

CHAPTER VIII
LANGUAGE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION—II
PROGRESS MADE IN THE USE OF INDIAN LANGUAGE MEDIA
IN STATE ADMINISTRATIONS

(a) IN THE DIRECTION OF ADOPTING REGIONAL LANGUAGE(S) AS THE LANGUAGE OF THE ADMINISTRATION;

and

(b) IN THE DIRECTION OF HINDI FOR PURPOSES OF INTER-COMMUNICATION AMONGST STATES *inter se* AND WITH THE UNION.

(a)

The progressive use of Hindi in the affairs of the Union is of course connected, for obvious reasons, with the progressive use of that language, for purposes of inter-communication with other States and the Union, in the State administrations. It is also connected for reasons which we have adverted to elsewhere with the progress of adoption of the Hindi medium for the purpose of their administration by the States in which Hindi is the regional language. Indeed inasmuch as the progress of all Indian languages in those spheres of administration from which they were hitherto shut out can only be in step with each other, the progress of Indianisation in the linguistic medium in the non-Hindi-speaking States also is not without bearing on the issue of the progressive use of the Hindi language in the affairs of the Union.

We have, therefore, had a statement prepared showing the existing position in respect of the use of the Indian languages in the administrations in the different States. This statement is printed as paper V in the Supplementary Papers.*

It will be observed that on the whole considerable progress has been made, in the States where Hindi is the regional language, in replacing English by Hindi in the official administration. Several of these States have passed Official Language Acts and in some cases laid down definite and phased programmes for the substitution of English by Hindi within the State administration. Separate Language Departments, or other like administrative agencies such as separate sections within a department, to look after the subject have been set up, in some of these State Governments; manuals of procedure have been published; glossaries of administrative terms prepared and adopted, steps put in train for translating the procedural literatures necessary for the conduct of administration, measures initiated for training personnel including stenographers and typists, etc. On the whole it might be said that several of these States are fairly far advanced in the direction of turning over the linguistic medium of administration within their States from English to Hindi.

*Not printed.

In the State of Madhya Pradesh which has adopted Marathi along with Hindi as the second official language of the State, like progress has been registered with reference to the Marathi language. In Orissa and Saurashtra also where legislative measures have been passed for adopting the respective regional languages as the official languages for their administrations, some progress appears to have been made. For the rest, it would seem that the progress in the direction of displacing English from the State administration at the levels at which the English medium has been current, has been modest or negligible.

2. No doubt there are factors which account for the relatively greater progress in Indianisation of the administrative medium made in the Hindi-speaking regions as compared to what has transpired so far in the rest of the country. For one thing, in the Hindi-speaking States, the problem is less complicated than in the rest who have not only to adopt another regional language as the language for State administration but also to provide at all appropriate levels for Hindi which would be the language for the purposes of all-India inter-communication when English is displaced in terms of the constitutional provisions. Apart from this, the fact that over a considerable part of the non-Hindi regions, the territories of the States were multi-lingual in character hitherto must have somewhat retarded the displacement of the English medium in the administration. For instance, in the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the Madras Government's reply to the Questionnaire of the Commission, it is stated in this connection as under:—

So far, the Legislature of this State has made no provision regarding changes in the Official Language. English, therefore, continues to be the Official Language of the State. A few years ago, a pilot experiment was started in one district for the transaction in Tamil of all official business within the district. The experiment has helped to bring to light certain practical difficulties which require to be overcome in such matters as equipment, training of staff, etc. The experiment has not been extended to other districts of the State. It is necessary at this stage to explain why no serious step has been taken so far to bring about a change in the official language of this State.....

Until recently Andhra was part of this State. There are special difficulties in effecting a change so long as several languages are spoken by different groups each of which represents a "substantial proportion of the population of the State". It seemed desirable to await the separation of Andhra and other changes connected with the reconstitution of States on a linguistic basis before embarking on any important change in the official language.....

* * * *

While it is true that the decisions regarding the official language of the State are to be taken independently of the decision regarding the official language of the Union, the probable repercussions on the State Administration

and the State Educational system of any changes which may be brought about in the official languages of the Centre must be understood and allowed for. But no decision about the changes at the Centre appeared likely until the Official Language Commission studied the problem. These are the reasons why the official language continues to be unchanged in this State'.

(With the reorganization of the States on a more or less unilingual basis in these areas, there is no doubt that there would be a greater demand for a faster replacement of the English language medium by the regional language medium in the business of the administration.) We are, however, not directly concerned with the policies to be adopted by the States as regards the language medium in the field of the respective State administrations. In terms of Article 345 of the Constitution, subject to the provisions of Articles 346 and 347, the Legislature of a State 'may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State': the proviso to that Article lays down that until the Legislature of the State otherwise provides by law, the English language shall continue to be used for those official purposes within the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of the Constitution.

We have elsewhere made recommendations relating to the development of all regional languages including the Union language. Apart from this, we have nothing further to say so far as the language medium of the State administrations is concerned, except in so far as in terms of Article 346 of the Constitution, it is provided that the official language for communication between one State and another or between a State and the Union shall be the language for the time being authorised for use in the Union for official purposes; that is to say, shall be the Hindi language in Devanagari script, unless otherwise provided, after 15 years from 1950.

***(b)**

3. The point about measures to be taken to fulfil the terms of Article 346 arises only in the States in the non-Hindi-speaking regions. So far as States in the Hindi-speaking region are concerned, on the adoption of the Hindi language for all internal purposes, the administrative machinery of those States would automatically be in a position to fulfil the requirements for purposes of all-India inter-communication between the States and the Union.

*In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 370 of the Constitution, the President has by his Order No. C. O. 48 dated the 14th May 1954, known as 'The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954', made the provisions of Part XVII of the Constitution applicable to the State of Jammu and Kashmir in so far as they relate

to—

- (i) the official language of the Union ;
- ii) the official language for communication between one State and another, or between a State and the Union ; and
- (iii) the language of the proceedings in the Supreme Court.

In the non-Hindi-speaking States what are the requirements for fulfilling the implications of this provision? (The States concerned will have to consider for themselves at what levels administrative occasions would arise for the officers of the State Governments to enter into communication with officers of other States or of the Union.) It must be mentioned in this connection that such a communication would not necessarily be exclusively on paper. A large number of conferences are held and committees or working parties of Officers appointed for advising on particular subjects at the all-India or inter-State planes of contact and consultation. The State would doubtless want all such officers to be in a position to participate fully and with facility in all such deliberations. Apart from officers who would have occasion for such inter-State contact or for functioning at Union levels of deliberation, presumably it would be necessary for the State Governments to ensure that communications received from the Union or other States in Hindi are understood at all levels *below*, whereat they must be read, noted upon and otherwise processed. In this connection it is sometimes suggested that 'translation units' may be set up to translate Hindi communications into the regional languages for the purpose of such staff handling them within the State administration. It would be for the State concerned to decide for itself whether the handling of such documents in translation would be entirely satisfactory; while such translation services would probably be necessary in any case to make such communications intelligible at other levels, *at the levels at which they have to be attended to* with a view to initiating action or rendering a reply or for other similar purposes, it would doubtless be found preferable that the personnel are in a position to understand the wording of the communication in the original. It would be for the State Governments to determine what staff would be affected by this and consider what precise steps should be taken for training up their personnel at the appropriate levels for dealing with such communications.

4. We notice that in some States where the regional language is other than Hindi, the Government have imposed a requirement on certain administrative staff—in some cases on *all* government servants of all grades—to pass certain prescribed tests in Hindi by prescribed dates. To the extent to which knowledge of the Hindi language would be necessary to be possessed by the government servants to enable them to discharge effectively their duties touching upon the field of inter-communication between the States and the Union, such a requirement would be obviously quite necessary. It is not quite clear on what grounds the requirement has been imposed where government servants would *not* come within the ambit of inter-State communication. We have elsewhere advocated that in the compulsory scheme of education up to the age of 14 enjoined by the Constitution provision should be made for every child to undergo 3 or 4 years' compulsory instruction in Hindi. It is arguable that the requirement that government employees who would have no occasion for all-India or inter-State contacts must nevertheless qualify in Hindi is defensible by analogy on the general ground that such a knowledge, though not required by them as government servants, is necessary in them even merely as citizens. Whether State government servants should or should not be so distinguished

from other citizens is however entirely a point for the State Governments concerned to decide; likewise it would be for the State Governments to decide for themselves whether any such instruction in Hindi, beyond the strict requirements of the issue, should not be on the basis of 'encouragement and incentives' rather than 'compulsion and penalties'.

5. The proviso to Article 346 provides that if two or more States agree that the Hindi language should be the official language for communication between such States, that language may be used for such communication. Accordingly, there have been agreements to carry on inter-State correspondence in Hindi with one another amongst the States of Bihar, Madhya Bharat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Ajmer, Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh.

Certain points arise for consideration in this connection. While the States may agree between themselves to conduct inter-communication in the Hindi language in terms of this proviso, the language for use between a State and the Union and between other States which do not so agree would continue to be the English language until 1965.

One of the points for consideration would be whether it would be possible, and if possible advisable, for the Union to correspond with the Hindi-speaking States in Hindi even prior to 1965. Within the Union Government itself knowledge of Hindi among the non-Hindi personnel has not yet so far advanced as to admit all communications received from the Hindi States in Hindi being dealt with. Therefore the incoming communications from the Hindi States will have to continue to be in English or at any rate be accompanied by an English translation until such a position is reached. So far as outgoing communications from the Government of India to the Hindi States are concerned, if it is so desired, it should not be impracticable to send out with the outgoing letter in English a Hindi translation. Of course the Hindi versions in both cases would have the status merely of a translation, the original communication being in English. Nevertheless in the view that we have elsewhere taken that the employment of Hindi in the actual work of the administration helps in establishing the forms of address and expressions, etc., in that language and in promoting a greater knowledge of it, we would recommend to the Union Government that whenever a State makes a request to that effect, arrangements may be made for outgoing communications from the Union Government to such States being accompanied by a translation of the English text in Hindi. The President has already authorised the use of Hindi along with English for correspondence with the State Governments which have adopted Hindi as their official language and such a practice would be covered by this authorisation.

NUMERALS

6. One of the specific terms of reference referred to the Commission for making recommendations to the President is 'the form of numerals to be used for any one or more specified purposes of the Union'. The provisions of the Constitution in this regard are as

under. It is enacted in clause 1 of Article 343 of the Constitution that 'the form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals'. In the next clause it is provided that the President may, during the period of 15 years until the Hindi language becomes the official language of the Union, 'by order authorise the use of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union'. In the third clause of the Article it is enacted that 'notwithstanding anything in this Article, Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of the Devanagari form of numerals for such purposes as may be specified in the law'.

As laid down in Article 344, the form of numerals to be used for any one or more of the specified purposes of the Union is one of the terms of reference on which this Commission have to make recommendations. These recommendations, like others, will be reported upon by a Committee of Parliament consisting of 30 members, after consideration of which the President may issue appropriate directions in this behalf

So far as provision by Parliament by law for the use of the Devanagari form of numerals *after* the period of 15 years is concerned, we do not consider it necessary for us to make any recommendation. There will be another Commission five years hence, with similar terms of reference; and in respect of its recommendations a similar procedure will be followed. Thereafter, Parliament will doubtless give further thought to the matter before it decides by law whether any provision should be made for the use of the Devanagari form of numerals for any of the purposes of the Union after 1965.

The only point that we have to consider is whether we could recommend to the President the issue of directions for providing for the use of the Devanagari form of numerals for any purposes between now and the time when the issue will be re-examined by the next Commission due to be appointed in 1960. It may be mentioned that of the *two orders issued by the President as regards the use of Hindi language in addition to the English language, in one the President has been pleased to authorise the use of Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals, for the purposes referred to in that order and recited below:—

For warrants of appointments of—

- (i) Governors of States,
- (ii) Judges of the Supreme Court, and
- (iii) Judges of the High Court.

7. It will be interesting and pertinent first of all to see the distinction between the international form of Indian numerals and the Devanagari form of numerals and how this is accounted for.

*Referred to in the footnote to paragraph 1 of Chapter VII.

As to when exactly the present numerals and the decimal system of counting was evolved is lost in the mists of ancient history. The system of notation and the use of the zero, which by positional changes facilitates the handling of numbers of any size, is generally recognised as having been an Indian discovery. Dantzig states in his book 'Number':—

"This long period of nearly five thousand years saw the rise and fall of many a civilisation, each leaving behind it a heritage of literature, art, philosophy, and religion. But what was the net achievement in the field of reckoning, the earliest art practised by man? An inflexible numeration so crude as to make progress well-nigh impossible, and a calculating device so limited in scope that even elementary calculations called for the services of an expert.....Man used these devices for thousands of years without making a single worth-while improvement in the instrument, without contributing a single important idea to the system...Even when compared with the slow growth of ideas during the dark ages, the history of reckoning presents a peculiar picture of desolate stagnation. When viewed in this light, the achievement of the unknown Hindu, who some time in the first centuries of our era discovered the principle of position, assumes the proportion of a world event'.

The epochal character of this device, which appears so simple and natural in retrospect, is referred to by Laplace, the mathematician-astronomer, in the following terms:—

'It is India that gave us the ingenious method of expressing all numbers by means of ten symbols, each symbol receiving a value of position, as well as an absolute value; a profound and important idea which appears so simple to us now that we ignore its true merit, but its very simplicity, the great ease which it has lent to all computations, puts our arithmetic in the first rank of useful inventions; and we shall appreciate the grandeur of this achievement when we remember that it escaped the genius of Archimedes, and Apollonius, two of the greatest men produced by antiquity'.

The Indian numerals, that is to say, the notation and the symbols which had been apparently for a long time in use in India in mathematical and astronomical treatises, appear to have been taken over by Arabian scholars; and from Arabia it would seem they travelled over to Europe, undoubtedly undergoing several mutations in the process. The Encyclopedia Britannica has the following remarks to offer in regard to the origin of the numerals now only known as international numerals and referred to in the Indian Constitution as 'the international form of Indian numerals':—

'Our common numerals are commonly spoken of as Arabic but preferably as Hindu-Arabic. The country, however, which first used, so far as we know, the largest number of our

numeral forms is India. Hindu literature gives some evidence that the zero may have been known before our era. By the close of the 8th Century, however, some astronomical tables of India are said to have been translated into Arabic and in any case the numerals became known to Arabic scholars about this time'.

Within the country itself the numeral symbols came to be written in slightly different styles amongst the different linguistic groups more or less in the same way in which the original Brahmi script underwent mutations and gave rise to the scripts of most of the modern Indian languages. The so-called international form of numerals is nothing but yet another mutation of the ancient Indian numerals. We give in a chart, in Appendix X, the manner in which these numerals are written in their pristine form in association with the scripts of the different regional languages of India. It is to be noted in this connection that in the South the international form of numerals is in current use in the four great Dravidian languages alongside of their respective scripts. It may be noted that indigenous numeral symbols of some of these scripts are derived from the first letters of the alphabet in the respective languages. In fact it appears that the international form of numerals is more widely prevalent in the writings in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada than their respective indigenous forms.

As regards the Devanagari form of numerals, there seem to have been two slightly different series of symbols in current practice. The Lucknow Conference for Devanagari Script Reform of 1953 recommended a particular system of Devanagari numeral symbols. If the Devanagari numeral symbols are to be used, which particular series should be considered for such use is a matter which we might consider as settled in the case of public authorities by the recommendations of the Lucknow Conference which have been adopted by the Central Government as well as several State Governments.

8. We understand that there is some difference of opinion as to whether or not the provisions of the Constitution envisage that the international form of numerals should be used alongside of the Devanagari script while writing Hindi when that language is adopted in terms of Article 345 for the official purposes of a State. One opinion is that the provision of clause 1 of Article 343 relating to the international form of Indian numerals is restricted in its application to the official language of the Union and that States are competent, while adopting Hindi as the regional language for their official purposes, to adopt the Devanagari form of numerals. In view of these different interpretations, we understand that some State Governments of the Hindi-speaking region use the Devanagari form of numerals for their internal purposes and the international form of numerals for their communications with the Union Government.

Whether the States which have adopted Hindi as the State language may or may not use the Devanagari form of numerals for all purposes of the State administration within their own regions either exclusively if their interpretation of law is correct or in addition to the international form of numerals is a matter for the concerned States to decide for themselves.

9. A large number of States have expressed in their opinions in reply to our Questionnaire the view that the international form of numerals may continue to be *exclusively* used along with Hindi in Devanagari script as the language of the Union. The view has, however, been advanced by some of the Hindi-speaking States that the Devanagari form of numerals should be used in addition to the international form of numerals; yet others have advocated that the Devanagari form of numerals may be used to the exclusion of the international form of numerals either for all or certain purposes of the Union Government.

It is sometimes argued that the curvilinear shape of the Devanagari symbols for the numerals is more artistic and more in keeping with the shape of the characters in the Devanagari script and that the use of the international form of numerals in conjunction with the Devanagari characters 'hurts' the eye. Objectively speaking, we do not see anything to choose in point of shape in the Devanagari symbols for the numerals as against the other series. As regards the use of the international form of Indian numerals appearing incongruous to persons reading the Devanagari script, we believe that this incongruity is merely the result of habit and that inherently there is no incongruity between the two. As people get accustomed to the international form of numerals alongside the Devanagari characters, this feeling of incongruity will rapidly pass away. It has also been suggested to us that the symbols of the international form of Indian numerals are more convenient for easy reading and spotting, particularly in the case of motor-car numbers, and milestones, etc., whereas the Devanagari numerals being more curvilinear are not so quickly distinguished.

In view of the historical origin of the series of symbols known as the international form of Indian numerals, there should be no objection, even on the ground of sentiment, to their adoption. The fact that the international form of Indian numerals has been widely adopted in current practice for the regional scripts for the languages of the South, and the constitutional provision that this form of numerals should be used for the purpose of the Union and for purposes of inter-State communication, mark it out for universal adoption in the country by public authorities if there is to be a common series of numerals all over India. For reasons somewhat similar to those which we have advanced with reference to the Devanagari script as a common optional script for Indian languages it appears to us that it would certainly be an advantage if a common system of numerals came to be used for the widest possible purposes in the whole country. It seems to us that such a common system of numerals would have to be the international form of Indian numerals for like reasons for which for the choice of a common script for the Indian languages one would have to select the Devanagari script. We do hope that States will adopt the use of the international form of Indian numerals—if necessary in addition to their regional form—so far at any rate as concerns mile-stones, motor-car numbers and other such cases in which the facility of easy legibility by persons

*Paragraphs 8—12 in Chapter XIII.

of other linguistic groups may be properly expected. With the introduction of compulsory education in accordance with the constitutional directive, the teaching of the international form of Indian numerals, which are a part of the linguistic medium of the Union, would become in course of time more general; and any difficulties that may exist at present in the way of adopting these numerals universally in the country would be growingly mitigated even as such difficulties in respect of the universal currency of the Devanagari script would be likewise ameliorated by the same development.

So far as private citizens are concerned, they would, we presume, for a long time continue for their own records, to use the different series of symbols that are current along with the different scripts of Indian languages in various parts of the country. The Devanagari symbols will continue to be used in this fashion in the Hindi-speaking region by those writing in the Devanagari characters, whatever the decision of the respective State Governments relating to the question in the preceding paragraph.

Of course so long as this form of numerals is current amongst the public and is better known, the State Governments of these regions would naturally have to use these numerals (perhaps and preferably, in addition to the other series, namely the international form of Indian numerals) in their publications or communications directed to such public.

We understand that the present policy of the Government of India in this regard is as under:—

‘The policy is that the use of international forms of Indian numerals should be encouraged as much as possible and that ordinarily the form of numerals to be used should be this form. The Cabinet has, however, left it to the discretion of the various Ministries concerned to use the Devanagari form of numerals in the case of Hindi Translations of official documents belonging to them’.

It seems, what is contemplated in this decision is that where it is sought to reach the wider masses of the public of the Hindi-speaking regions who are presumably not familiar with the international form of numerals, the Devanagari form of numerals may be used in the Hindi publications of the different Ministries. We assume that what has been left to the discretion of the Ministries concerned is to judge what publications answer to this type of literature and authorise the use of Devanagari numerals in such publications. If it is the broad application of accepted principles that is intended to be left to the Ministries and not the decision in principle itself as to whether Devanagari form of numerals should be used in particular documents emanating from them, the above decision would be comprehensible.

We have to make a recommendation as to whether the President should issue direction for the use of the Devanagari form of numerals for any purposes between now and the time when the issue will be

re-examined by the next Commission due to be appointed in 1960. We have no such recommendation to make as we are not aware of any additional purposes of the Union for which it would be an advantage to direct the use of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals.
