

History of Language in India

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Abstract

India is a big country in which people of different castes, religions, standards of living, food habits, languages and customs are living. Apart from physical diversities between one region and the other, there are several other kinds of diversities in India. The language problem in India is not simply academic. Gradually it has taken a political turn. Certain minority parties have given it the form of a national problem in order to earn cheap popularity and fulfilling their vested political ends. Language problem is not peculiar to India, it is found in several other countries. America and some developed nations of Europe also have language problems. But in India it has taken the form of a movement. Riots, loot and arson in the name of language have been resorted to in the past in our country. In the present article, the status of language studies has been highlighted in the time of various ruling powers in India.

Keywords: Language, India, ruling powers, various commission, history

Introduction

Language symbolizes human development. It is a gift to man as the best living being of the world. Without it, a man is the most superior animal with limited expression. Language is the power of the human race through which he is able to express himself well and understand the expressions of others. On its basis, man utilizes the experiences of the past for the present and secures present successes as a basis of future development. As a wonderful discovery of man language has enriched him tremendously. It has saved the world from man using signal sounds like the dumb. Its development is a sign of social and national development. It is a vehicle of human expression. Therefore, the usefulness of an individuals' expression, his influence, his popularity etc. depend on the capacity of the means of expression. The human relations of the space age are not limited to any class, caste, society, nation or continent. Any narrow-mindedness regarding language will only signify the illiberal attitude of a society or nation.

India is a big country in which people of different castes, religions, standards of living, food habits, languages and customs are living. Apart from physical diversities between one region and the other, there are several other kinds of diversities in India. In the Northern region, from Kashmir to Bengal, a vast majority of people have the impact of Aryan culture. In the Deccan peninsula, the influence of Dravidian culture can easily be noticed. The Western part of the country has been influenced by the Aryan culture, but being the gateway of India it has got a mixture of western culture also. Aryans and the Dravidians are the primitive races of India. These two cultures were well developed during primitive age when civilization had only begun to develop at some places. The developed conditions of country first attracted Turk invaders and subsequently Muslim and European imperialists. Every class, group, community or people of a region have a particular affinity with their language. It is very natural for the

people to become attached to their language sensitiveness, emotional feelings and cultural values. "Indians are more influenced by their ancient glory than by their present achievements and consider the old culture as their most important treasure. One of the main reasons for this is faulty presentation of Indian history. Whatever is available in the form of history here is either one-sided or a translation of the works of foreign historians who could not understand the then conditions well.

Language under Muslim Rule

With the establishing of Muslim rule in the land a foreign language came into existence for the first time in India. The original language of Muslim rulers converted into Urdu language and was fully installed for government work, but it could not become the medium for inter-provincial communication in spite of government protection. Sanskrit, other native languages (Aphhransh) and Hindi continued to occupy that place. One of the main features of that time regarding language was that the excessive protection and favoritism of rulers to Urdu, created a special attachment towards their own language in people of India and accordingly Indian languages developed more and more.

Language under British Rule

After establishing their empire, the British established schools and colleges for teaching English to Indians for administrative purposes.

i) **Christian Missionaries:** The Christian Missionaries established educational institutions as a powerful means of propagation of Christian religion. In all such institutions the medium of instruction was English. About the third decade of nineteenth century, the Company Government over India visualized some danger due to growing public awakening in the country. It became clear to them that according to the wishes of Indian people

some facilities were necessary in order to rule the country. These facilities also included Indian languages as medium of instruction in English schools and colleges. But Lord Macaulay and Lord William Bentinck stood for English as the medium of instruction. The British Government also declared that preference would be given to English knowing people for government posts. Thus, English education got more encouragement though this increased the anger of the Indian public against the British Rule.

- ii) **Wood's Dispatch 1854:** An amendment was made in the Wood's Dispatch of 1854 that English would be the medium of instruction only for brilliant students and all other students would be educated through Indian languages. But due to the disturbances in 1857, that provision could not be implemented and the problem was postponed for about twenty to twenty-five years.
- iii) **Education Commission 1882:** Appointed in 1882 the first Education Commission considered the problem of medium of instruction in English schools in India. It was decided that the medium for Secondary Schools would be English but primary education would be given through Indian languages. In the beginning of twentieth century, the public movement again gained momentum in India and the leaders along with other demands, stressed the demand for making Indian languages as the medium of instruction. The then Governor-General showing his farsightedness accepted the demand for making Indian languages as medium of instruction at the secondary level also, but the decision could not be effectively implemented as English was used in all Governmental work. As such education in Secondary schools continued to be given in English.
- iv) **Calcutta University Commission 1917:** Language movement again led to the appointment of Calcutta University Commission in 1917. It recommended the adoption of Indian languages as medium of instruction up to higher secondary stage. Some English medium schools made regional languages medium of instruction.
- v) **1935 to 1947:** By 1935, regional languages had become medium of instruction in most of the educational institutions. But some important institutions, particularly those run by Christian Missionaries, kept English as the medium. After that till the attainment of Independence, there were some other language changes. The leaders engaged in public movement demanded to make Indian languages as medium of instruction in all types of educational institutions and to adopt the Basic system of education for the primary level. After the Movement of 1942, the British rulers accepted Indian languages as the first compulsory language and English as second compulsory language for secondary education but continued English as medium of instruction for higher education.

Language in Independent India

- i) **Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission 1948:** The first education commission, known as Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission, was appointed in 1948 after Independence. It recommended the study of the federal language in the Deonagri Script and that of English and regional

language both at secondary and University stages.

- ii) **Secondary Education Commission 1953:** It recommended two-language formula instead of three-language formula recommended by Radhakrishnan Commission. It also recommended that at the State level facilities should be provided for the study of every language spoken in a State. This recommendation further complicated the problem rather solving it. Regarding language most of the recommendations of this Commission were impracticable. Even before Independence, the provision of study of English as a national language, mother tongue and one additional language was compulsory at the secondary stage and continuing smoothly without any difficulty. After the acceptance of Hindi as a national language, provision could easily be made for the study of national language along with regional languages and English.
- iii) **The Central Advisory Board of Education (1956):** It recommended the adoption of three-language formula.
- iv) **The Emotional Integration Committee (1961) and Kothari Commission (1966):** Both these tried to improve the situation through their recommendations but the situation remained out of control. The regions which have been continuing the study of three languages before Independence, now considered it a waste of time and energy of the students. The people of some regions started supporting English for their personal and party interests though they did not have any particular attachment to English.

Conclusion

Language is a science which has certain rules and principles. It is the media of communication and verbal interaction between teacher and students. Literature is an art and mirror of a society and culture. The language is the media for literature.

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