

Karnataka Beyond the Three-Language Formula: Shaping India's Multicultural Future, Viksit Bharat@2047

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ABSTRACT:

India has always been known for the diversity, which has become the beauty of the country. In this linguistic diversity is also notable. India came up with THE THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA in the year 1968 focusing on bringing a balance between preserving different regional languages in the country and strengthening Hindi as a link language and English for global access. Even after having this idea for nearly seven decades, it has faced repeated disagreements, with states like Tamil Nadu outright rejecting it and others negotiating their own interpretations. In this larger debate, Karnataka has recently shifted towards a TWO-LANGUAGE policy, which has become a national discussion again.

This paper examines Karnataka as a case study to explore how India's Multi-lingual future can be reimagined, as the country moving towards 2047 which marks the 100 years of independence. By revisiting historical events like linguistic state principle [1956] and the strong resistance shown by PERIYAR who warned Hindi domination would lead to cultural slavery and destroy equality among Indians. Here the paper sheds light on policy choice within a wider historical and political framework. And it also talks about international perspectives from UNESCO [2003] statement.

KEYWORDS:

Multi-lingual, Three-Language formula, Two-Language policy, Language and identity, Linguistic State Principles.

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Democracy in India cannot succeed without respecting the linguistic rights of all communities. Language diversity is democracy in action.

-Dr. B R AMBEDKAR

Introduction: Why Language Matters in India's Future

The linguistic reorganization of Indian states in 1956, under state reorganization act, which had the idea to match political boundaries with linguistic identities, to ensure both the administrative coherence and cultural recognition in the country. Even after seven decades of this policy implementation there is lot of debates and discussions over education and national policy. Language is not just a medium of communication, it is also the vessel of thought, memory, and cultural continuity. As India looks forward to its Viksit Bharat @2047 on its centenary, the question of language needs renewed urgency. Economic growth and geopolitical aspects surely become key makers for India's progress, yet the country's ability to harmonize its wonderful linguistic diversity with the demands of a knowledge driven and globally integrated economy will be equally determined. Within this context Karnataka's decision to change Three-Language formula to Two language formula framework which mandates Kannada and English grabs critical attention.

Language is not only a medium of communication but also a medium of identity, power and participation in society, India with 22 scheduled languages and hundreds of dialects, language plays an important role in marking cultural diversity. It tells how communities see themselves and how they are recognized within the political boundary. At the same time language makes a way for opportunities. In education the choice of medium directly affects learning outcomes, social mobility, and even self-esteem. UNESCO [2003] stressed that 'MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION IS ESSENTIAL FOR QUALITY LEARNING, IDENTITY, AND INCLUSION.' Highlighting the global consensus that students learn best when thought in their mother tongue.

The Three Language Formula: Promise and Constraints

The three Language formula, first brought in the 1968 National Policy on Education and reaffirmed in 1986, was designed as a compromise among competing imperatives. Students were expected to learn three different languages 1. The regional language, 2. Hindi and, 3. English. The intent was ambitious as it will work on regional, national and global identities by preserving regional identities through mother tongue and strengthen national integration through Hindi and equip citizens with English for global engagement. On paper, this framework appeared to balance local, national, and international needs. In practice, the formula was

fraught with contestation. Southern states, particularly Tamil Nadu considered it as forceful implementation of Hindi on them. The Dravidian movement and Periyar E V Ramaswamy's critique in particular, exposed the inherent asymmetry. Karnataka though not as uncompromising as Tamil Nadu, saw strong resistance to Hindi imposition through popular movements and cultural assertion. The Gokak agitation of 1980–1983 is particularly significant in this matter.

Thus, while the three Language formula was framed as a unifying national idea, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka's history shows how it provoked opposition and resistance and redefined language as a site of cultural negotiation. Far from bringing uniformity, the idea opened space to insist on the importance of their own linguistic traditions within the federal framework.

Karnataka's Two-Language Turn

In 2025, Karnataka shifted from the national accord by bringing a Two-Language policy– Kannada and English as the medium of education in the state. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, took the report from Sukhadia Thorat, which focused on reducing the academic burden on students, by uplifting Kannada cultural identity, and making sure the competitiveness through English proficiency. The policy focused on Kannada will be the medium of instruction till class Vth which will be a mandatory subject until class xii, with English as the parallel compulsory language. This move is not merely a administrative adjustment but a reassertion of linguistic autonomy. While interest groups supporting it as a measure to safeguard Kannada in an era of cultural weakening, critics opposed it saying that excluding Hindi might become challenging for students' mobility within the country, particularly in northern states where Hindi dominates both in professional and social domains. These opinions reflect a bigger confusion: how can states balance their cultural preservation with broader aspirations of integration and globalization?

Echoes from History: Gokak Agitation and Periyar

Karnataka state's decision cannot be taken away from the historical resistance to language-based imposition in southern states. Tamil Nadu state's prominent figure Periyar E V Ramaswamy, notably known for anti-Hindi agitations, said that prevailing Hindi was a form of cultural domination that neglects both equality and self-respect. For Periyar, lan-

guage was historically tied to social-justice; man is equal to another man, there should not be any type of exploitation, everyone should live and let others live, with a national spirit. This opinion framed linguistic equality as inseparable from bigger struggles against exclusion and hierarchy.

Karnataka's stance is not identical to Tamil Nadu's stance, but it resonates with intellectual legacy. It reflects claim of dignity and identity against uniformity pressures. Karnataka is not as uncompromising as Tamil Nadu but shown strong resistance to Hindi imposition through popular movements and cultural assertion. The Gokak agitation from 1980-83 became a spark by the recommendations of Gokak committee which insisted to make Kannada as the sole first language in schools, this movement became more popular with active involvement from students and writers and even film actors. The anxiety spreader as Kannada will be going to get marginalized in its own state by the growth and spread of English medium education and the push for Hindi. These mass movement and protests made the state government to accept Kannada as the primary language of instruction. Further protests were seen in 1990's and 2000's on compulsory Hindi signboards in capital city Bengaluru this movement highlighted the enduring strength of linguistic advocacy.

Strengths and Risks of Karnataka's Model

Karnataka's policy carries different strengths; by implementing Kannada, the state refocuses on cultural roots and opposes the resistance on erosion of its own heritage. By making English mandatory it ensures global connectivity and sustains Karnataka's leadership in technology driven sectors, especially in Bengaluru. Furthermore, reducing number of mandatory languages on students will reduce burden on students during their formative years of schooling. By not burdening students from more compulsory languages, children will still have the option to choose to learn the other language in their interest, this makes multilingualism more voluntary, and organic. The Three-language formula have majorly created tensions in southern states especially against the imposition of Hindi. Karnataka's this simpler model of Two-Language will reduce such tension in future. And instead of making students learn three different languages partially, now the students will be fluent in two strong languages. This strengthens communication skills which is essential for knowledge and career growth.

Yet this model comes with some risks, First, is the absence of Hindi in this curriculum will increase regional difference and weakens inter-state culture exchange. Second, students from Karnataka state may face disadvantages in central institutions or in employment opportunities as Hindi acts as a LINGUA FRANCA. Third, giving importance only to Kannada and English risks narrowing the scope of India's linguistic diversity, especially for minority languages within Karnataka itself. These tensions illustrate that, but Karnataka's model can be provocative, it faces challenges to transplant completely as a national template.

People, Not Just Policy; Why Language is Emotional

Language debates in India are not only just about classes, this touch emotions, families and future. Language is not only a medium of instruction or just a policy decision but it is deeply rooted into people and even the sense of self. For communities, their mother tongue is considered as the first bond with culture, memory, and family. Language carries traditional things like folksongs, stories, rituals, and how people think and imagine their world. When a government promotes or restricts certain language, it not only shapes education but also touches emotional core of communities. Especially in Karnataka, Kannada is not just an official language but also symbol of state's identity, celebrates KANNADA RAJYOTSAVA every year. Any attempt to dilute its position in schools have created sparks, protests, as people afraid of heritage loss. Similarly opposing to compulsory implementation of any language is not rejecting it but protecting emotional value of their own mother tongue.

In Bengaluru parents often think: should they teach Kannada to their child to preserve their roots, or Hindi and English for their future and carrier help. In rural Karnataka teachers wonder: will the students left behind if they don't learn Hindi? students themselves sometimes feel torn between pride in Kannada or practical benefits with other languages. These stories let us know that language is not only a policy matter it is also Human experience and emotion.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM KARNATAKA FOR INDIA

Karnataka's Two-Language policy should not be seen as a opposition of Three-Language formula – It says that India's future must be multilingual by choice not by force, It focuses on matters like identity and dignity as much as integration. It reminds us through echoes of Periyar

and Gokak agitation which showed language is about self-respect. For India to truly succeed in VIKSIT BHARAT @ 2047 it must consider language as not a issue to be resolved but as a resource which should be nurtured. Karnataka's bold move should be seen from a open mind, which could help India focus on a multilingual future which will not only be strong but also DEEPLY HUMAN.

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