



LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

India is a multinational country with many sub-nations which are proud of their own cultures. The linguistic survey of India on different occasion has soon that there are more than thousands mother tongues including various languages and dialects. These linguistic diversity has always been posing a great threat to national unity or integration which means a people living in a territorial unit having a national authority and as value consensus.

National integration is a problem of many countries but in India the problem is most comprehensive. One of the barriers to the achievement of national integration in India is the existence of strong hold of sub-national loyalties on account of linguistic diversities. However linguistic diversity did not pose a great problem for compromises and consensus among the people during the independence struggle.

After independence politicization of language has tended to threaten our national integration on the controversies over the linguistic re-organisation of the state, the official language, etc. Yet it can be said that a single language for national identity is hardly possible in India. The solution of language problem for establishing national unity in India must be a pluralist one.

KEYWORDS

Multinational, Linguistic, Diversity, National, Integration, Independence, Politicization, Reorganisation, Identity, Pluralist

INTRODUCTION

India being a polyglot country displays diversities of culture. There is no all India language or all India culture. As such India is a multi-national nation with many sub-nations with different cultural and linguistic characteristics. These subnations are very conscious and very proud of their own culture, language and identity. The linguistic configuration of India is in many respects unique. Analogies from other countries – Canada, Belgium, Switzerland – have little relevance in understanding its problems. The assertion of a decisive relationship between language and politics which formed an important part of the European nationalist creed applies quite differently in a situation where the language problem is multi-dimensional.

India has always been a multilingual civilization with a complicated system of communications both horizontally and vertically, special elite languages and a constant interplay between local, regional and all Indian languages. Patterns of language development in different historical epochs have displayed a history of cultural assimilation par –

excellence. They have displayed the peculiar interplay of primordial group cohesion, secular accommodation and emulation of dominant cultural standards.

India is obviously a land of many tongues. The linguistic survey of India published in 1927 listed 1652 mother tongues, including 179 languages and 544 dialects. The census of India of 1961 recorded speakers of 1018 different languages. The 1971 census enumerated 33 languages with speakers of more than one million. All these languages, however, fall under four language families (Indo – Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto – Chinese and Austro Asiatic). Underlying the persisting diversity of India's language situation has been the striking process of consolidation of regional standards.

MEANING OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The concept of “National Integration” is used to cover an extraordinary broad range of political phenomenon. According to Myson Weiner, the term national integration refers to –

1. Creation a territorial unit.
2. Establishing a national authority over subordinate units.
3. Linking the Government with the Governed.
4. Achieving a value consensus, and e
5. Creating the capacity of people in a society to organize for some common purpose.

The problem of national integration varies from country to country. Hence the solution to the problem of national integration cannot be uniform. As regards India, this country is plural in the most comprehensive sense of the word. In the developing countries like India the problem of national integration is the problem of meeting the challenges of the revolution of rising expectations and maintaining a dynamic equilibrium in the process of change. Against the background of the highly diverse and regimented social fabric the keynote to integration is unity in diversity in which both the components are equally valid and mutually interdependent.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN INDIA

Many western scholars and west oriented political elites of India regard mono-languish as a fundamental pre-condition of nation-hood itself. A single language, to them, is essential for national identity. Language reflects common patterns of thought and very often the soul of the nation is the language it speaks. So one of the barriers to the achievement of national integration in India is the strong held of sub-national loyalties passed on linguistic diversity. This view ignores – a) the centuries old history of linguistic diversity in India, b) the compromises and consensus evolved during the independence struggle, c) the multi-plexity of language problem in the Indian context where languish in many cases is either a catalyst or a cloak for communalism and / or separatism.

A different view is that language can be a powerful unifying as well as divisive force. It could bind and unite and promote brotherhood. It can also separate and divide and foment hatred. We have not concentrated on the constructive aspects of language. We have politicized it too long. As a result the negative aspects of linguistic diversity have tended to threaten our national integration. Rajni Kothari, on the other hand, opines that the doctrine that a single language is essential for national identity is hardly relevant to the Indian case. According to him, while the language problem is no doubt putting to test India's overall design of national unity, it is also forcing all parties to accept pluralist solution. After encountering a series of crises the linguistic diversity has led to important breakthrough in policy crystallization.

For the first two decades after independence, the most salient divisive and persistent set of issues entered around the various language problems of India. They included especially the controversies over the linguistic re-organization of states, over the official language of India and over the states of Urdu and other minority languages within several states.

CONCLUSION

Thus we find that most of the language conflicts in the Nehru period, some of which became at times bitter and violent, were ultimately resolved through pluralistic solutions. In the post Nehru period, however, several linguistic, ethnic and regional movements have escalated to levels of bitterness and violence. According to Paul R. Brass, linguistic diversities in India do not themselves provide interest obstacles to national unity or inevitable sources of conflict. According to him, a combination of increasingly assertive centralizing drives by the Indian state and its national leadership with an intensified struggle for power in centre, state and locality have contributed to the intensity of such conflicts during the past few decades. It should be mentioned in the respect that Hindi fanaticism should be avoided and under no circumstances Hindi can be imposed upon the non-Hindi speaking people.

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