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**TOPIC: LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND UNION-STATE POWER STRUGGLE:
CHALLENGES TO INDIAN FEDERALISM**

Nandini Singh¹

ABSTRACT

Federalism is the division of power between the center and its various constituent units so that every unit can work independently in its own sphere according to the needs of people. India is a country where people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds live together, this diversity makes federalism an important aspect for India. In Indian Federalism states' autonomy is frequently questioned under the labels "quasi-federalism" or "federalism with a central bias." Language diversity present in India poses a problem to Indian federalism, especially the conflict related to the New Education Policy and the perception that it imposes mandatory Hindi teaching in schools and official language. This has led to the conflict between the union and state, especially the non-Hindi speaking states which are against the imposition of Hindi. Through this research paper, I will dwell on the question of how language diversity poses a challenge to federalism, and how language politics deters the power of the state. This paper will also analyze how the controversy of official language has fueled this fire of conflict. My research methodology for the paper would be purely doctrinal. This paper will conclude by providing viable remedies, analyzing the effectiveness of current systems, , in tackling linguistic diversity and policy proposals to alleviate power struggles caused by linguistic variety.

5 Keywords:

- Co-operative Federalism
- Quasi federal
- Language politics
- New Education Policy

¹The author is a law student at Ram Manohar Lohiya, National Law University.

- Intergovernmental conflicts

INTRODUCTION

Federalism is a form of government where power is shared or distributed among all other political units rather than being placed solely in the central government. It is the division of authority within an organization. This ensures the independence of different constituents of government. India follows the quasi-federal form of government i.e. the power is divided between center and state but the states cannot secede from the union. Hence the union exercises dominance of power over the states. This dominance has been the reason for conflict between the two, one of the examples of this is language conflict. India has been a multilingual nation for thousands of years, with each area and state speaking a unique language that has a significant influence on that region. The linguistic diversity of the country can be gauged from the fact that as of date, there are 22 scheduled languages, 100 non-scheduled languages, and over 1700 dialects and other vernacular languages spoken all across the country. Since independence, there has been conflict regarding the official language of the country. Recently the statement of Amit Shah, the Union Home Minister, that all States must finally accept Hindi without resistance has sparked controversy and has been slammed by the government of non-Hindi speaking states. This statement has led people to question how this imposition of Hindi can lead to a violation of the power of the state given under Article 345 of the Indian Constitution² for choosing their own official language. This research paper analyzes how the language diversity of India has led to conflicts regarding the encroachment of the union in matters of the state, threatening its autonomy, and will try to provide some insights as to how the problem can be solved without providing advantage to a particular group.

²Constitution of India, art 345

DIVERSE VOICES, ONE NATION: INDIA'S LINGUISTIC KALEIDOSCOPE**WORDS OF POWER: LANGAUGE'S IMPACT ON UNION-STATE****RELATIONS**

India's system of government is frequently referred to as cooperative federalism, where the national government and state governments collaborate to accomplish shared objectives. Even though this system seeks to balance the two levels of government, there are times when the federal government has interfered with the independence of the states. Certain provisions of the Indian Constitution provide dominance to the central government over the state government such as:

- **Article 256** ⁴ This article lays down that the executive powers of the State are to be exercised in such a manner that it complies with the laws made by the Parliament or any other existing laws which are applicable in the State. Supporting this provision, the Hon'ble Supreme Court laid down in **State of Rajasthan v Union of India (1977)** ⁵ that if the Union Government believes that the way the State's executive power is exercised may be in conflict with the execution of Central Laws, the Centre can issue directions to the State government pursuant to Article 256.
- **Article 356** ⁻⁶ This article provides that it is legal for the President to declare that a situation has developed in which the State administration cannot be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution if a state refuses to follow the instructions given by the Center. As a result, a state of emergency may be declared.

The above provided provisions reflect how the center can interfere in the administration of the state. In this research paper, we are more concerned with how language diversity fuels this fire of conflict and challenges federalism:

1. **The 11th volume of the Official Language Committee's Report** ⁷ - This report has triggered angry reactions from non-Hindi-speaking (especially southern) states. This report has recommended Hindi should be the medium of instruction in IITs, IIMs, and

central universities in Hindi-speaking states. Though this recommendation only applies to Hindi-speaking states, it was criticized and concerns were raised especially by the Tamil government, and was labeled as “Hindi Imperialism”. This report not only restricts state autonomy over language but also over making laws on education (which was first part of the state list but was transferred to the concurrent list by the 42nd amendment).

2. Linguistic Division of states -Soon after independence the demand for creation of states based on language started. When the government denied this demand, freedom fighter Potti Sreeramulu began a hunger strike in support of the creation of Andhra Pradesh, a state for Telugu speakers. There was a massive protest after his death to carry on the cause he began. Thus, the demand for the Andhra language state was finally granted in 1953 by the Government and it was bifurcated from Tamil Nadu. India was finally divided into states based on regional languages in 1956 when the States Reorganization Act ⁸was passed⁹. After this several new states have been based on language such as Meghalaya , Tripura etc.. It was thought this division would create a sense of security among various identity groups, but nothing of this sort has happened rather, it led to a division between north and south states. Creating a state based on language is not the solution but part of the problem.

3. Dravidian Movement: In pre-independence times, the Dravidian movement's focus was defined and set solely against the Brahmins. It was after independence that this movement took a political turn. The Dravidian parties continually support state

4. Conflict over National Language ¹¹- Even before India gained independence, there was a dispute about whether Hindi should be the country's national language. Recently the statement of Home Minister Amit Shah regarding making Hindi the language of communication for people of Non -Hindi-speaking states has raised controversy and is being largely condemned by people. Being a member of the Parliamentary official language committee home minister has the power to spread the Hindi language under Article 351 ¹²of the Indian Constitution (which states that it shall be the duty of the union to spread Hindi). But the article does not give the

power to impose any language. When the constitution of India was made it was proposed that Hindi should be the

National language; this idea was opposed vehemently. Ultimately, to solve this the Munshi Ayyangar formula was adopted according to which English along with Hindi will be the official language for a period of fifteen years and there will be no national language. But English still continues to be the official language of India as whenever Parliament tries to remove it, they have to face agitation. Non -Hindi groups at the time of Lal Bahadur Shastri even popularized the slogan “Hindi never, English ever”¹²

Analyzing these examples indicates that Language conflicts in India are a great threat to the unity of India. Article 1¹³ of the Indian Constitution states that India that is Bharat shall be a union of states. Language diversity is an impediment to this union of states as it is not only a reason for conflict between state and union but also between states. To save national unity it is essential to establish a balance so that there will be no imposition of language on any group and the relation between union and state will not deteriorate.

BRIDGING THE LANGUAGE DIVIDE: STRATEGIES FOR STRONGER STATE

UNION RELATIONS

“Our differences in speech are the threads that weave the fabric of our togetherness.”

• **Our language is who we are-** This statement reflects the emotions of almost all citizens of India. The union and state have been divided over the issue of official language since time immemorial. Since the advent of the BJP government, there has been a tangible push for Hindi to be the nation’s dominant language. India is a country of hundreds of languages and thousands of dialects, an attempt to impose a language on its citizens is both ‘laughable’ and ‘dangerous’. According to Ganesh Narayanan Devy, a linguist, “It’s not one language but the multiplicity of languages that has united India throughout history.

India cannot be India unless it accommodates all native languages”¹⁴. Imposition of Hindi violates Article 29¹⁵ and Article 345 of the Indian Constitution which lays down the power of

minorities to conserve their language and the autonomy of states to choose their official language respectively.

The Centre should respect the diversity of languages present in India and not spread one language on the loss of another. The state (especially southern states) should also not take the matter forward like the Dravidians protest for making Tamil an official language.

• **Three-language formula vs Two-language formula** –The New Education Policy 2020 has supported the three-language formula. The Three Language Formula states that every student in India should learn three languages: two of which should be native Indian languages, including one regional language, and the third should be English. The problem with this policy is that states like Tripura, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry were not prepared to teach Hindi, while states that speak Hindi did not include any South Indian languages in their curriculum.¹⁶

On the other hand, the Two language policy was introduced in Tamil Nadu by C.N. Annadurai in 1968¹⁷. Beyond Tamil and English, he realized that no other language would be taught in Tamil Nadu schools, either as a language or as a medium of teaching. The two language formula promotes a simpler language as it reduces the burden. It allows for a stronger focus on regional languages

In my opinion, opting for two two-language formulas over the three-language formula would help Indian unity, as it will lead to more development of regional languages and will also help in mitigating conflict between union and state.

• **Language Commission-** As it can be seen that the state and center do not see eye to eye regarding the topic of language. The biggest reason behind this is the lack of any proper effort by both sides to mediate things and come to a conclusion. Hence there is a need for a neutral mediator, here comes to role of a language commission. Language Commission can facilitate negotiations and suggest compromises to resolve conflicts. It can help by the following ways :

a) Implementing more informed policies, busy conducting research

b) It can gather linguistic expertise which can be helpful in crafting effective solutions. c) Can periodically review language policies and their impact, providing recommendations for adjustments or improvements.a

• **Middle Path** – To resolve this age-old problem, a middle path should be adopted. This middle path is adopting a language that will not confer an advantage on any group or that is common to almost all communities. There should be no national language but rather an official language only. One such language in India is English. Due to the widespread usage of English in India's system, which is deeply ingrained in its use in everything from courts to the job market, India is said to benefit from its use of English in the globalized world. Although Hindi is the official language of India, states have their own official language, which creates a communication barrier between people from ¹⁸different states. This idea was also propagated by Lee Kuan Yew, he believed that the lingua franca of the country should be equidistant to all cultural groups. Therefore, it creates fair competition and opportunities. It would be simpler to communicate, and fewer linguistic issues would arise if more individuals were encouraged to speak English.

CONCLUSION

This research paper sheds light on the intricate relationship between language diversity and the challenges it poses to federalism. I have examined how language-based identity politics, regional disparities, and historical contexts have contributed to these challenges. Indian federalism is an “indestructible unit of destructible states”. To keep the unity of the nation secured it is important that the relation between the state and center remains strong. It is not only the center that should take into account the constitutional provinces while implementing policies, but the state should also look into the legality while putting forward their demands like the demand of Tamil Nadu to make Tamil an official language, which is inconsistent with the constitution. It can be concluded from the above-provided research that language is an essential ingredient of identity, and unless every group gets the satisfaction that their language is protected, this unity will keep getting disrupted. This paper provides specific viable techniques and solutions like adopting a language that does not confer an advantage on anyone and adopting a policy that leads to increased development of regional languages. The policymakers and stakeholders must consider these solutions to foster a harmonious and resilient federal structure that respects linguistic diversity while upholding the principles of democracy and unity.