

CHAPTER III

PLACE OF HINDI AND ENGLISH IN NATIONAL EDUCATION

I

1. Replacement of English from its unnatural and therefore wrong position of being the medium of administration and higher education in the country is the most outstanding national venture we are called upon to undertake. This venture, in its effect upon the entire life of the nation, is bound to be revolutionary. India had till now in her history Sanskrit, Persian and English as all-India common languages. They were languages known only to a microscopic number of the people. They were not the languages of the people; they were languages of small classes only. Therefore, such a thing did not tend to nor work for a democratic order, which we now desire to establish. It is perhaps for the first time in our history that we are launching upon the democratic experiment of having the languages of the common man as the vehicle of his government and education.

2. Multilingual as we are, we need for such an experiment the unavoidable accompaniment of an Antar Bhasha—a *lingua franca*. Accordingly we have decided that it will be Hindi, the common language of the largest number amongst us; it will not be a small affair like Sanskrit or Persian or English, however, rich and developed they may be. The decision is a tremendous responsibility. If we succeed in discharging it, the very effort itself will create the New India of our dreams—a democratic and egalitarian society. The language pattern and policy envisaged by the C. of I. is therefore the most epoch-making item in rebuilding New India—free and democratic, creative and equalitarian.

3. As the said pattern abundantly shows, this great rebuilding is to be done by replacing English with the judicious use of our great national languages of India and of the Antar Bhasha Hindi which will be one additional language to the enormous linguistic wealth with which we are blessed in our country. For such an effort to be successful it is very essential that there should be a joint and concerted endeavour of all the language groups of the nation, without any spirit of unhealthy rivalry or sense of superiority etc. amongst them. The Antar Bhasha Hindi, being also a regional language of one of the groups, shall feel or own no superiority over others and shall not covet to steal a march over the fields of the primary or basic languages of the people. This requires to be said here because there is a school of thought among the ruling and vocal classes of the intelligentsia who, thinking in old grooves English had cut into the mental make-up of these classes, would like to create an order wherein not one's own but another language—the Antar Bhasha Hindi may rule. This, as is abundantly clear, is not what the Constitution wills or contemplates. Surely we cannot have a revised edition of the English order, though through Hindi.

4. Almost as an antithesis to this school is to be found a school of thought in the non-Hindi-speaking areas which clings to the *status quo* and pleads for retention of English, though it may not mind if Hindi is also placed along with it as another all-India common language, so long as it may be allowed English. This school, therefore, wishes to continue English teaching in Schools in the same way as it obtains at present and would, as a concession to the constitutional clause regarding Hindi, teach it to those who wish to learn it,—not compulsorily. That is, it will avoid the change-over as long as it can. Their whole argument amounts to saying that English is a national prize we have inherited from our ex-rulers. It has been the “pipe-line” of modern knowledge, specially scientific. I may not analyse this proposition here but only say that pipe-lines are many—as many as there are peoples of the world; but the life-line is only one and it is the indigenous tongue of the people. The best in us can develop and blossom forth only through being nourished by that line. Therefore we should retrieve that life-line and it will retrieve us from the groove in which we have stuck and lost our true way.

5. The retention school also is constitutionally as wrong as the former. Retention is out of court, unless we are prepared to continue with English and thus wreck the language chapter of the Constitution and the nation’s effort of more than half a century to give to ourselves one common national language, which may provide us with a medium complementary to our own languages. This medium will thus be an instrument with which to feel and live our basic unity. But this unity is not to be a monolithic uniformity, but should be a creative and lifeful diversity on the canvas of a fundamental unity which India possesses as her great cultural and democratic prize achievement.

II

6. The above ideal under the Constitution requires now to be worked out in its practical details as a constructive programme for our whole people. The first thing that is obvious is the paramount need of instituting compulsory study of the Antar Bhasha in the national system of education which will be free and compulsory up to the age of 14 of a pupil, under the C. of I. Such a step will be a long range measure for the replacement of English and for the progressive use of Hindi. The short-range measure would be to coach up the administrative personnel of all Governments in India for the immediate needs of the linguistic change-over. This also must be on a compulsory basis. While the former measure covers the non-official or the people’s sector, the latter is the official sector, and will therefore be mainly a Government controlled and directed movement. We shall discuss here the former movement first.

7. The directive to the Union in Art. 351 says that it will be its duty “to promote the spread of the Hindi language” as defined in it. In the context of the above position, this becomes the Union’s imperative duty. Obviously, the Union can efficiently discharge this its constitutional duty by seeing that Hindi becomes a compulsory study in the schools of the whole country. This will be the first step in the direction of the change-over stipulated by the C. of I. I agree with

Shri C. Rajagopalachari here that, if necessary, "the Constitution should be amended so as to provide for (this) logical first step..... to attain the universal spread of the new official language.....in all the areas of India."

III

8. Naturally some will argue against this compulsion and quote in support the Madras anti-Hindi agitation. The point must be unequivocally met. There are two sorts of compulsion: (1) Prescribing compulsory courses of study and devising a system of national education for the people such as may reasonably be held to fulfil the ideas and ideals laid down by the democratic constitution of the land. In a democratic order, such a thing is considered to be the legitimate duty of a State. As Shri Rajaji said in another connection, "all School education has to be based on a certain amount of compulsion". This is not really the sort of compulsion which is objected to. The objectionable sort is the second one, *viz.* to ask for or impose the medium of Hindi in the affairs of a non-Hindi-speaking State in places where its regional language should legitimately and rightfully function; as for instance, the medium of instruction, and administration. This is obviously undemocratic and will be felt coercive. And if imposed in any way overt or covert, it will be educationally and culturally bad and calamitous and politically disruptive and practically suicidal to the interests of the spread of Hindi. It will be in disregard to the safeguard contained in the O.L.C.'s terms of reference, *viz.* regard for our cultural advancement. Rather, I firmly believe that if the Government of the Union, on due recommendations in this regard from the O.L.C., assure non-Hindi-speaking areas, through due declaration of its policies in this behalf, that the second sort of compulsion is entirely out of court and is rejected as a wrong policy, I am sure, such an assurance will go a long way in giving a line-clear to the States for starting compulsory study of Hindi in our Schools and Colleges. As we know, there are numerous pronouncements made both by the President and the Prime Minister of the Country in recent times, giving such assurance of not imposing Hindi through any legal or administrative means in all the spheres where regional languages can have their legitimate use according to the Constitution. What these spheres are must now be detailed and a clear-cut policy mapped out by the O.L.C. Such assurance only can start the process of replacement and silence the cry for retention of English and consequent postponement of the linguistic change-over at least for the next five years. It will, to say the least, knock out any semblance of a tenable argument not to move and learn Hindi.

9. The specific spheres of regional languages mentioned above have been clearly enumerated in an amendment to the resolution of the Madras Legislative Council moved by Government for consideration of the Questionnaire of the O.L.C. The evidence tendered to us in Bengal and other non-Hindi-speaking areas generally endorses this view of Madras. I reproduce the said amendment of the Madras Legislative Council as an addendum to this chapter at the end. It must be noted that the view is in entire agreement with the language pattern under the C. of I.

IV

10. The O.L.C.R. (in Chap. 4, para. 15 onwards) describes the above specific details of the linguistic assurance under discussion here as "linguistic requisites for...unity which is enshrined in the Constitution". And it avers that "as the English language is gradually displaced in the supererogatory fields it occupies at present,..... the regional languages will come into their own"; and it welcomes that such "enfranchisement of the regional languages in their respective fields in administration, education and other respects would be very rapid".

11. However, it does not put down what these 'linguistic requisites' are and when actually making suggestions about the use and study of Hindi and English in Chap. VI, it has, according to me, gone contrary to the position described above. I do not wish to go into describing and discussing these things of the Report, but may note my fears with saying that they will, I fear, unintentionally help in maintaining the *status quo*, which is a vested interest of the small classes created by English in our national life.

V

12. I said above that the Union should have power and influence to cast a positive duty on the States to institute compulsory teaching of Hindi in their schools. An enactment like the one suggested by the S.R.C. for safeguarding the right of instruction through the mother-tongue, should be proposed by the O.L.C., saying that it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for compulsory instruction in the official language of the Union to all children, at least for the last 3 years of the period of free and compulsory education as directed by the C. of I. The President may issue necessary instructions to States in this behalf.

13. At present English is generally studied during these years of schooling in India. This must be displaced giving place to Hindi as the second language in the order of language studies in our system of national education. The teaching of English, except for those who own it as their mother-tongue, must be restricted to begin after the age of compulsory studies when further education may begin in Higher Secondary Schools. It is agreed by all that in the scheme of things educational envisaged by the C. of I., only the regional language followed by Hindi at the 5th year or so of the schooling—only these two languages can have place in it. The O.L.C.R., on the untenable plea of two 'streams' which have only a hypothetical validity, recommends that English might begin earlier than the 14 year-age of compulsion. This is entirely unnecessary and unwarranted by the needs of the change-over for which the O.L.C. was asked to consider. Such gratuitous consideration shown to English will only help continue the *status quo* and not allow Hindi to make any headway. Displacement of English language study and instituting Hindi study, in the present climate of our country, will be indicative of the earnest of our desire to usher in the process of the linguistic revolution we have decided to have. I may not dilate further about the urgent necessity of this first logical step which is:

equally sound educationally and culturally also. I am firmly of the view that unless this is accepted as the general principle of reconstructing national education, the process of linguistic transition will hardly have congenial climate to start and can have any chance of a fair trial or a happy beginning. The above principle is in entire consonance with the ideas of Basic Education—the type of education we have decided to introduce in the country. Rather, it may be noted that unless the above national policy regarding the place of Hindi and English in our compulsory educational scheme is accepted, Basic Education even cannot come to stay and prosper.

14. The above step should begin as an all-India move from 1957. In that case, latest by 1965, schools will have been teaching Hindi not only in the lower but also in the higher secondary schools, i.e. for 7 or 8 years. And every citizen will have learnt Hindi for 3 or 4 years under the Constitutional scheme of free and compulsory primary education lasting up to the pupil's 14 years of age.

VI

15. Along with this move in the educational sphere, there should be a similar move, on the part of all governments in the land, to train their personnel in Hindi for the specific needs of their work. This should be completed by 1960, which will give them a fairly sufficient time of about 3 years. Necessary planning of this work should immediately be undertaken so that its implementation may be expected to begin by 1957. A detailed and close study of all Government departments, like the one given by the O.L.C.R. in Chapter VII, Part (ii), regarding the Indian Audit and Accounts Department should be immediately undertaken and adequate targets and time-tables decided upon for each one of them. This must give to every Government a five years plan to be over by 1960 in the field of this linguistic change-over.

16. Thus working, the personnel in the services of the Union and the States will be ready by 1960 to use Hindi as an alternate or additional medium with English. Five years more will be used to perfect their linguistic equipment still further. The concerted move in the educational field also will be helpful in various ways in the effort. Hence it should surely be possible to arrive at the stage by 1965 when we may reasonably be expected to do our internal work of Government through Hindi. For the work of external affairs, political, commercial and industrial, we might continue in English till Hindi gets necessary international recognition in the comity of nations. That will depend on both the assertion of our national pride, prestige and position and the extent of our having developed and enriched Hindi.

ADDENDUM

(in reference to Para. 9, above)

The Madras Legislature discussed the language problem in India in its session of September, 1955. It was occasioned by a Government Resolution which said, "that the Questionnaire issued by the Official Language Commission (Government of India) be taken into consideration."

An amendment was formally moved in the Upper House which said to add as follows at the end of the Resolution:—

“and, on such consideration, this Council resolves to request the Government of Madras, in framing their replies to the Questionnaire, to incorporate the following principles and suggestions in their reply:—

- (1) That, for purposes of administration, the State should use the regional language or languages ultimately and that Hindi cannot be adopted for this purpose.
- (2) That for the limited correspondence between the Central Government or any other State and the local State, the State should utilize the services of translators and interpreters to the extent necessary.
- (3) That, so far as the Union Public Service Examinations are concerned, the only just method of ensuring equality of opportunity for people both in the Hindi and non-Hindi speaking areas, as laid down in the Constitution, would be to permit candidates to choose a language or languages mentioned in the Constitution and to fix quotas according to the number of persons speaking such language or languages in the country.
- (4) That so far as Court languages are concerned, the regional language or languages should be used in the courts of the State and in the High Court of the State.
- (5) That the language or languages used in the State Legislature should be the regional language or languages and that in Parliament, representatives of the different States should be afforded all facilities to speak in the regional languages mentioned in the Constitution.
- (6) That all public servants recruited to the Central Services should be required, after their selection to such services, to pass a test or tests in Hindi if they are from non-Hindi speaking areas and in one of the other languages of the Constitution if they are from a Hindi-speaking area.
- (7) That there is no necessity for using Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form.
- (8) That so far as the medium of instruction in primary schools, secondary schools, Universities, etc., is concerned, the sound principle that has been enunciated by all educationists that the mother-tongue is the natural medium to be employed by progressive stages, should be borne in mind and if and when English is to be replaced, it should be replaced by the mother-tongue of the particular region.
- (9) That finally, in the opinion of the Council, the question of replacement of English by a suitable regional

language should be dealt with, taking into consideration the possibilities of the regional language being utilized at different stages of instruction and particularly in regard to higher education, technical, technological and professional, and also the extent to which well-qualified personnel in these higher branches of learning will be available to meet the needs of the changed situations.

- (10) That due importance should be given to the study of an international language (English) during the stage of University and higher education, even after the adoption of the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction."

It was said in the course of the debate that the amendment embodies, in a general way, the considered opinion of the University, the Legislature, and the Government as well. Shortly understood, we might say that it describes how a non-Hindi State would wish its regional language to be used in its affairs—educational, administrative, judicial, legislative, etc. The amendment says that Tamil Nad would like to use Tamil entirely in all these fields.