

**LETTER FROM SHRI B. G. KHER, CHAIRMAN, OFFICIAL  
LANGUAGE COMMISSION, TO THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
FORWARDING THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION.**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE COMMISSION,  
*Bombay, 31st July 1956.*

FROM

SHRI B. G. KHER,  
CHAIRMAN,  
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE COMMISSION,  
BOMBAY.

To

THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
NEW DELHI.

DEAR SIR,

I have the honour to submit herewith the Report of the Official Language Commission appointed by you in pursuance of the provisions of Article 344 of the Constitution (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs Notifications Nos. 43/9/55-Public-I, dated the 7th June 1955 and 22nd July 1955).

The Commission had been instructed to make their recommendations to the President not later than the 31st date of July 1956 and I am glad it has been possible for me to submit the Commission's Report to you by that date.

Apart from the Report together with its Appendices and three notes, one of explanation and two of dissent, a Supplementary Volume prepared in the Commission's office by its Research Unit and comprising papers relating to certain basic data is forwarded herewith in the hope that this material will be of use for any subsequent examination of these issues. The views or opinions expressed in the Supplementary Volume are not necessarily the views of the Commission which is not responsible for them.

2. In forwarding the Commission's Report, I am constrained to make the following observations with reference to the two Notes of Dissent and the third Note of Explanation appended to it. The purport of these observations was stated at length at the last session of the Commission held on the 25th July 1956 in Bombay.

3. The last meeting of the Commission was held on the 25th July for the purpose of considering any such notes, dissenting or otherwise, which the members might want to append to the Report the main

text of which they had approved (subject to such possible dissent) and signed at the end of the previous meeting held at Srinagar from the 11th to 20th June.

I quote relevant extracts from the Minutes of the meeting of the 25th instant.

"The Chairman pointed out the significance of the Report in the present conditions in the country and the importance of every member of the Commission approaching the issue with a due measure of a sense of responsibility. He further pointed out that it was necessary, even if we could not agree, that we should not do anything that would cause harm to the larger interest of the country. He said that while he would scrupulously respect any genuine disagreement and while of course such disagreement must be expressed in the form of a minute of dissent, he was constrained to point out certain *considerations* relating to propriety and form which must be observed in a minute of dissent. A minute of dissent is always read together with the main report and should properly be restricted to the element of disagreement and the argument necessary to support the views of the dissenting member embodying the disagreement. A minute of dissent is not a fresh dissertation or thesis and the inclusion of matter already covered in the Report or a refutation of views not supported or countenanced in the Report have properly no place in it. In conclusion he appealed to the members who had sent in their minutes of dissent that:

- (a) They should confine their minutes of dissent to specific points of disagreement;
- (b) Supererogatory observations not inconsistent with the Report, or re-statement of matters already in the Report, or expositions which only re-state what is there already in the Report in a different way, should be avoided and pruned away from the minutes of dissent. Otherwise the general reader will get a wrong impression about the extent and character of the dissent;
- (c) When views in the main Report are quoted or referred to for refutation, the quotation or reference should be such as not to give a wrong impression."

This request of mine found general support from all other members of the Commission. Two or three members who had specific points of disagreement limited to particular issues, have seen their way to the disagreement being indicated by foot-notes which have been embodied at appropriate places in the Report.

4. The genuine points of disagreement in the two Notes of dissent appended to the Report, with reference to particular conclusions and recommendations relate to points of great importance (but not those in the note of explanation). The Report touches upon many fields and aspects of the complex issue of languages in the country, and has arrived at many conclusions and recommendations; some are factual or non-controversial and the bulk of them are not disputed

in any of the three Notes. It would be seen that the extent of disagreement is quite limited, even though in the case of the two dissenting Minutes it relates to basic issues.

5. I must record my profound unhappiness at the fact that the dissenting members have not found it possible to grant my request that they might avoid inclusion of material in their Notes which by positive statement or by implication might create a wrong impression about the contents of the Report. At the meeting of the 25th July the other signatories of the Report expressed their grave concern about the mis-representation to which they would be exposed because these Notes contained matter which ascribed views and opinions to the main Report incorrectly. A request was made to me on behalf of the signatories of the main Report that they should be allowed to append a 'post-script' in which they would point out such "acts of commission and omission" in the dissenting Notes and prevent such misrepresentation. I ruled that such a post-script would be out of order. This has made it all the more necessary for me to state all the circumstances in order to avoid any misrepresentation.

6. In what follows, I indicate how large portions of these three Notes are merely a re-statement of matter already in the Report: I also controvert one or two points relative to procedure and notice some unfortunate expressions and incorrect ascription of views.

In paragraph 1 of his Minute of Dissent Dr. Subbarayan expresses his feeling that "more evidence should have been secured..... For instance students in the Universities should have been examined in every State" in regard to difficulties of study of "scientific, technical and technological subjects in a language which is not yet developed sufficiently to be a satisfactory vehicle of such a study."

I invite attention to paragraph 2 of Chapter I of the Report in which the procedure followed by the Commission in taking evidence has been described. It has been the Commission's endeavour to seek the widest expression of opinion on the subject-matter of its inquiry. And even apart from the fact that ample evidence has been taken on this particular point, if this suggestion had been made while the Commission was taking evidence, I should have at once acceded to the taking of such further evidence. The first time that Dr. Subbarayan makes this suggestion is in his Minute of Dissent. I respectfully differ from his view.

In the same sentence Dr. Subbarayan also states that he cannot help feeling that "more thought (should have been) bestowed on the solution of the problem of such great importance as to what should be the official language for our country and the measures necessary and the time required for the progressive introduction of this language for all official purposes and for higher education". I am pained that Dr. Subbarayan should suggest that sufficient thought was not in fact bestowed by the Commission which had taken such great pains to obtain material and ascertain views from all over the country and give its best thought to them.

Both Dr. Subbarayan and Dr. Chatterji have been, it is stated in their notes, impelled to take a view different from the other

signatories of the Report, by the outbreaks of linguistic passions and intolerance witnessed at various places in connection with the proposals for the reorganisation of States. It is suggested by implication that other signatories of the Report have been heedless of these matters. Nothing could be farther from the truth or less fair to the other members. Indeed it is precisely because of these unfortunate manifestations of linguistic intolerance and exclusiveness that the issue of forging stronger links through a common linguistic medium amongst the different linguistic regions of the country, as a powerful factor towards its 'emotional integration', has become a matter of such crucial importance, as so frequently stated by us:

Dr. Subbarayan observes "I fear that in the entire Report there is very little evidence of understanding, imagination and sympathy for the non-Hindi-speaking peoples of India." (Ref. paragraph 3).

I submit this is grossly unjust to all the other members. It is particularly distressing to me that one of the members of the Commission should appear to suggest that he is the sole repository of "understanding, imagination and sympathy" for the non-Hindi-speaking peoples of India as against all the others including the remaining members representing the great regional languages, besides Hindi, of the country. In the main Report it has been observed ".....we grant entirely the *bona fides* and sincerity of all views advanced including those with which we have wholly differed. We ask for the credit of neither less nor more for the view that we have ourselves taken of the matter." It is a sad reflection for me that a member of the Commission and a co-signatory of this statement is not prepared to do as much to the colleagues with whom he worked for over a year in search of answers to these problems! There are several other grossly unfair aspersions in these two dissenting Notes but I refrain from quoting more.

7. Large portions of Dr. S. K. Chatterji's and Dr. Subbarayan's notes are merely repetitive of what is already stated in the Report. I quote below a few instances and give references to portions of the Report in which the points have been already dealt with very adequately:

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| (A) The importance of the English language as a 'pipe-line' of scientific knowledge and as a 'window' on the rest of the world;                | Chapter IV, paragraph 3.<br>Chapter VI, paragraph 6.  |
| the continued employment of the English language for scientific and technical studies;   | Chapter VI, paragraph 6.<br>Chapter XV, paragraph 5.  |
| that in our consideration of the place of the English language in India one must not be actuated by animus against a foreign language as such; | Chapter IV, paragraph 3.<br>Chapter XIV, paragraph 7. |

the part that the English language has played in furnishing 'a common platform' to the intelligentsia of the different linguistic regions in India's recent political history;

Chapter IV, paragraphs 2 and 3.  
Chapter XV, paragraph 3.  
Chapter XIV, paragraph 7.

the beneficial leaven of new ideas and forms which acquaintance with English language and literature brought into Indian social life and the literatures of the regional languages, etc.

Chapter III, paragraph 5.

(B) The special significance of the English language in the sphere of law and administration of justice and the greater length of time that it would take before other linguistic media could replace this language in these spheres.

Chapter IX, paragraph 3.  
Chapter X, paragraph 4.  
Chapter XI, paragraph 1.

(C) The present-day undeveloped character of the Hindi language (I would point out as of other languages of India) and the need to develop it before it can replace in its appropriate sphere the current linguistic medium of the English language.

Chapter IV, paragraphs 1 and 6.  
Chapter V, paragraph 1.  
Chapter XV, paragraph 7.

More specifically, even amongst the "recommendations" made to the President by these two dissenting members ('B' of Dr. Chatterji's Note and Paragraph 25 of Dr. Subbarayan's Note) the following are no different from the recommendations of the Report:—

(1) There should be no restriction on the use of the English language for all or any of the official purposes of the Union.

Chapter VII, paragraph 16.

(2) That the use of the English language be continued as now both in the High Courts and the Supreme Court for a long time to come and the States be given the liberty to use their regional languages side by side with English in their subordinate courts and so on. [Reference b(ii) of paragraph 25 of Dr. Subbarayan's Note].

Chapter X, paragraphs 8, 9 and 15.  
Chapter XI, paragraph 1.

- (3) The international form of Indian numerals which have been once accepted for the convenience of the whole of India not only for easy communication but also for scientific purposes be retained in pan-Indian Hindi. But for Hindi as a regional language, Hindi forms of the numerals may be continued subject to the use of the international numerals side by side or alternatively.
- (4) A language cannot be developed to order and the preparation of a time-schedule before a language is actually developed will be futile and exasperating because it is impossible to be certain of achievement.
- (5) The States may adopt the language of their region as the medium for all State purposes if they think it desirable and easy to do so. Examinations conducted by the State Public Service Commissions may be in the regional languages with option given to the candidate to have either English or Hindi as the medium.

Chapter VIII, paragraphs 8 and 9.

Chapter XV, paragraph 10.  
Chapter VII, paragraph 17.

Chapter VIII, paragraph 2.  
Chapter XII, paragraph 19.

N.B.—(5) above is not in Dr. Subbarayan's Note.

8. The main and basic disagreement of these two Notes of dissent is contained in the following remarks:

"The question of progressive use of the Hindi language for the official purposes of the Union be kept in abeyance for the time being..... It will finally rest with the different States using their own different regional languages to decide, after Hindi has been voluntarily adopted by them and a knowledge of it has spread among their intelligentsia throughout their territory to what extent Hindi can be used for communication between the Union and the State Governments and between one State Government and to another."\*

Furthermore Dr. Subbarayan recommends that English must find a place in Schedule VIII as one of the languages of India and Dr. Chatterji would have English and a whole host of other languages admitted into this Schedule.

\*In this quotation and those that follow where the words used by Dr. Subbarayan differ from those used by Dr. Chatterji, they have been indicated as alternatives below the line.

So far as the substantive disagreement is concerned, I make no comment beyond stating that both these points, which were vigorously advocated by these members, were deliberated upon at great length by the Commission (*vide* minutes of the May and June meetings of the Commission) before framing its final views.

As regards the inclusion of further languages in the Schedule, a reference is invited to paragraph 19 of Chapter IV of the Report in which the point is fully dealt with. The dissenting members might have at least answered the points made therein. A mere averment once again cannot illuminate the matter any more.

In general the impression is likely to be formed from a perusal of these two Notes (1) that the main Report seeks to eliminate the English language; (2) that it does so not on objective grounds but on grounds of sentiment and animus against English; (3) that it seeks to impose Hindi on sectors appertaining to the proper field of regional languages; (4) that it does so regardless of the present deficiencies of the Hindi language and (5) that it purports to bring about its immediate substitution in place of English. It will be manifest to even a casual reader of the Report that this impression is grossly unjust to the views expressed in the Report.

9. So far as Shri Maganbhai Desai's long Note of Explanation is concerned, it is only a re-statement of points which already find full expression in the Report at appropriate places. The only important specific points of disagreement that I can see in his Note are the following:—

- (1) The Constitution should be amended so as to cast a definite duty on the State Governments to introduce compulsory instruction in Hindi.
- (2) He disagrees with the view in the main Report relating to compelling Hindi students to learn a non-Hindi Indian language.

Shri Maganbhai also mentions his dissatisfaction at the use of certain terms and expressions in the Report. It was pointed out to him that any such points relating to the manner of expression should have been raised before the text of the Report was formulated, in doing which he along with others had collaborated.

I deeply regret that I have failed in persuading Shri Maganbhai Desai to refrain from recording this long Note and thereby causing avoidable confusion in the mind of the reader.

10. So far as the Notes of Dr. S. K. Chatterji and Dr. Subbarayan are concerned, I deeply regret that they should have thought fit, in spite of my request, to retain certain unfortunate remarks and expressions in their Notes. The reference to the creation of 'two classes of citizens' in India, the allegation of 'Hindi-Imperialism', the denigration of the Hindi language and its 'cultural value and intellectual tradition' are most unfortunate.

Apart from their views about the need to amend the Constitution I deeply deplore that they should have thought fit by implication to

impugn the whole Constitution itself as they do by the following observations:

"Hindi was selected, out of the 14 main languages of the country as enumerated in the Eighth Schedule <sup>of</sup> <sub>to</sub> the Constitution, by the Constituent Assembly of India and *not by a Parliament consisting of properly elected representatives of the people.*"\* (Italics mine).

[Paragraph 8 of Dr. Subbarayan's note and C(ii) of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's Note].

11. There are several inaccurate and unsubstantiated statements in these Notes of dissent as regards the contents of the main Report. These were specifically pointed out to these members but they refused to amend them. To illustrate some of them:

(i) Dr. Chatterji says in third paragraph of part A of his Note and Dr. Subbarayan says in paragraph 2 of his Note that—

"It (that is the Report) is also seeking to place as something conclusive before the non-Hindi peoples of India that it will be both an act of patriotic duty and an urgent and necessary reform to replace English by Hindi *as quickly as possible, and to take in Hindi to saturation in their judicial and administrative bases, in their educational set up, and consequently even in their most intimate being*."\* (Italics mine).

Anybody who reads the Report even cursorily will at once see how the italicised portion is gross mis-representation of its contents.

(ii) Dr. Chatterji has argued in 'C' (xii) of his Note against the injustice of Hindi being made the sole language for all-India Civil and other service examinations and how non-Hindi speakers will have to study through Hindi and answer questions in Hindi as consequence thereof. No such view is advocated in the Report in which it is specifically recommended that other regional languages would also be eligible as linguistic media for these examinations.

(iii) "The provisions in the Constitution regarding the use of Hindi as the official language of the Union in certain contexts have been *extended* in the Report". (Italics mine). This statement is obviously incorrect.

Large portions of these Notes recite odd views and proceed to argue against them: these are not the views of the Report at all; nor have they anywhere been countenanced. A wrong impression is likely to be thereby created about the contents of the main Report to which they are appended.

12. Dr. Subbarayan has stated in his note that his point of view was supported by the evidence gathered during the inquiry particularly in Bengal, Madras and Mysore and of many distinguished

\*Please see footnote on page 6.



persons of learning and experience in public life from other States.' In the interest of accuracy I am constrained to point out that this sweeping statement is far from correct. Furthermore he refers (towards the end of paragraph 18 of his Note) in similar broad terms to his view being concurrent with views of certain witnesses and the same remark applied to that statement. Similar remarks would lie against the verisimilitude of support of their views sought to be created by the two dissenting members by quoting certain expressions of views of some eminent persons out of their context. •

13. I must also place on record the following: at the stage of formulating conclusions with a view to framing the draft of the Report it became apparent that these two members advocated that it should be recommended that the provisions relating to language in part XVII of the Constitution should be reviewed and amended radically. A quite tenable view of the matter is that such a suggestion is not 'intra vires' of the Commission which was appointed specifically to consider the detailed implementation of the very provisions which these members sought to amend and replace. Indeed this point was raised by other members as soon as such proposals were advocated. After giving deep and anxious thought to the matter—while reserving my view as to validity and legality of such contention—I decided that it would be inadvisable to rule out the discussion of such a suggestion. It is my profound conviction that the burking of any issues, or the ruling out of their expression, does more harm than good. I have every faith in the good sense and the feeling of 'belonging to each other' amongst the general body of our citizens: and I am sure no view, howsoever one may judge it to be, should be blocked. The discerning public may be trusted to judge the merits of the matter. It is for these reasons that I have not thought fit to rule out of order the expression of these views in the two dissenting minutes and I did not prevent the two members from canvassing them in the Commission in the course of its deliberations.

14. With the concurrence of the Government of India, the Secretary of the Commission was deputed to the U.S.S.R. for a short period to study and report on the linguistic problems tackled by that country; a copy of the note furnished by him of his observations there is submitted herewith.

Yours faithfully,

B. G. KHER,

*Chairman, Official Language Commission.*

