

## CHAPTER V

### MEDIUM OF PUBLIC SERVICE EXAMINATIONS

#### I

1. This is a peculiar question in Indian conditions, and very vital also. This is evident from the fact that the C. of I. has given a directive to the O.L.C. that "in making their recommendations the Commission shall have due regard to.....just claims and the interests of persons belonging to the non-Hindi speaking areas in regard to the Public Services."

2. Public Services (shortly P.S.) in India, particularly the central and all-India ones, under foreign rule, came to assume undue and peculiar weight and importance in the social and economic life of the people. They also formed vital links with the English educational system, so much so that till now they dominate it and almost set the law for its pattern of instruction. It is out of place to dilate on this story here. A few points only, relevant to the matter under discussion here, may be noted.

3. We are out to replace the English medium in education and administration. If we do it with the monolithic solution of adopting Hindi in place of English, in the case of non-Hindi speaking persons it becomes a change of one alien language giving place to another, though Indian. If we do that, the worst evil of the present educational system will have a new lease of life through Hindi. It is this which requires to be safeguarded against. Also we must see that it does not jeopardise the cultural and educational advancement of the country.

4. The corner-stone of the English educational system obtaining and still persisting in our country today is the alien English medium. This has created among the English educated classes an illusion of a unity which is, at its best, masonic in character. And as an academic system, it degenerated into a thing which we see today and which was described as follows as early as 1871, by an English observer:

".....Looking to the poor and superficial acquirements of a great mass of those who obtain university distinctions, and to the fact that such distinctions are not pursued for their own sake, but merely as a means to employment or reward, there is really no *status* as yet for a university in the European sense of the term."

(From 'Education and Statesmanship in India' by James).

5. Even this system is at present in a decadent state; and under the stress of our new needs of free India, it is almost collapsing under its own dead weight of unworthiness. Therefore, it is a veritable headache for our national leaders as to how to reform and remodel it *betimās* before it gives way and creates a vacuum in our national life.

6. The only prop that still keeps it up is the same old unholy alliance of education with the lure of good services jobs. Possession of certain university degrees is made the basic qualification for public services examinations, and the chartered universities enjoy the monopoly of conferring them. The question of the medium of P.S. examinations is vitiated and unduly complicated on account of this most undesirable element in our recent history of education and recruitment to public services. A committee of the Government of India is working at present to study this problem and to suggest what might be done to improve the situation. If university degrees lose this economic value which the Universities enjoy, live by and prosper with at the present time, it will not only mean a change for the better in university reform, but will also set us at thinking for a new scheme of recruitment for public services. The recruitment still continues under the old ways and values established and given to us as a legacy by our ex-rulers. Like many other matters, this also direly needs to be changed in the context of our new needs as a free people. One of them is the question of the linguistic equipment of public servants in a democratic order of administration.

### III

7. Obviously all these things will have direct bearing on the question of the medium of the P.S. competitive examinations. However, leaving them aside for the moment, the O.L.C. had to consider the problem from the restricted point of the replacement of the English medium, which is stipulated to be achieved by the nation within 15 years. I am afraid, the O.L.C.R. lost sight of this main question and followed the lines of thought and approach which it adopted in regard to the question of the medium of instruction for higher education. Therefore, evidently, the conclusions it arrived at here also suffer under the draw-backs of the same nature. I do not, therefore, repeat what I have observed about them in the previous chapter of this note. I may only add that, as the matter of the services is felt more keenly, the drawbacks are bound to be more seriously disturbing in their effect on the public mind.

8. There is a view held by some according to which they fondly believe that this problem solves itself in the following simple manner:—The C. of I. lays down that Hindi will be the Official Language of the Union. Therefore, the medium of examinations for the central and all-India services should *ipso facto* be Hindi and hence should be immediately adopted. And the view further asserts that the language medium of all universities also should be Hindi. The logic of the argument is patent to the attitude born of the English Educational System we very well know.

9. The fallacy is obvious. The Union Hindi, as I said earlier in this note, is only titular. What exists as a working proposition is the regional Hindi which has begun to be used as the medium of instruction and education in North India. Such use of Hindi is on a par with that of Gujarati, Marathi, etc. in their respective regions, though, I am afraid, universities in the North perhaps do not see it that way.

## IV

10. The O.L.C.R. notes that as the Hindi-speaking area universities have changed the medium, therefore they must be accommodated in regard to "the alternative medium of Hindi in addition to the existing English medium, to be introduced after due notice." It does not care to note why non-Hindi speaking area universities are not changing the English medium, even though most of them have decided to adopt their regional languages instead. The reason is obvious: they cannot take to Hindi as it is still not known to their regions; hence they sit on the fence and maintain the *status quo* waiting for conditions favourable for changing their medium according to their wishes. If, as all agree and desire, the regional languages as well as Hindi must be given every encouragement and opportunity to develop, it is very clear,—nay, I think it is incumbent upon the O.L.C. that it should recommend to the President, that conditions must be so created that non-Hindi speaking area universities may feel free to reform themselves by instituting the regional languages as media of instruction. The obvious way to do so is to institute P.S. Examinations also through these languages. Thus only can the just claims and interests of non-Hindi speaking persons be safeguarded.

11. The O.L.C.R. has suggested optional Hindi medium institutions in its chapter dealing with the problem of the medium of instruction. If Hindi becomes the medium of examinations for the much coveted prize of public services, it will have a tactical advantage over the regional language medium institutions. This would then set in a process of pushing on Hindi in the same unnatural way as happened in the case of the English medium. Thus history would repeat itself in the case of Hindi, if it had to be so adopted as a medium in non-Hindi speaking areas. Obviously, such a way if adopted would be felt coercive and will only breed aversion to Hindi, and result into retention of English. If we are to replace English, the surest and quickest way is to begin to work through regional languages and to teach Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas, as we saw earlier in this note.

## V

12. The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress acknowledging the inevitability of our situation wherein such a law of the linguistic transition was immediately necessary, passed two resolutions in 1954, on this most controversial issue of the medium—one regarding the medium of Education and the other regarding that of the P.S. Examinations.

13. The Government of India accepted them and declared its policy that—

1. it will not make the medium of instruction in universities an issue of Govt. policy. It has virtually declared thereby that regional languages will be the media there; and that,
2. "progressively examinations for all-India services should be held in Hindi, English, and the principal regional languages and candidates may be given the option to use any of these languages for the purpose of examinations."

14. This decision of the Government of India is the most outstanding and immediately necessary contribution it made during the period 1950-5, in the implementation of its constitutional duty to work for the replacement of English and for the introduction of the progressive use of Hindi, at the same time encouraging all the Indian languages to develop and prosper. The declaration heartened non-Hindi speaking area universities to change the English medium to regional languages. This is bound to help not only the overdue reform of our universities but also to strengthen our onward march to democracy. It would be in tune with the two safeguards laid down in the O.L.C.'s terms of reference.

## VI

15. It would be naturally expected therefore that the O.L.C.R. would welcome these two decisions declared by Government on the floor of the Parliament on an important matter of such high policy. But it is surprising that rather than this, the O.L.C.R. almost appears to show its aversion to it by basing its argument on the U.P.S.C.'s opinion regarding a technical matter of moderation in multi-medium examinations. I hold that an opinion of experts on a comparatively small matter of a technical nature cannot be allowed to be the determining consideration on the subject of fundamental importance like the one being discussed here. It should rather be that experts should feel that they are set a problem in the matter of the examination technique, necessitated by our special needs of a multi-lingual people. The best technique under the circumstances should be found out to start with, perfecting it in light of experience gained later on. I am sorry the O.L.C.R. did not take this view and, as I feel, made much of the opinion of the U.P.S.C. Queerly enough, the latter begs the very question of moderation even for a uni-medium examination.

16. Of course, where more than one language media are concerned, the task of assessment and evaluation becomes rather complex. But it would not do to say that it is impossible. In this regard it is interesting to note the opinion of the Radhakrishnan Commission Report. Discussing bilingualism about which I quoted it in the previous chapter, the Report says (P. 322, Para. 49)—

“In selecting Officers for the federal services it should *not* be beyond the *ingenuity* of the Public Services Commission to devise their examinations so as to give the same chance of selection to candidates belonging to different linguistic regions.”

That is, in its view, the question is not beyond the realm of practicability.

17. The Bengal Government in its reply to Q. 5 and 6 of the O.L.C. Questionnaire, which are in this regard, said:—

“It is considered necessary, desirable and possible to have as media for P.S. examinations all the major languages in use in the Union.”

And it added regarding moderation—

“It is not difficult for a Public Service Commission to lay down definite standards for the examination of answer papers

and to enforce those standards through their examiners. This has gone on very well in the universities which teach languages. It is very rarely that in any particular language a large number of candidates obtain first class honours and in another hardly one obtains it for successive years. Without relying upon the good sense of examiners, P.S. Commissions may set up Boards of moderators, each expert in particular language, so that answer papers may be discussed and verified to ensure a Uniform standard, and marks can be revised accordingly."

18. If the U.P.S.C. seriously goes into this matter, I am sure it can find a very suitable solution to this problem of moderation. In its reply to the O.L.C., it reports that excessive number of examinees is a very great difficulty in this matter. It is not beyond ingenuity to find out a way of screening it out by devising a suitable scheme for it.

19. Again a multi-lingual medium examination is not quite a new thing. For example, the S.S.C.E. Board of Bombay State holds its examination in about 7 languages. My point is that a practical way for meeting the difficulty is not impossible. Believing so I had submitted a note on the matter to the O.L.C. I should better reproduce it here, even for documentation as a suggestion on this matter. This is added at the end of this chapter.

## VII

20. To solve the above difficulty, there was a suggestion of a sort of a Quota System; that is a sort of reservation of places on a linguistic basis. The C. of I. [Art. 16(4)] contemplates reservation for backward classes only. It is a question whether linguistic reservation would be constitutionally proper. I am glad the O.L.C.R. rejected the quota system; it could well, in that case, have saved itself of a long discussion with a note on it appended to it. However it is just by the way.

21. With this I conclude my argument of this separate note. At the end I wish to add a chapter on the Hindi movement, as it very well serves as the background of my argument as also of the entire language problem of our country. The O.L.C.R. has not touched this aspect of the matter. Therefore, for the purposes of documentation even, I think, it will be a good addition to it. It was placed by me on the table of the O.L.C. I reproduce it at the end as a new chapter with a few verbal corrections and the addition of a concluding paragraph at its end.

## ADDENDUM

### A NOTE REGARDING MODERATION OF A MULTI-MEDIUM EXAMINATION

1. There may be a preliminary open competitive examination under the auspices of the U.P.S.C., medium-wise. A suitable curriculum for all such examinations be decided upon. This is a matter of detail.

2. The aim of the preliminary test is to find out and choose the best few from each language-medium candidates for the final test, the main idea being to secure a manageable number of candidates at the final open competitive examination or test.

3. Those only who score a certain total number of marks above a certain percentage not less than 1st class, say 65 per cent. or so,—they only be held eligible for the final test.\*

4. This test will thus have a manageable number of candidates in each language medium, thus helping better and more careful evaluation and assessment of their performance.

5. Examiners will be surely bilingual if not tri-lingual or more. English will obviously be a common language equipment for them at present.

6. Answer-papers in English uniformly assessed and moderated in the manner obtaining at present can serve as, and will give a working basis of, a common specimen or model for all other languages. I mean, every regional language examiner will have before him, for his work of assessment, an English answer paper assessed and moderated in usual prevalent way, supplied by the Head Examiner. This will serve as a common model guide for evaluating all regional answer-papers, thus enabling to set up a common basis for maintaining a uniform standard for all the regional language groups.

7. Every language-medium answer paper may have two examiners, one 'internal', i.e., belonging to the same language and another 'external',—i.e., knowing the language, though not of the region. This is to ensure a fair and balanced assessment. If thought necessary, a third man may go through their assessment as a moderator for that subject.

8. As number of candidates will not be so large, the process can be easily implemented and better impartiality secured; and any sort of a check-up still felt necessary will not be prohibitive.

9. It may be noted that the process and manner of evaluation and moderation suggested above is not really multi-lingual, but bi- or tri-lingual, only. Such a process will operate at any University examination also, if along with the regional language English and/or the Union language are going to be the media. This will be so in all universities of the linguistic areas. The All-India examinations of the Union Public Service Commission will be only doing it simultaneously for every region, only the respective regional languages changing region-wise. It will be only one agency working instead of 12 or 13 like several universities.

10. "If just claims and interests of persons belonging to the non-Hindi speaking areas in regard to the public services" are to have due regard, and if the medium of regional languages for higher instruction is to be encouraged and assured a fair trial, so that those languages also prosper and develop,—as we obviously wish and are required to do—then some such system of moderation on lines suggested

\*How many may these be from each language group, it might be asked. The answer is obvious, equal from each.

above or others more suitable and helpful might be sought out by our examination technicians. Some such system only can ensure equality of opportunity in the matter of appointment to services, as assured under Article 16 of the Constitution.

11. This note is only to show that multi-medium examination moderation is surely not impossible; rather it must be assiduously devised in the present context of our national conditions.