

One Nation One Language: A Roadmap to Unity and Congruence or an Unsound Approach

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Abstract: India a country which is basically recognized for its varied culture and lifestyle. A country with 22 recognized languages, written in 13 different scripts, with over 720 dialects and if we apply the notion of One Nation, One Language here, will it work? Today the beauty of India lies in Unity in Diversity, but the concept of “one nation, one language” will kill the essence of this beauty. When people of India are given the basic fundamental rights that they can live their life the way they want and can speak any language they want, then will it be justified to impose the notion of ‘one nation, one language’ on them? Won’t it go against Constitution of India? Won’t it be violating the fundamental rights of the citizen of India? Identifying the major stakeholders as the common population of India, We put forth our views on the questions raised above and will this western concept of One nation one language followed by countries which have small population work and is a tangible approach for a densely populated country like India? Will a country like India which has a total 122 major languages and 1599 other languages adopt one language as LINGUA FRANCA. This Article deals with various data of Census 2011 [1], Official Languages Act, 1963 [2], Official Languages Act, 1967 [3], Article 344(1) [4] and Article 351 [5]. We aim to unquestionably prove why this concept is not a tangible approach for a country like India.

Keywords: Unity in Diversity, Densely Populated, Lingua Franca, Census 2011, Official Languages Act

1. Background

Starting from where this notion of ‘one nation, one language came’. It is ironic that our animosity towards English makes us blind to the fact that the idea of a singular nation: One nation, one language, is itself a European Idea, whereas India always believed in **Unity in diversity**. Basically this is the notion that emphasizes on practicing one language in a country but in India we are having different conditions than many of the European nations because of the extent of regional diversities found in India. Taking the example of religious diversity here, in most of the Muslim countries India is identified as the Hindu country but despite of recognition as the Hindu country the Indian subcontinent is the birthplace of four of the world's major religions; namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. According to 2011 religion census around [6] 19.5% of population practice diverse religion, other than Hinduism and imposition of the notion of ‘one nation, one language’ in India is like snatching their culture from them. In fact it is not only about religion, if we consider it in a wider ambit then we can see that currently in India we are having total of 29 states and 7 Union Territories however, after recent bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, there will be 28 states and nine Union Territories in the country but the main point here is that the bifurcation of states is not only about the bifurcation of land in fact it is more about the bifurcation of culture and language. There is no single language that the whole nation speaks. According to the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner [7], India has a total of 122 major languages and 1599 other languages and with such diversity it is actually very difficult to adopt one language as a **Lingua Franca**. Often it is argued that a national language is considered a language which represents Indian culture but then what about the other languages and the culture associated with those languages. And imposition can lead to a chaotic situation in our society and a feeling of rebel in the minds of people of India, leading to an unstable society.

2. Impact on Culture

Considering it from the cultural point of view, this notion of imposition of one language will lead to the death of the regional languages and language is the lifeline of culture and tradition of people living in a particular region because culture can be propagated from one person to another or from generation to generation with the use of language but what if the language you have spoken from ages have been snatched from you? How will you then pass your culture if you would not be able to communicate with others, if the language you speak has been snatched and you are completely unfamiliar with the language that is imposed on you? Language is the only way to preserve any culture and the best way to preserve or promote any language is to use it extensively which can't be possible after the imposition of this European notion ‘one nation, one language which will lead to the death of culture and tradition of people and it is not easy for people to see their culture vanishing, that is the reason for the nationwide protest after the Union Minister proposed the notion of ‘one nation, one language’ for India so imagine if only on the proposition of an idea can lead to so many protest then what will be the condition when it will be implemented. Like recently when the government introduced the concept of compulsory Hindi education in non-Hindi speaking states under the National Education Policy [8], 2019 it led to the huge protest in the nation. And this protest is not new, instead we have seen it since 1963 when Violent protests broke out in the non Hindi speaking states especially in the Southern states resisting the imposition of Hindi and the time also witnessed violent protests against the proposal that Hindi would be India's only official language leading the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, to introduce the ‘Official Languages Act’ in 1963 [9], which assured the continuation of English along with Hindi as the official language of the Union of India. Anti-Hindi protests of 1965 marked an important turn in India's official language policy. The ‘Official Languages Act’ was amended in 1967 [10] guaranteeing the “virtual

indefinite policy of bilingualism" for all official purposes of the Union. The southern States since long have been protesting against Hindi as they fear that the plan to promote Hindi might make them secondary citizens and undermine the country's integrity. Southern states also feel that the imposition of Hindi is the hegemony of the North and the introduction of monoculture. So this notion of one nation, one language is dividing India rather than uniting.

3. Major Problem

If we consider one more aspect of the notion that if we want to make one language as the **LINGUA FRANCA** of the country then which language it would be? How will you choose one language from such diversity? If we make English as that one language then it would go against the notion of sovereignty of India and it will be the acceptance of the colonial rule and the death of the mother languages of India also there are many people who do not have any idea about the English language. Other than English many propositions were made to make Hindi as the one and only language of India like recently on the occasion of "Hindi Divas" the Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tweeted that "Today, if one language can do the work of uniting the country, then it is the most spoken language, Hindi. There is so much influence of English on us that we cannot talk in Hindi without its help." The minister also said that people should realize that if languages are lost to foreign influence, "we will be severed from our culture". But will it actually unite the country? No! the protests of 1965 are enough to answer this question. And also as per the 2011 census [11], 43.63 percent of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue and this do not even constitute the half of the population of India, so on what basis will Hindi be made the compulsory language and how will it be implemented in the states when people do not have any idea about the language, when they are completely unknown to the language.

4. Constitutional Outlook

A uniform language goes against the idea of a diverse and federal structure of the country, where such common language may not be desirable. It also runs contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and our country's linguistic diversity. Here considering the constitutional aspect of this notion, it goes against the constitution as well because Article 29 [12] of the Indian Constitution has given the right to a distinct language, script & culture to the India citizen and imposing the notion of one nation, one language is against this because this notion prefers having one language over all other languages. As per Articles 344(1) [13] and Article 351 [14] of the Indian Constitution, the eighth schedule includes the recognition of the following 22 languages namely Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu and All languages listed in this Schedule of the Constitution are national languages and must be treated equally. Any attempt to impose any one language will lead to the disruption of our country's unity and integrity. Despite of the fact that there are already 22 languages recognized by the Indian Constitution the people of India are demanding 45 more

languages to be given the recognition. At present, as per the reports of Ministry of Home Affairs there are demands for inclusion of 45 more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution, then what will be the scenario of our country if one language would be imposed on the people. Thus imposition of one language in a country like India where its constitution itself talks about providing rights to practice the regional language is actually making the mockery of those people who spent their 165 days in making the constitution.

If we consider it from the ruling point of view then a multitude of languages means resistance, empowerment, many life-worlds, many knowledge systems and mobility. That is why all totalitarian regimes seek to erase such multitudes. That is why the Britishers after coming in power introduced many plans to introduce their language in our country and to eradicate the essence of unity of India that is its linguistic diversity and forget resistance, how can people speak in another tongue as fluently as a native speaker whose language also happens to be the national language? They will not be able to communicate properly and that will eventually lead into no rebel and resistance.

Markus Zusak in his book *The Book Thief* [15] also explained about the importance of words-

"The words. Why did they have to exist? Without them, there wouldn't be any of this."

That is the reason why the first step towards autocracy is erasure of tongues, erasure of speech because it ensures your rule without any kind of revolt. So it is best to have a nation with linguistic diversity because it prevents a country to go into the hands of autocrats.

5. Conclusion

This idea of One Nation One language will lead our country to the utmost darkness where the people instead of working for the development of country will be fighting with each other because any such efforts of imposing a language on the unwilling people is hardly unifying, and rather it is more divisive. We may have one nation-one tax, but one nation-one language will never be a reality. So accordingly it is not morally and ethically suitable to snatch their language from the people and to impose any random language on them which they are not aware about because language play a very vital role in the life of people as also stated by Ludwig Wittgenstein –

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." [16]

and also people are emotionally attached with their languages and snatching their language is actually hurting their emotions. The beauty of India lies in its diversity and imposition of one particular language is like ruining its beauty. There is already very much unity in India that is why it is known for its "**Unity in Diversity**" all over the world, so there is no need to spoil it by bringing any European idea in our country. The citizens are happy without this idea and for the continuation of this happiness it is important not to introduce it here in our country.

“Unity, not uniformity, must be our aim. We attain unity only through variety. Differences must be integrated for a better society and a better country.”

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