at the higher stage also." The Commission has recommended a phased transformation of the medium of instruction from English to the regional languages within a period of 10 years.
- (b) The regional languages should be made the language of administration in the regions concerned as early as possible so that the higher services are not banned to those who study in the regional medium.
- (c) As regards the teaching of mother-tongue, the Commission suggests that the teaching of mother-tongue and the regional language should start from the first primary class and continue upto the end of the school stage. It should be optional at the school stage.
- (d) The most suitable stage for learning these languages is the lower secondary (classes VIII-X) where smaller number of teachers will be needed.
- (e) Hindi or English should be introduced at the point of greatest motivation and need.
- (f) The Commission has spoken in favour of a common script for all Indian languages—Devanagari or Roman.
- (g) The Commission has recommended the provision of classical languages in the school curriculum on an optional basis only from class VIII onwards.
- (h) The Commission has recommended that study of a language at the high stage should not be compulsory,
- (i) All Indian institutions should continue to use English as the medium of instruction. The eventual adoption of Hindi

should, however, be considered in due course, subject to certain safeguards.

- (j) The regional languages should also be made the language of administration for the regions concerned as early as possible so that higher services are not banned to those who study in the regional medium.
- (k) The teaching and study of English must continue to be promoted right from the school stage. Encouragement should be given also to the study of other languages of international communication. The study of Russian needs special attention.
- (l) It would be desirable to set up a few institutions, both at the school and university level, with some of the important world languages as media of instruction.
- (m) English will serve as a link language in higher education for academic work and intellectual communication. It is, however, equally obvious that English should serve as the link language for the majority of our people. It is only Hindi which can and should take this place in due course.
- (n) As Hindi is the official language of the Union and the link language of the people, all measures should be adopted to spread it in the non-Hindi areas.
- (o) In addition to Hindi, it is essential to provide multiple channels of inter-state communication in all modern Indian languages. There should be adequate arrangement, both in schools and colleges, for teaching different modern Indian languages. At the B.A. and M.A. level, it should be possible to continue two modern Indian languages.
- (p) The U.G.C. and the universities should work out a programme for the adoption of the recommendations suitably for each university or a group of universities.
- (q) Energetic action is needed to produce books and literature particularly scientific and technical, in regional languages. This should be made a responsibility of universities assisted by the U.G.C.

The Kothari Commission recommended the regional languages to be the medium of instruction. Vice-Chancellors accepted this recommendation with a number of qualifications.

- i. The change should be restricted only to the undergraduate staff;
- ii. It should be carried out in about five to ten years, depending on the degree of preparation work already done on the nature of the subject and other relevant factors.

- iii. In the programme of change-over, the importance of English should be fully recognised and adequate arrangements for its study made at the undergraduate level.

13. **Official languages (Amendment) Bill:** This bill provided for the continuance of English as the official language and the development of Hindi so that it may become the link language of India and may be adopted as the official language of the country when all the States agree to it. The whole of the country was shaken by violence of the language fanatics in almost all the important cities and towns and also by loud dialogues in Parliament. Ultimately the Bill was signed by the President on 10 January 1968 and became an Act. But that does not did the problem as many of the States have not accepted the decision of the Central Government. The Hindi-speaking people do not want that English should be imposed on them and the southerners are in no mood to tolerate the domination of Hindi.

14. **Ishwarbhai Patel Committee, 1977 :** The Committee recommended that in determining the pattern of languages to be taught, the recommendations of the Kothari Commission should be given due consideration and that these recommendations should be used as guidelines in formulating or reformulating any policies on the teaching of the languages.

15. **The Draft National Policy on Education, 1979:** According to this, the three-language formula, will be implemented at the secondary stage. It includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably a South Indian language, in addition to Hindi and English in Hindi-speaking States and of Hindi in addition to regional language and English in non-Hindi speaking States.

THE LINGUISTIC PICTURE OF INDIA

The Constitution has recognised fifteen languages—Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. There are almost 1,652 dialects spoken in our country.

In the words of the official language Commission :

"The difficulty and complexity of the language problem that the country has to tackle are manifest. We seek to find a medium of expression for the strong elements of identity in the cultural life of the country and as a linguistic counterpart for the political unity which the country has discovered after many centuries. In doing so, we seek to replace a working system based on the English language which *albeit* foreign to the people, is one of the world's richest and most widely spoken languages and has many general merits to recommend it. The language we can replace English by one at present insufficiently developed for the multifarious occasions of official and

non-official intercourse, that arise in a modern community. Several of these dozen or so languages are, however, spoken by numbers in excess of many current European languages claiming to be advanced means of communication and are thus, in point of the number of people who speak them, entitled to a high place in the world's roll of languages. Hindi has been chosen as the Union Language on the principal, and, we think, sufficient ground that amongst the regional languages, it is spoken by the largest number of people in the country."

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Multilingualism has created a number of problems concerning the status of languages in our curriculum. Also any decision taken on the subject on academic grounds is often overridden by political considerations, the entire question gets shifted to an extra-educational plane of argument. In brief, the problems are :

- (A) Which language should be the medium of instruction at the various levels?
- (B) Which language should be the official language of the Union ?
- (C) Which language should be the link language ?
- (D) What should be the place of English ?

(A) WHAT LANGUAGE SHOULD BE THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS ?

The problem of the medium of instruction has been a triangular controversy between English, Hindi and the regional language.

Medium of Instruction at the School Stage

The importance of mother-tongue as the medium of instruction at the primary stage can hardly be exaggerated. The mother-tongue is an integral part of a man's life. The personality of the child is built up through the mother-tongue. It is, therefore, the most natural medium of reception and expression of knowledge.

As far as early education is concerned, our major attention is fixed on the common man. His requirements can be satisfied by an elementary knowledge of the three R's and such other utility subjects such as Civics, Economics, Logic, History and the like, to make him an enlightened citizen. All these subjects can easily be imparted through the mother-tongue.

So educationists and politicians are unanimous on this point, that upto the Lower Secondary Stage, the medium of instruction should

be the mother-tongue to enable pupils to acquire knowledge with facility, to express themselves with clarity and to think with precision and vigour.

Medium of Instruction at the Secondary and College Level

The controversy regarding the medium at the secondary and university stages does not comprise two problems but one because even after the recommendations of the Secondary Education Commission that "Secondary stage should be a complete unit by itself and not merely as a preparatory stage," secondary stage continues to be the stepping-stone to college. The universities continue to dominate the theory and practice of secondary education. Hence the medium of instruction at the secondary level is mainly to be decided by the medium adopted at the University stage.

Below we shall discuss the comparative advantages and disadvantages of three different languages—English, Hindi and Regional Languages as medium of instruction at the Secondary and the University level.

Before we take up a comparative study of the claims of different languages to become the medium of instruction, let us examine the qualities a language must possess to become the medium of instruction :

(i) It should be a well-developed flexible language having a rich literature and vocabulary suitable to express general and technical ideas in easily comprehensive form.

(ii) It should have original text-books and reference books.

(iii) It should be able to translate articles, books etc, published in foreign countries to keep students in touch with the latest development in their own subject all over the world.

(iv) It should be a language generally understood, spoken and written throughout the country to enable the students and professors to have a free exchange of ideas.

(v) It should be a language providing an entrance not only in the field of knowledge in the country but a window to the entire world.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF ENGLISH

1. English—A well-developed language

English is a well-developed language having vast and rich literature in almost all subjects, hence any subject upto the highest stage can easily be taught and studied in English. It is a world language, highly developed in every branch of modern knowledge and holding the key to the best that has been achieved under the sun. One can

attain the highest degree of proficiency in science and technology through that language.

2. English has served as the medium of instruction in our country with excellent results

Three centuries of British rule have left English very much with us and there is nothing unnatural in cashing in on this accident of history and integrating English into our culture.

English provides an All-India link. It is the link language in education today. Over a period of 200 years, English has permeated the education pattern evenly. It gives no advantage as Hindi would to any particular region or regional language. To give it up now would mean a thoughtless sacrifice.

Even Pt. Nehru while inaugurating the All-India Panjabi Conference at Sapru House, New Delhi, on 23 July 1961 is reported to have said, "All regional languages must be developed and promoted. But that did not mean that English should be discarded. To do that, will amount closing a window on the world of technology—Foreign language served as windows on it and to suppose that translations could take their place was a mistake. . It was no use getting into an intellectual prison after achieving political independence." He has reiterated it time and again, "English is ours by historic necessity".

3. English—A popular language

We have been using it and listening to it for several generations. It has entered into our home and way of life. In the case of educated people—students, employees in government and voluntary organisations, business men and several categories of people at large—English is generally the medium of communication. In the routine parlance of even the illiterate, there is a marked bias for English vocabulary. English is no longer foreign, but a native language and can easily line up with the other accredited languages of India. Despite constitutional provisions and emotional favour, English shall never be ousted.

4. English—A dynamic language

If Indian mind and imagination has to remain dynamic, the flow of new ideas from progressive countries is bound to be an influencing factor in shaping our thought process and charting our course of action. There cannot be two opinions regarding the prolific availability of the latest scientific and technological thought in English.

5. National solidarity

Switching over to regional languages or Hindi will not only put education in the reverse gear but also hamper the development and national solidarity of the country. English has forged a collective consciousness glibly called as national integration which is so necessary for an unbroken continuity of common inspiration. With the debasing of English the myth that this Bharat is one will explode. So we can ill-afford to disturb the status quo.

6. Present utility and future needs

At a time when English is to be studied for increasing dictates of life, how can we usurp its importance and relapse into regional caves? English is the best medium of instruction for its present utility and future needs. A language does not become foreign because of its birth and origin in a foreign land. It becomes foreign when it is foreign to mind and to our way of thinking. That way every one of the 14 languages recognised in our Constitution, can be treated as foreign. For a Panjabi, Tamil or Kanarese is as foreign as Panjabi or Hindi to a South Indian. In the case of English such a situation does not obtain in India.

7. Mobility of students and professors

English must be the language of the universities if we want that India should not be cut into isolated island. It is argued that it would indeed be a very bad bargain for the nation—this fifteen-language plan in exchange for English. All mobility of students and professors—mobility in occupation and public services—would be lost for our young men and the coming generations.

8. English is an international language

It can help us to communicate with the rest of the world with the intensification of International relations, the retention of English as link language may become even more necessary and useful than at present. English, as D.C. Sharma said, is an unwritten testimonial to go all over the world. There will be nothing unnatural if we retain it as medium of instruction.

In evaluating the contribution of English, the wise counsel of Pt. Nehru must be borne in mind. He says, "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 being pushed out without another unifying factor fully taking its place. In that event there will be a gap and 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 one to the conclusion that English is likely to have an important place in the foreseeable future. The devaluation of English will prove injurious."

So it is argued that the inevitable result of the Central Government's proposal to destroy English as a medium will be to create a vacuum which can be filled only by chaos and disintegration. It will be a blunder of the same type as the formation of linguistic states ten years ago. It will be nothing short of incurable lunacy to disturb the status quo.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST ENGLISH

1. English is a foreign language and a relic of the British domination of India. All the politically conscious sections of the country are totally against the continuation of English as medium of instruction.

2. Foreign medium of instruction is unsound and uneconomical. Much of our learning is wasted on its way to the mind, simply because it has to go through the medium of a foreign language. Students are compelled to concentrate on cramming. Independent thinking and free expression are not possible. Extraordinary fluency in English language in personalities like Dr Radhakrishnan and Pt. Nehru is an exception. They were only geniuses who could have performed miracles with any weapon. Quality education for the millions cannot be imparted through a foreign language.

3. English has never been a cementing factor in our political or cultural life. It is spoken and understood by 2 per cent of Indians. So if at all it has caused integration—which might have been confined to 2 per cent elite and intelligentsia—98 per cent of Indians remained totally unaffected.

4. Our languages are equally great. Their past history and achievement are in no way mean. Continuance of English is advocated on the plea that our languages are not yet ripe and ready to replace English. But the question which arises is, should we go on waiting till that golden day when the languages become rich enough to help solve the tangle or should we carry on the process of change and language will grow and bloom according to the need? We cannot go on waiting for the first event to happen.

Japan's case should be enough guide for us. At the outset, she had to take recourse to textbooks written in foreign languages, but from the very beginning her objective had been to arrive at the stage of ranging freely over the subjects of study in the language of the country. It was because Japan had recognised the need of such

studies not as an arrangement for a select section of the citizens—but for giving power and culture to all of them that she deemed it to be of prime importance to make them universally available to the people. If Japan could produce enough literature for its needs, there is no reason why we should not be able to produce it. Languages will develop according to needs. Terminologies must be framed. Our own Indian languages must be enriched, polished and refined to suit the requirements.

5. English has checked the progress of our languages. Its continuance will mean a death blow to them. It will be just accepting defeat of the worst kind.

6. The use of regional languages as media will satisfy all groups. It will promote the development of each and every major language in the country and enable it to become the vehicle of all branches of knowledge and thought.

7. Different groups will take pride in their linguistic inheritance. This will be a more positive and forceful factor in preserving and strengthening national unity than compelling unwilling people to use either English or Hindi.

8. The foreign medium is the cause of the large percentage of failures in the university examinations. Students generally cannot follow lectures in English.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF HINDI

1. Constitutionally Hindi is our national language. It is bound to play a predominant role in our life.

2. As a Federal language it is bound to be the medium of interstate communication. It shall be taking the place of English as a link language. So it will be better if we switch over to Hindi as medium of instruction in the universities.

3. Introduction of Hindi as medium would eliminate administrative and practical difficulties of uniformity in all the States.

4. Public competitive examinations of the Union and the States, if conducted in this Federal language, will be simple, uniform and impartial, offering equal opportunities for all.

5. Hindi is a language spoken by 35 per cent of the people of India. English is spoken only by 2 per cent and regional languages are spoken in the respective regions only. Thus Hindi is the language of the majority and in a democratic set-up, this is bound to play a dominant role.

6. The introduction of Hindi will bring uniformity in our educational system and avoid the complexities of a multilingual system.

7. If Hindi has been learnt as a compulsory subject during higher primary and the secondary, it should not be difficult to change over to Hindi medium at the university stage. This arrangement has worked in case of English and should work a little more easily with Hindi.

8. The money and energy that have to be expended to replace English by the regional language in each university will pay much richer dividends if channelled to changing over to just one common language.

9. For national unity the Federal language is an indispensable nexus.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST HINDI

1. Compared with English, Hindi is a very poor language and even compared to certain Indian languages such as Bengali, Marathi, and Tamil, its achievement is inferior.

2. Hindi has no political or administrative tradition, because throughout Indian history there has never been a Hindi state. What is now being sought to be imposed as an all-India language, according to the famous Indologist Suniti Kumar Chatterji, is *Khari Boli* which had no existence prior to 1850.

3. There is no standard Hindi. Even in the Hindi States today, Hindi differs from one area to another. According to the evidence given before the Parliamentary Commission appointed in June 1955, the people of East U.P. did not understand the Hindi of West U.P. Not even 1 per cent of the Hindi-speaking people understood what now passes for the new Hindi.

4. Hindi is not a mass medium. A country where 300 million people cannot read or write a single language and in a country which according to the authoritative sources, has 179 languages and 1652 dialects, the question of a mass medium does not arise.

5. There is no special advantage in substituting Hindi for English. In the non-Hindi areas and particularly in the South, Hindi is as good as a foreign language.

6. Even as a spoken language, Hindi has very little place in the Non-Hindi areas. The 1961 linguistic census showed that while 11 million people returned English as their second language, only 9 million returned Hindi in spite of the compulsion attached to its teaching.

7. Hindi is not a link language. It has virtually no place in the all-India education pattern.

8. Hindi is not the language of higher education in the Hindi

States. Given the option, even those who study through the medium of Hindi prefer English. Recently when the option was given to those taking the Intermediate examinations in U.P. to answer their papers either in Hindi or English, 85 per cent who had throughout been studying through the medium of Hindi, opted for English.

9. If Hindi is introduced as the medium it will dominate and stunt other languages. Hindi predominance may create linguistic 'vested interest.'

10. In order to enable Hindi to serve as a medium, extensive efforts will have to be made to develop that language. This would require a lot of time and energy. The same efforts, if applied to other Indian languages, will develop all of them simultaneously.

11. A Federal language need not necessarily be the medium of instruction. A certain minimum knowledge of Hindi may be compulsorily imparted up to a certain stage. That would serve all the purposes.

12. There is not much connection between national unity and the presence or absence of a common medium of higher education. Language is only a vehicle of ideas. It is like the bottle which contains a medicine. It is the ideas and the medicine that are important. We may be proficient in different languages but hold the same set of political ideas. We will then become politically united. Thus the assumption that the introduction of a common medium will preserve political unity in the presence of other disintegrating factors is to live in an Utopia.

REGIONAL LANGUAGES AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Arguments in favour

1. Regional languages—the languages of the majority in the respective regions'. As the regional languages are the languages of an overwhelming majority of the people in the respective regions, they will constitute the best medium of instruction.

2. Regional language (when it is also the mother-tongue) is the most natural medium of instruction: In the words of Gurudev Tagore, "The best way to make education our own would be to impart it through the medium of our own language. The mother-tongue is for students what mother's milk is for infants. One of the functions of education is the training to express one's thoughts and feelings through language. This give-and-take between within and without is necessary for a healthy mental life. But if that has to be done through a foreign language, it becomes like trying to act to play with a mask over one's face."

3. *The period of education can be curtailed:* If regional languages are used as medium of instruction, a lot of 'wastage' involved in learning a foreign language can be avoided and the period of education can be curtailed without an adverse effect upon the standard.

4. *Languages will get a change for development:* All the regional languages shall get their due opportunity for development. They will become the vehicle of all branches of knowledge and thought. No linguistic group will have a grudge against another.

5. *Inter-state relations would be smooth:* Due to the absence of domination of any particular language, inter-state relations would be smooth. A situation like this in which all groups take equal pride in their linguistic inheritance, will be a more positive and forceful factor in preserving and strengthening national unity, than compelling unwilling people to use either English or Hindi. The use of Hindi in the Hindi areas and of English in non-Hindi areas will not improve the situation even if it were practicable.

6. *The masses can afford to get enough liberal education and the curse of illiteracy and ignorance would be wiped out.*

7. *Medium at the school stage—the regional languages:* As medium of instruction at the school stage is regional languages, in the interest of education, it will be advisable to continue the same medium at the college stage also.

8. *The use of regional languages—A great benefit to democracy:* When the masses are educated in the regional language and the administration is also conducted in the same language, the common man shall be able to judge political things better and his opinion shall carry weight. This is a great benefit to democracy.

9. *A positive communication can be established between the university men and the masses—its artisans and technicians:* University men will be able to make their maximum possible contribution to the advancement of learning generally and science and technology particularly. Advanced knowledge will become as much the property of the common man as of the university man. Most of the time graduates in agriculture serving as extension officers and demonstrators whose profession is to explain the latest methods in agriculture to the ryots in the villages, are seen to be ineffective simply because they do not know the language of the cultivators. Regional languages, thus, will provide a link between the university and the masses.

10. *Regional languages in the interest of emotional integration:* The Emotional Integration Committee opines that the use of regional language as medium of education from the lowest to the highest stage of education was a matter of profound importance for national

integration. People in most of the non-Hindi areas have not yet arrived at a stage where they are prepared to accept Hindi as the medium of instruction. There is no possibility of forcing Hindi on them. Such a course will alienate them from the Hindi-speaking people and prove to be a serious obstacle in the way of national integration. The other alternative is the indefinite continuance of English as the sole medium. But this arouses the opposition of all the politically conscious section of the Hindi-speaking people. They will revolt against it. The only alternative left is the use of all regional languages as media. This will satisfy all groups.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST REGIONAL LANGUAGES

1. *Regional languages not well-developed:* No doubt regional languages like Bengali, Hindi and Tamil have great literature, rich in classical work of prose and poetry—but as vehicles of modern knowledge in the field of science and technology, they present a sorry picture. With the full-fledged enthronement of regional languages as the medium of instruction in universities, we would be bidding good-bye to our hope of catching up with the advanced countries in matters of science and technology in the immediate future. It is suggested that we can make up for this deficiency by translating standard works from foreign languages. The feasibility of this proposition is doubtful. Firstly, various branches of modern knowledge have become so highly specialised that they have developed not only a terminology but a language and symbolism of their own, which are almost untranslatable. It is very likely that such translations, even if they are accomplished, will be more difficult to understand than the original works themselves.

Again, we have examples which show that translations can never keep pace with the originals. As far back as 1916, Osmania University started for the first time with Urdu as the medium of instruction. Several crores of rupees were spent on translations. This took years and by the time a translation was ready, the original edition had become outmoded and the translation was already behind time.

2. *Universities will become isolated islands:* The deeper and fuller intercourse between the seats of learning will not be possible. We shall be compelled to draw students and professors from within the confines of the States and not from the whole country, let alone from abroad.

3. *Universities will no more remain as international centres of learning:* The introduction of regional languages as media would wipe out English from our system. Thus universities will no more remain the international centres of learning as they are today.

4. *Our students will no more be in a position to go abroad in search of knowledge as confidently as they do at present.*

5. *If the regional languages be made the medium, it would be a great disadvantage to emigrants and immigrants.*

6. *Disadvantage to students who have to reside in cities like Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta.* If all the schools and the universities teach in the regional language, what will happen to the children of those from other States, who will have to reside in these big cities for professional reasons?

7. *The interests of linguistic minorities will suffer.*

8. *The use of regional languages will precipitate national disintegration.* Their introduction would foster the spirit of narrow provincialism and thus would harm the basic unity of India.

9. *Lack of uniformity in different languages:* If the languages are unequally developed, it would mean unequal opportunities in competitive examinations and as such it would be a matter of concern.

10. *There is also the difficulty in finding teachers who could lecture to university students in the regional languages:* A number of university professors of the present generation have done specialised studies in their respective subjects abroad—they would not be able to teach them in the regional languages.

B. WHICH LANGUAGE SHOULD BE THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNION?

One of the major factors contributing to a State of indecisiveness and confusion in regard to the place of languages in schools and colleges is the uncertainty in regard to the official language of the Union. The Constitution laid it down that Hindi shall be the official language of the Union and that English would continue for fifteen years from the inception of the Indian Union, namely until 1965. When, however, this decision was announced for implementation on January 26, 1965, the entire country was agitated over the language issue and this in turn has created problems concerning the language or languages to be provided for instruction in schools and colleges. Thus the issue of the official language influences, to a very considerable degree, the question of the media of instruction as well as the kind of languages which a student ought to learn.

A distinction has to be made between the *official language* and the *national language*. The Constitution does not lay down any one national language. On the other hand it recognises 15 languages as having this status. Therefore, the question of the national language is not an issue. Decision is required in regard to the official language of the nation. This language in turn will be used for transacting the business of the Central Government, Central Services, Law Courts,

communication between the States and the Centre, and to a large extent, the various all-India competitive examinations. Naturally a language adopted as the official language of the Union must be known in all parts of the country so that people everywhere have equality of opportunity for all types of Central services. The opposition to Hindi stems from the fact that although this language is spoken and understood by a large part of the country constituting about 85 per cent of the population, it is not understood by those who live in the South and hence, the Southerners will be placed at a disadvantage if this language becomes the official language.

Some advocate adoption of Hindi as the official language, others would like it to be English while still others would compromise and have both. Others advocate that the country should adopt bilingualism. Undoubtedly such a policy will result in dividing the country into two, namely, the part where Hindi is the official language and the part where English is the official language. Bilingualism, though, is only a temporary solution. The instance of Canada where bilingualism has been in existence over many years—English and French being the official languages—and the agitation of the French population for a separate French-speaking State in Canada should be an eye-opener in this direction.

C. THE LINK LANGUAGE

One of the very important questions to be decided in the language controversy is the question of link language. The question is often asked: What would be the link language among the universities and the institutions of higher learning where the decision to switch over to the regional languages as media of instruction is implemented? A link language for academic purposes is necessary:

- a. To facilitate the interchange of teachers between one part of the country and another. Such an interchange is needed only in respect of post-graduate courses.
- b. To serve as medium of instruction and research in all-India centres of learning and in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay.

Now the question which needs an answer is: Which language can serve the purpose?

Can Hindi fulfil the requirements?

As some centres will contain students and teachers belonging to all the linguistic areas, it is very much doubtful if Hindi can serve the purpose of a link language.

Sanskrit can serve the purpose of a link language, but it is not a spoken language. Moreover, a certain section of the people of the country are hostile to Sanskrit and it is not easy to bring about a change in their attitude.

Can English be the link language?

The claim of English to continue as the link language for the academic purposes is indisputable. It has been the link language for more than a century. Educated people are familiar with it. It will preserve the academic tradition which is a great advantage in itself.

Also, every one recognises that education is not complete unless pupils in schools compulsorily study a second language besides the regional language which is to be the medium of instruction. In most of the countries of the world such a second language is a foreign language. In Britain, for instance, pupils study French, German or Russian. In Russia, they study English. The same thing happens in Japan. We have also to adopt the same policy. The second language of compulsory study in the schools of our country should be a non-Indian foreign language. Today the choice lies only between English and Russian. It is in these languages that most of the books and journals are published. From every point of view it is better for us to choose English. We have more facilities for teaching and learning this language, and as it is also an associate official language, a knowledge of it will serve a double purpose. What is needed is the giving up by the Hindi speaking people their hostility to English. Among them a feeling has grown that unless English completely disappears from our educational institutions Hindi cannot take its place. This is a very short-sighted and suicidal view. In the existing political atmosphere Hindi cannot replace English. The best course for the Hindi-speaking people is to study English as a compulsory second language. English should continue to be a language of compulsory study throughout the country. All educated people will continue to be acquainted with it. It will thus become automatically a link language. English will thus serve the double purpose of a national as well as an international link language.

D. WHAT SHOULD BE THE PLACE OF ENGLISH?

As mentioned earlier, the primary stage does not come in the field of controversy regarding 'the place of English in the scheme of studies.' The controversy is mainly with regard to the higher studies at secondary and university stages. This does not comprise two

problems but one because even after the recommendations of Secondary Education Commission that 'secondary stage should be a complete unit by itself and not merely a preparatory stage. Secondary stage continues to be the stepping-stone to college. The universities continue to dominate the theory and practice of secondary education. Hence the place of English at the secondary level is mainly to be decided by the role of English at the university stage.

Now let us see if English can be replaced by any other Indian language at the university level. The language aspiring to replace English at the university level must at least be a well-developed flexible language having a rich literature and vocabulary suitable to express. Hence any hasty and premature attempt to replace English by any other Indian language may result in the intellectual chaos and confusion in the country. So long as our languages are not capable of coping with certain subjects at the higher stage, English cannot be removed. Its premature removal would mean a great blow to the present generation. English is indispensable for the present. So it should be a compulsory subject from the High School to the First Degree as it was before. English is a language whose roots have gone too deep into the soil of our country—to throw it over board would be a kind of lunacy.

Can English continue to occupy the important place that it does today?

It is quite certain that English cannot be our national language. Within the coming fifteen years or so Hindi will undoubtedly take the place of English as the official language at the Central and inter-State levels. Further, the regional languages will take their due place as media of instruction. Thus in due course the use of English is bound to be reduced.

The extinction of English from our system will no longer do good to anybody. For inter-state and international intellectual and academic contacts, English will serve a good medium. To make English co-equal in status to German, Russian etc., is a weak compromise. To reduce English to the status of a theory language will be extremely unjust. English does occupy a special place as a popular medium of inter-communication and therefore, should be a compulsory link language in which every student should gain a reasonable proficiency. So, it should be a compulsory subject from the High school to the First degree as it was before, for the present. All out efforts should be made to strengthen Hindi and other national languages. A ten-year programme should be declared, during which production of Hindi books for the degree courses should be encouraged and when this preliminary is complete, the regional languages should be introduced at the degree courses as medium. When the medium is well set, English should be made optional instead of compulsory, first in the degree courses and then progressively below. Hindi as a

Federal language will be essential for all citizens. As such it should be made compulsory upto the matriculation and optional subsequently. This would give sufficient knowledge of Hindi to all citizens.

THE THREE-LANGUAGE FORMULA

As stated earlier, in the year 1956 the Central Advisory Board of Education originated the three-language formula. This formula was approved in 1961 in Chief Ministers' Conference. According to this formula, the student learns his mother-tongue as the regional language, Hindi as the national language and English as the international language. The Education Commission (1964-66) adhered broadly to the three-language formula devised by the C.A.B.E. but in a modified form. The modified formula includes:

1. Mother-tongue or the regional language,
2. The official language of the Union or the associate official language (this means either Hindi or English), and
3. Any modern Indian or European language other than that used as the medium of instruction.

National Policy on Education, 1968, again endorsed the Government stand that in Hindi-speaking areas, the students will learn Hindi, English and one South Indian language and in non-Hindi areas the students will learn regional language, Hindi and English.

The Draft National Policy on Education has also recommended the three-language formula at the secondary stage.

It is common knowledge that it has not been possible for secondary schools to implement the three-language formula in spirit, though appearances are sought to be kept as if it were being implemented. In Tamilnadu, Hindi, though a national language, is a subject in which no minimum has been prescribed for a pass, though it is a compulsory and an examination subject in SSLC and other class examinations.

In the North, instead of teaching a South Indian language, the formula is being circumvented in spirit by teaching a classical language like Sanskrit or other regional language which is akin to Hindi. Similarly, so far as learning of English is concerned we see two diametrically opposite views. While we see Education Minister of Tamilnadu emphasising the need of picking up a good working knowledge of English and teaching of English adequately, we see, on the other hand, the Education Minister of Bihar, making English an optional language in the curriculum of education. Education Minister of U.P. announced that English would remain optional and Hindi compulsory in High School Exams. While Shri K.V. Shankara Gowda declared in Karnataka State Assembly on 18 July 1967 that the three-language formula was functioning there satisfactorily,

Education Minister of Kerala was not in favour of the formula. Tamilnadu has completely dissented from the formula and is not implementing it.

LIMITATIONS

1. Heavy Language Load: Learning of three languages, it is believed, will constitute a heavy burden upon the students and will inhibit learning. Taking into consideration the needs of our society and potentialities of the child, the study of subjects like Physics and Mathematics would help the child intellectually. By burdening the child with the study of languages we would be guilty of stifling the growth of nuclear physicists and creative engineers which the country needs.

2. Lack of Motivation: To make the study of a modern Indian or foreign language compulsory for all children in the Hindi areas is pointless as it lacks necessary motivation. On the other hand Sanskrit can prove more useful. Moreover, most of the pupils do not need and use more than one language.

3. Resistance to the Study of Hindi: There is lot of resistance to the study of Hindi in the non-Hindi areas; it is interpreted in terms of the political domination of the North over the South.

4. Heavy Cost Effort: Additional heavy cost and effort required for teaching the second and the third language is one of the most important factors contributing to the failure of the three language formula.

The Three Language formula in our country is a compromise based on political and social considerations and not on any educational principles. It tried to equate the language load as between the students of Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas. But this appears to be the only solution of the most formidable language problem. What is urgently required at present is the implementation of the formula without qualifications and reservations by all the States in the wider interest of national solidarity. Some suggestions are offered below for overcoming the difficulties in the implementation of the formula:

(i) *Teachers proficient in two or three languages needed*

Teachers with bilingual knowledge are urgently needed if students with one regional language are to be taught a language different from it. If three language formula is successful in Europe, it is because there are teachers who are proficient in two or three languages. An additional allowance may be given to the teachers for teaching an additional language.

(ii) *Teaching Language instead of literature*

There is still another way to implement the formula, if we decide to teach them from the point of view of teaching the language instead of its literature. Our aim may be to make the pupils pick up a *fair working knowledge* of these languages rather than to teach them their rich literature.

The formula was, however, somewhat simplified and approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961. The same year, it was given support by the Emotional Integration Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Sampurnanand. The National Integration Association under Smt. Indira Gandhi also recommended it in 1962. A new development took place in 1965. Hindi was to become the official language at the Centre from 26 January 1965, but because of troubles in the South against its adoption as the official language instead of English, and because of the late Pt. Nehru's assurances to non-Hindi speaking people that Hindi will not be imposed on them, the Central Government appointed a Cabinet Sub-Committee to find out a solution. This Sub-Committee suggested the continuance of English for the official purposes till all the States vote in favour of Hindi.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

1. *Enrichment of Hindi*

Constitutional provisions by themselves do not solve problems. In spite of a constitutional mandate, little headway has been made towards making Hindi the federal language of India. The implications of having accepted Hindi as Federal Language are many and far reaching. It has to be the language of our legislatures and courts, our embassies and consulates, our national institutes of art, science and culture. It has to serve as the language of inter-state and inter-university communications and as medium of the diverse all-India services. It is essential that Hindi should be enriched to meet successfully its diverse and delicate assignments. The Hindi that is needed is not the regional language of the Hindi-speaking States but a language which should be enriched by the contribution made by the different languages and which would ultimately become the real link language of the country.

2. *Lift the famine of books*

Shortage of books in the Federal language as well as other national languages is another problem posing difficulties. It will have to be admitted that to study and to teach without books is next to impossible. The Government should shed its vacillating policy and

extend encouragement to indigenous writers to help lift the book-famine. Selfless and dedicated labours of hundreds of Indian scholars and scientists who are masters of the subjects as well as their own languages can enable us to overcome the hurdle. The vicious circle of 'no production' must be broken. The text-book Boards, National Book Trust and University Grants Commission should join hands and make available good books in all languages.

3. Provide facilities for the study of important library languages

The study of important modern library languages other than English should be made possible in selected schools in each State, with the option of studying them instead of English or Hindi.

4. Provide safeguards to check lowering of standards

Suitable safeguards to prevent any lowering of standards during the process of change-over must be provided.

5. Equal language load for all

There should be no imposition of any language on any person, no undue favour to any one, and it is necessary that both Hindi and English should remain the link languages and official languages till there is a consensus of opinion to make Hindi the sole link language and the official language. There should be a Three-Language Formula in which the mother-tongue or the regional language should be compulsory and it should be left to the learner and his parents to choose the other two languages out of a large number of languages both Indian and foreign. If English is studied as a link language and Hindi as the official language, they will serve to strengthen the bond of mutual understanding and intellectual intercourse among the intelligentsia even if regional languages become the medium at the universities.

Summary

1. There is need of a bold, clear, definite and final decision regarding our language policy.

2. The multi-lingualism has created a number of problems concerning the status of languages in our curriculum. There are some pertinent problems—which language should be the medium of instruction at various levels? Which language should be the official language of the Union? Which language should be the link language? What should be the place of English?

3. The Government has announced the acceptance of Three language Formula. It includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably a South Indian language, in addition to Hindi and

English in Hindi speaking states and of Hindi in addition to the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking areas. To make this formula successful, teachers proficient in two or three languages are needed, instead of teaching literature, working knowledge of languages should be given; Hindi should be enriched; books should be made available in the different languages.

Evaluation

1. 'The language problem had become a 'hump' in India's progress in the field of education. The only way to get over this (hump) is to put this controversy behind us and take clear and unequivocal decisions and implement them in a sustained manner.' Dr Triguna Sen.
Elucidate this statement and suggest the language pattern which may suit our country.
2. Give the Three-Language Formula, as accepted by the Central Government. What modifications have been suggested in the Formula by Kothari Commission? Do you agree with these recommendations?
3. What are the different aspects of the language problem in India? Write a note on each.
4. Why is a link language important for a country? Discuss the claims of English and Hindi for the same.
5. Which language, in your opinion, should be the medium of instruction at the university stage?
6. "We should not approach English with any kind of prejudice, regional, geographical and linguistic. Because of our long association with it, we cannot help English." Discuss.
7. "English was the third concentric circle—the other two being the mother-tongue and the national language. We must have a happy combination of all these three." Discuss critically.
8. Critically examine the recommendations of the IEC in regard to the language policy.
9. What are the different facets of the language problem in India? Write a note on each.
10. 'The Three-Language formula stipulating retention of English as a link language and involving the obligation to learn Hindi in the South and a South Indian language in the North commends itself both for its practicability and integrative value.' Discuss.