

Congress Socialists and the politics of language in India

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Introduction

The very first definition of the term 'language' that we encountered in our school-days ran follows: 'Language is the medium of expression'. But this basic definition limits itself to a task that languages usually performs, not the definition of 'language' *per se*. Throughout the vast span of human history, languages played a significant role, in not only enhancing the understanding of human societies, within and without, enriched the vast arena of human experiences and interactions, but also helped us in multiple ways to communicate our ideas, in processing our thoughts in our mind, and in shaping our personalities in varied ways. Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, and God saying: 'Come, let us go down and confound their speech'; persisted even now up to some extent, and so to say even obstructed the channels of interaction between human societies often.

The equations of 'power, ideology, and hegemony' also in one way or another had influenced the discourse of language. And in this whole process, language played a key role, it served as a medium through which ideas are conveyed, from one corner of the world to another; in the hands of the people of the one-time colonies it became a powerful tool through which, they encountered the colonial project of the 'colonizing' their body and mind, so to free themselves of the subjugation and exploitation imposed by colonial rule on them. In our times, to which an eminent historian of our age had called 'Age of Extremes', languages are increasingly playing and would play in future the important role of as being one of constituent elements of the process summarily called the 'identity formation'.

Indian sub-continent is a home of various ethnic and linguistic communities, viewed culturally; it's a sphere of 'mega-diversity'. Pre-independence India witnessed political and administrative unification under the Raj, and spread of the English education which had in its foundation stone the reason of colonial superiority and moral authority. The English education established itself in India by uprooting the 'beautiful tree' of indigenous Indian education.¹ But apart from producing babus (Macaulay's mission: 'to create such a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.') as its advocates had wished, it produced Indians remarkable in their intellect and argumentative capacity, those who appropriated the best of West, and mixed it most ingenuously with their traditional knowledge reservoir, and thus produced a detailed, thought-provoking, and incisive critique of imperialism and colonialism, of the political economy of colonialism, and its implications and ramifications. They also believed that India was a 'nation-in-the-making'. Thus, by mastering the language of their colonizers i.e. English, they countered the semi-hegemonic structure of the British Raj in India on the social, economic, political, and cultural frontiers.² Most of them were equally at home in various languages including regional Indian languages and the European languages.

During the first-half of nineteenth century, began the process of standardization of Indian languages, in which Fort William College played leading role by preparing bilingual dictionaries in English and Indian languages, and by publishing texts in Indian languages in their 'standard' forms, as well as publishing bi-lingual texts. This process was further enforced in the second-half of the nineteenth

¹ Gandhiji argued: 'I say without fear of my figures being challenged successfully, that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago... because the British administrations, when then came to India, instead of taking hold of things as they were, began to root them out...and the beautiful tree perished'. Speech at Chatham House Meeting, London, October 20, 1931. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 54, p. 59.

² See for further discussion, Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement The Long Term Dynamics*, New Delhi, 2008.

century with the more printing houses, publications, and with the widening of the school education both at the primary and secondary level, which further made it necessary to the preparation and publication of textbooks in Indian languages, and for which standardization of the Indian languages was a necessary requirement.³

Intensified over the issue of languages of textbooks, medium of instruction, and the language in courts, the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the Hindi-Urdu controversy and, the emergence of voluntary language associations, and mobilization along linguistic lines. Associations like Nagari Pracharini Sabha (1893), Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (1910) promoted the cause of Hindi written in Devanagari script, while association like Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Urdu (1903) supported and favored the cause of Urdu written in Persian script.⁴ The issue of language also raised its head in the meetings of Indian National Congress (INC). And INC had tried to resolve it in 1920, through the provision that Provincial Congress Committees would be formed on the linguistic basis. Gandhiji with his vision for reducing the communal tension between Hindus and Muslims, and to bridge the cleavage between Hindus and Muslims created by the 'Hindi-Urdu' controversy, came with the idea of 'Hindustani', which could be written both in Nagari and Persian script. Two times, he presided over the annual session of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (HSS) held in Indore in 1918 and 1935, and in the later session he also successfully passed the resolution in favor of the 'Hindustani'. Three years later, the Working Committee of INC also passed a resolution advocating the use of 'Hindustani' in the proceedings of INC, and in the speeches of the Congress leaders (see p. 7).

For analyzing the complex nature of language politics and its contribution to the process of national development, we had to separate the complex phenomenon of language politics into its constituent elements and then relate these elements to the concrete process of policy formulation and implementation, which are relevant to political integration and national development. And we had to analyze the linguistic scenario, both in terms of intergroup phenomenon, as well as intergroup interactions and transformations.⁵

Last years of the 1920s and initial years of 1930s witnessed the growth of socialism in India, as well as in the other parts of the world. In 1934, Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was established which operated itself within the ambit of INC, as a group of Socialist leaders who tried to incorporate the ideas of socialism in the policies of INC further. Even the Hindi and Urdu literature of this period was influenced by the socialist ideology.⁶ This paper is a stocktaking exercise of the policy of Congress Socialists regarding the question of 'national language'. Drawing from their writings, memoirs, autobiographies, and interviews I would try to comprehend their position on this particular issue, both in the period of pre- and post-independence.

³ See Christopher R King, *One Language Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in the Nineteenth Century North India*, New Delhi, 1994, Chapter II.

⁴ Ibid. see also, Christopher R King, 'Forging a New Linguistic Identity: The Hindi Movement in Banaras 1868-1914', in S. Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras*, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 179-202.

⁵ See further Jyotirindra Das Gupta, *Language Conflict and National Development*, Berkeley, 1970, chapter 1.

⁶ See for the impact of socialism on Hindi and Urdu literature papers of Prabhakar Machwe ('Influence of Socialist Thought in Hindi Literature, 1919-1939'), Qamar Rais ('Impact of Socialism on Urdu Literature, 1919-1939'), and Shivdan Singh Chauhan ('Impact of Socialist Ideology on Hindi Literature, 1919-1939') in *Proceedings of the Seminar on Socialism in India 1919-1939 (Part II)*, New Delhi, 1970.

Congress Socialist Party: Background

During the second phase of Civil Disobedience Movement, 1932-33, many young nationalist leaders, who were inclined towards socialism, like Jayaprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta, Minoo Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, Charles Mascrenhas, M L Dantawala, S M Joshi, N G Goray were imprisoned in Nasik Jail. In the jail they discussed about formation of a socialist group within INC. In July 1933, a meeting was held in Poona for organizing the Socialist group; this meeting was attended by leaders like Purshottam Trikamdas, Acharya Narendra Deva, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Yusuf Meherally among others. This meeting resulted in the formation of a committee which drafted the constitution and program for such a group, came to be known as 'Poona Draft'. On May 17, 1934, Acharya Narendra Deva presided over a conference of various socialist groups from various provinces, which was held in Patna. It was decided here to form Congress Socialist Party (CSP). Later in the same year first National Conference of CSP was held in Mumbai during 21-22 October, presided over by Dr Sampurnanand, where the CSP took its concrete shape.⁷

Before the foundation of a nationwide CSP, there were other Socialist groups in the country in regions like Bihar Socialist Party (established in 1931 by leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Abdul Bari, Rahul Sankrityayan, Phulan Prasad Verma, Ganga Sharan Singh, and Ambika Kant Sinha) and Punjab Socialist Party (which had leaders like Prof Brij Narain, Jeevan Lal Kapur, and Lala Feroze Chand, and merged into CSP in 1936). Among the leaders of CSP were: Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Yusuf Meherally, Dr Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Minoo Masani, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Dr Sampurnanand, A N Menon, Ramnandan Mishra, Munshi Ahmad Din, Faridul Haq Ansari, Rambriksh Benipuri, Shivanath Bannerjee etc.

The objectives of CSP included in its *Programme* ran follows:

1. Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
2. Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by state.
3. Socialization of key and principle industries.
4. State monopoly of foreign trade.
5. Organization of co-operatives for production, distribution and credit in the un-socialized sector of economic life.
6. Elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation.
7. Redistribution of land to peasants.
8. Encouragement and promotion of co-operative and collective farming by the state.
9. Recognition of the right of work.
10. "To everyone according to his need and from everyone according to his capacity", etc.⁸

⁷ See Report to the First Conference of CSP, Bombay, October 21, 1934, in Jayaprakash Narayan Selected Works (hereafter JPSW). I. pp. 81-84, and also the Appendix 7, *ibid*.

⁸ Jayaprakash Narayan, *Why Socialism?* (1936), JPSW. II. see Chapter 2.

Congress Socialists believed that Congress symbolized the national movement against British imperialism, and that despite its limitations Congress still represented the 'greatest revolutionary force' in the country. They recognized the role of revolutionary intelligentsia in organizing the peasants for disciplined action. Addressing the first session of All-India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna on May 17, 1934, Acharya Narendra Deva argued:

*The national struggle is coming more and more to be identified with the struggle of oppressed classes... Just as the purely economic movement of the working class is irresistibly growing into a political movement, in the same way purely political movement of the Congress is unconsciously developing into an economic movement for the masses.*⁹

Congress Socialists and the question of 'national language'

Writing in the weekly organ of Congress Socialist Party, Congress Socialist, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia wrote: 'Of the Indian languages, Hindustani is spoken by one-thirds of the population and partially understood by nearly as many more...where 60 persons in each 100 of the population understand Hindustani, only one understand English. It is obvious that with this disparity of sixty to one the English language has no popular utility for the country'.¹⁰

Two months earlier, on September 23, 1937, speaking in the U.P. Legislative Assembly on the cut motion urging the adoption of Hindustani as medium of instruction, another prominent Congress Socialist Acharya Narendra Deva urged for; a. evolving a common language with a new name, Hindustani, which according to him was necessary for maintaining the Hindu-Muslim unity; b. the adoption of scientific terminology that were in vogue in the west and; c. supported the cause of Hindustani as medium of instruction in the secondary schools and thus criticized the approach of Sir Mohammad Yusuf towards the question of medium of instruction who was in favor of English.¹¹

A few days later Narendra Deva again made a speech in U.P. Legislative Assembly during the interpretation of Rule 19 and argued "an overwhelming majority was of the opinion that those who desired to speak in Hindustani should be permitted to do so, even if they had sufficient acquaintance with the English language."¹²

Narendra Deva also realized that to raise the political consciousness of the masses, having a body of literature is utmost requirement, and he urged to Congress Socialists in the Delhi Congress Socialist Conference, held in April 1938, that 'we must have our party organs in the Indian languages'.¹³ As far as the question of use of Indian languages in the national movement was concerned, and as a mode of communicating the nationalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial ideas to the masses to raise their political consciousness there was an unanimity among the nationalist leaders and Congress Socialists as well, that only these languages could serve the cause of Indian national movement efficiently.

⁹ Acharya Narendra Deva, *Socialism and the National Revolution*, edited by Yusuf Meherally, Bombay, 1946, p.9.

¹⁰Notes on Education and Culture. November 27, 1937. Collected Works of Rammanohar Lohia (hereafter CWRL).VIII.328.

¹¹Selected Works of Acharya Narendra Deva (hereafter SWND). I. 102-3.

¹²Rule 19 of U.P. legislative assembly declared that "the business of the Assembly shall be transacted in the English language, but any member who is not acquainted or sufficiently acquainted with the English language may address the Assembly in any recognized language of the province ... provided that speaker may call any member to speak in any language in which he is known to be proficient. Ibid. 103-104.

¹³SWND. I. 126.

Gangasaran Singh,¹⁴ while expressing his opinion on the question of the role that Indian languages had played in the national movement, rightly pointed out that: 'if the English was used in lieu of Indian languages then the national movement would never turned out to be a mass-movement...its public policies and program would never acquire such a popularity that it used to have in the Indian languages'. Thus for him, the vehicle of the national movement could only be the Indian languages.¹⁵ Expressing his thoughts on the education system in one of his speeches delivered in the Vidyant Hindu High School in October 1938, Narendra Deva stressed the necessity of remodeling the entire educational system on the lines suggested by Wardha educational scheme.¹⁶

Rammanohar Lohia, too, in his essay titled 'Education and Literacy', published in the National Herald on the occasion of 'independence day' in 1940 (i.e. 26 January, 1940), while expressing his serious concern for the low level of literacy in the country favored the Wardha Scheme and agreed with its recommendations.¹⁷ Now it would be in our interests to look over the recommendations of Wardha Committee¹⁸. Among the other recommendations that this Committee had made, including free and compulsory education and training in handicrafts, it also recommended seven years of compulsory education for both boys and girls with mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Both, Narendra Deva and Rammanohar Lohia, were in favor of mother tongue as medium of instruction for basic education.

But as a counterpoint here it would be interesting to cite another Congress Socialist, Purshottam Trikamdas¹⁹. According to him the British Raj and the English language had played the role of unifying force in the country. In his own words:

*We felt Indians because we were all citizens under one government...we felt one because we could communicate with each other in a language which all of us spoke. English was the common language. There was no other binding.*²⁰

Further he cited the example of a multi-lingual state like Bombay and argued that in these states administration was in the language of the region, and that only work 'inside the government' was carried on in English. He raised doubt over the idea of mother-tongue as 'media of instruction'. He was not opposed to the idea of teaching in regional languages, but he opposed the idea of teaching in regional languages 'in all subjects at all levels', without developing text-books, and without imparting

¹⁴Gangasaran Singh; b. 1905; member Indian National Congress, 1921-48, participated in Non Cooperation Movement, founder member Yuvak Sangh, 1926, *Yuvak* (magazine) 1928, founder member of CSP, 1934, member National Executive, CSP, 1947, Secretary, Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, member Socialist Party, 1948-1952, President, Akhil Bharatiya Hindi Samstha Sangha, 1964, d. 1988.

¹⁵Gangasaran Singh, recorded by H D Sharma (original in Hindi), 26 April 1968.

¹⁶ SWND. I. 140.

¹⁷ CWRL. IX. 11.

¹⁸ A national conference was held in Wardha from 22nd-23rd October, 1937, after which a committee was appointed with Dr. Zakir Hussain, well-known educationist, as its President and E W Aranyakam, as its convener, for suggesting the future course of education in India, preparing a vision for mass-education and to suggest the steps essential for achieving the goal of 'free, compulsory and self-supporting education'. Other members of the committee were K G Saiyidin, K T Shah, Vinoba Bhave, Kaka Kalelkar, K G Mashruwala, and Smt. Asha Devi. The committee submitted its report in December 1937, which later came to be known as 'Wardha Scheme'. Indian National Congress in its Haripura session of 1938 adopted this scheme.

¹⁹ Purshottam Trikamdas; b. 1897, member Bombay Home Rule League; Joint Secretary, Bombay branch of Swaraj Party, 1924; founder member CSP; Chairman, Socialist Party, 1948; publications include *Law and Liberty*, *The Face of Communism*, *None So Blind*; d. 1969.

²⁰ Purshottam Trikamdas, recorded by K P Rungachary and H D Sharma, 9 October, 1967.

training to school-teachers so that they could efficiently expressed themselves in regional languages. But he also nostalgically remembered that Gandhiji once shared with him his deep concern for the Hindu-Muslim unity and advised him to learn Urdu, which Trikamdas subsequently did.

Dr Sampurnanand, who had participated in the eighth Hindi Sahitya Sammelan meeting in Indore and also served as the President of the Exhibition Sub-Committee, which exhibited the Hindi books, advocated a simple Hindi (Hindustani) devoid of excessive borrowing from Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit, but which draw its vocabulary from the words in common use. He wrote:

Now the name Hindustani is being popularized. No one should object to this. But we should clear as to its form. Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian words should neither be forcibly introduced into language nor such words as are in common use forcibly taken out of it... The British have forced their language upon us but the people of United Provinces cannot force their language upon the country. In determining the form of language, we have to remember that, as it is our national language, the people of Maharastra, Gujrat, Bengal and Madras have also to use it. For their sake, we have to keep a sufficiency of words of Sanskrit origin. Both the characters, Urdu and Nagari, will of course, remain, for the present.²¹

Addressing a gathering of Banaras Students' Association in February 1940, Narendra Deva dealt in length with the issue of language controversy and communal problem. It would be worth quoting him in length here; he explained:

*The language of the communities was not different...even in the U.P., where the problem of Hindi and Urdu was more acute, the two languages were really one, possessing the same grammar, style and vocabulary. In any literature which had to be written for the masses, this difference had to cease and neither of tendencies to enrich Hindustani with Sanskrit or Arabic words would succeed.*²²

For him the question of script and its nuances are but natural for a country like India, in one of his addresses to the teachers at Faizabad, he hoped that in the course of time Hindustani would become the "lingua-Indica". He felt that Roman script would be adopted though perhaps it would be sometime before the people are ready for it.²³

The Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League not only believe that there were 'two nations' in India, but they also held that their particular politics represent the 'only' national movement in the country. Both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League denounced Indian National Congress as 'guilty of treachery to the Hindus' and as 'hypocrites' respectively. Muslim League passed a resolution in its Lucknow session in October 1937, that 'All India Muslim League shall make every effort to make Urdu the universal language of India', and the Hindu Mahasabha in its Nagpur session of 1938, also passed a resolution that 'the Hindu Mahasabha declares that Hindi (not Hindustani- rather Sanskritnista Hindi) that is based on and drawing its nourishment from, Sanskrit vocabulary is and rightly deserves to be the National Language, and Devanagari as the National Script of Hindustan'. These organizations further aggravated the language controversy by passing subsequent resolutions in favor of 'Sanskritized' Hindi and chaste Urdu respectively.²⁴

²¹ Letter to Mahadev Desai, dated September 5, 1938, reproduced in Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 91-92.

²² SWND. I. 208.

²³ Ibid. 194.

²⁴ Cited in Asoka Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan. *The Communal Triangle in India*, Allahabad, 1942, pp. 154-156.

Here it would be apt to compare these two resolutions of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, with the resolution passed by Congress Working Committee in September 1938, which declared Article XIX of the Constitution of the Indian National Congress as:

- A. The proceedings of the Congress, the All India Congress Committee and Working Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in Hindustani. The English language or any provincial language may be used if the speaker is unable to speak in Hindustani or whenever permitted by President.
- B. The proceedings of the Provincial Congress Committee shall ordinarily be conducted in the language of the province concerned. Hindustani may also be used. 25

The resolution further clarified that what the Indian National Congress meant by Hindustani, as 'the language of the bulk of the people of the North and written either in Devanagari or Urdu script'. It is evident that while Indian National Congress had a rational view on the issue of language, the other two political parties showed their narrow attitude more clearly in their language policy.

In an interview given to a representative of the Leader at Allahabad on 25th June 1945, Narendra Deva expressed his disagreement with Hindustani Prachar Sabha and Rashtra Bhasha Prachar Samiti on the question of Hindustani, but he did not explain why so? In his own words: 'But since I am a member of the Hindustani Prachar Sabha, I would not like to express my opinion publicly till I have met and discuss the question with Gandhiji'.²⁶ Almost one-and-half year later in February 1947, while delivering inaugural address at Jan Sahitya Parishad in Lucknow he stressed the need for preparation of a standard English-Hindi dictionary, for making the Hindi vocabulary more comprehensive by assimilating foreign words that were not existent in Hindi, and also urged for translations of standard works in Hindi.²⁷

In his Presidential address in Prantiya Hindi Sahitya Sammelan which Narendra Deva had delivered just five months before independence in March, 1947, he in a way tried to postpone the question of script and language up till India got independence. He argued: 'We do not want to get into the Hindi-Urdu controversy. This increases communal bitterness and diverts our attention from the main problem of political and economic slavery'. He reiterated the conviction that if we want to see Hindi as 'language of the people', then we had to adopt vocabulary of common people, and that borrowing from Sanskrit would make Hindi difficult.²⁸

Kamladevi Chattopadhyay²⁹ in her memoir *Inner Recesses Outer Spaces* remembered that Gandhiji laid the groundwork for a link language, to which he called 'Hindustani', and which had to be free from 'archaic' words and phrases. She also commended the job done by Hindustani Prachar Sabha, especially in South India, in promotion and advancement of Hindustani. She further argued: 'the South took most vividly to this language program, particularly women, who felt great pride in passing the various exams in Hindustani'.³⁰

²⁵ A M Zaidi and S G Zaidi, eds., *The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress*, XI, Delhi, 1980, pp. 486-487.

²⁶ SWND. II. 69.

²⁷ Ibid. 156.

²⁸ Ibid. 167.

²⁹ Kamladevi Chattopadhyay; b. 1903, participated in Salt Satyagraha (1930), member National Executive of CSP 1934-1939, member of AICC and CWC, 1946, founder President Indian Cooperative Union, headed the Sangeet Natak Akademi, member of UNESCO; d.1988.

³⁰ Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, *Inner Recesses Outer Spaces: Memoir*, Delhi, 1986, p. 179.

Post-independence and 'moving away from Congress'

In February-March 1947, fifth CSP National Conference was held in Kanpur, Lohia presided over the conference, where the party formally decided to drop 'Congress' from its name. So that to enable those who were not members of the Congress, to become the members of the party, but the party's relations with the Congress continued. In February 1948, All India Congress Committee passed a resolution declaring: 'no other political group will be allowed in Congress'. Therefore, in its sixth National Conference, held in Nasik in March 1948, the Socialist Party decided to formally separate.³¹

It would be in our interest to pursue further the language policy of the Socialist Party and its leaders after the independence. Addressing to a congregation of authors while inaugurating Hindi Sahitya Samaj of Lucknow University on November 5, 1947 Narendra Deva expressed his happiness that Hindi had become the official language of the U.P. He also insisted that now Hindi needed good translators, who could translate standard works in Hindi. He also expressed his concern over the position of various dialects in Hindi-speaking areas and asked for:

*The assimilation of the various dialects of the province into Hindi, for with the growth of Hindi these dialects will slowly decline, depriving Hindi of the rich store of lively and beautiful expressions they contain.*³²

Narendra Deva presided over the twenty-eighth annual meeting of the court of the Lucknow University as Vice-Chancellor, which passed two resolutions regarding the medium of instruction at graduate level, language of question papers in the exams conducted by University etc.³³ Here it is quite evident that he tried to replace English as a medium of instruction with two languages of the province, namely, Hindi and Urdu, keeping in the mind the policy of Socialist Party to promote regional languages.

On July 31, 1948 in Varanasi Narendra Deva clarified the position of Socialist Party regarding language issue. He declared that 'Hindustani in Devanagari script only' as the language policy of the Socialist Party, on the issue of script that: 'There should be only one script, Devanagari, throughout the country, all else should be abolished'. He advanced the idea of use of Nagari script throughout the country in the line of Dhamma Chakra and lion capital of Ashoka. At the same time he also advocated that Hindustani was to evolve out of a common pool of provincial language and not confine itself to Hindi.³⁴ While on the question of national language he was ready to adopt Hindustani which could be a fine mixture of Hindi, Urdu and other Indian languages, but as far as the issue of script was concerned, he was rigid about that and went as far as asking for the abolition of 'provincial scripts'. On August 17, 1948 in an interview given to press he argued: 'If we want to promote inter-provincial unity, we should know each other's language and literature. Multiplicity of scripts stands in the way of realization of this object'. Further he urged for initiation of a movement in favor of adoption of a single script for the entire country, and adoption of new diacritical marks. He criticized the attempts for introducing 'artificiality' in Hindi and Urdu, and viewed it as product of 'middle class culture'.³⁵

³¹ See 'Burning Star of Indian Politics', in CWRL. I. pp. 60-69.

³² SWND. II. 209

³³ I. Hindi and Urdu as medium of instruction in all graduation courses comprising B.A., B.Sc., B. Com and L. Lb. from July 1948; 1950 onwards question papers shall be set in Hindi only, the script being Devanagari; 1952 onwards the answers shall be written in Hindi only with Devanagari script.

II. Students will be permitted to answer question paper in subjects like Persian, Arabic and Urdu, either in Hindi written in Devanagari script or in Urdu.

³⁴ SWND. III. 347

³⁵ Ibid. 46.

While it is true that a language is not dependent on its script for its vocabulary and syntax, and with some differences in their views most of the nationalist leaders were in favor of a common script, including Gandhiji, Nehru, and Subhash Chandra Bose. But none of the abovementioned leader argued for the abolition of other Indian scripts, which Narendra Deva do, despite his openness and concern for regional languages, as he later argued:

*Homogenous culture could not be developed in India by imposing 'one language, one script and one religion'; a homogenous culture could be developed only through assimilation of all that was best 'anywhere and everywhere', and by changing the existing socio-economic structure of the country, and thus ushering into an era of social and economic equality and by restoring human dignity to people. The advocates of a common culture and language were led away by the medieval concept of European nationalism, which was wrong.*³⁶

Jayaprakash Narayan clarifying his view on the issue of linguistic provinces explained in unambiguous terms that Socialist Party agreed with the plea of Nehru that the whole question of linguistic provinces is an issue which should be decided in an atmosphere of 'calm and unity' and be 'put aside' for a period of ten years. He also put forward the two conditions for accepting the principle of linguistic provinces; a. the national language, namely, Hindustani must within a reasonable period of time, replace English; b. the linguistic provinces must satisfy the conditions of geographic integrity and economic solvency.³⁷ Almost, seven-and-half years later in a letter to Morarji Desai Jayaprakash Narayan remarked:

*I personally have always believed in the language being one of the important bases of States' reorganization, because I want the people to understand the working of their Government.*³⁸

Expressing his thought on medium of instruction at the university level in his presidential address at University Teachers' Convention, Narendra Deva argued that there was a 'universal consent' that mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at least up to the high school stage, but there was no agreement for university level. He contended that as adoption of national language as the medium of instruction would help us in having a common medium of thought and expression for the whole country, in the same way adoption of a common script would be helpful in promoting 'inter-provincial' unity.³⁹

Narendra Deva urged the people of India to shun the narrow concept of 'provincialism', so to keep the freedom of the nation intact. And he also believed that in the course of time Hindi could achieve the status of 'lingua franca' as such and, that too, without jeopardizing the interest of any other language.⁴⁰ Narendra Deva also asked the students and, later to the people of North India to learn South Indian languages for promoting the unity in country, and for this purpose he appealed to All-India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan to collaborate with Dakshina Bharat Sahitya Samsad, Hyderabad. He believed that this step by North Indians would certainly make the people of South India that they were not being 'dominated'.⁴¹

³⁶ Lecture on Indian Culture, 18 November, 1948. Ibid. 82-83.

³⁷ Views on Linguistic Provinces, 28 August, 1948. JPSW. V. 263-264.

³⁸ Letter to Morarji R. Desai, March 29, 1956. JPSW.VII. 108.

³⁹ Presidential Address at All-India University Teachers' Convention, 4 December, 1948. SWND. III. 92-102

⁴⁰ Speech at the annual function of Tagore Society, Kanpur, 26 February, 1949. Ibid. 121.

⁴¹ Speech at the inauguration of Lucknow University Union, September 15, 1949. SWND. III. 203-204., and Speech at Hyderabad, December 28, 1949. SWND. III. 219.

For expanding the world-view of the Indians, he urged that besides their mother tongue and another South Indian or North Indian, as the case may be, Indians should also learn at least one foreign language. He gave more emphasis on learning the languages of our neighborhood countries like Chinese, Japanese, Burmese etc., rather than the European languages. He insisted:

*Knowledge of the Eastern languages, particularly of the neighboring countries, spreading from Middle to the Far East, was essential to independent India today as of English and other western languages has been in the past.*⁴²

Demand for the linguistic provinces, Narendra Deva argued, was a 'natural growth' and would not prove disruptive. For him, national solidarity was forged on other links as economic and cultural. He put forward the idea that development of a 'national culture' on democratic lines in India was essential to combat the divisive forces active in country.⁴³ He expressed his respect for the linguistic identity of the people in unequivocal terms: 'I do feel that language which is the visible symbol of separate individuality of a people must be respected as far as possible'.⁴⁴ He also recognized the role that motion pictures could play not only as powerful medium of education but that they could be profitably used for the spread of Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas.⁴⁵

Inaugurating the special convention of Bharatiya Hindi Parishad on April 3, 1953, Narendra Deva in his speech reasoned that the natural form, tradition, and pattern of Hindi should not be affected by any 'artificial effort'. Further he supported the regional languages as medium of education in University of non-Hindi speaking areas, but he hoped that in near future Hindi would be ultimately accepted as medium of education even in non-Hindi speaking areas. He stressed that, a. standard text-books were needed in Hindi, and for this he suggested that an inter-university organization should be established, provided with proper financial aid from the Government, b. Government's duty to take all due steps to encourage growth and enrichment of Hindi in all respects, c. coining the technical terms and adopting 'international terms' for scientific subjects, d. attention to the development and enrichment of Hindi in all branches of learning and literature, e. immediate need in the form of dictionaries for English and Hindi, Hindi and other regional languages, scientific Hindi grammar for use of all over the country and for standard readers.⁴⁶

Addressing to Bihar Rastra Bhasha Parishad in 1954, in Patna, Narendra Deva suggested:

*We (people of Hindi speaking areas) should not do anything to create an impression that we want to impose Hindi upon non-Hindi speaking people...it should be our endeavor to make it clear that we do not want to oust other languages.*⁴⁷

He exhorted that Hindi should assimilate the best thoughts from the literature of other languages, thus bridging the gap between north and south, and also advocated the study of dialects, folklores, folktales, and idioms. Same year, Rammanohar Lohia also advanced the idea that in bilingual areas regional language or state language should be used in schools and in law courts, and the 'national language' should be introduced as a compulsory subject for study (later Dr. Lohia had revised his notion

⁴² Speech at a Public meeting, Varanasi, 8 April, 1952. Ibid. 377.

⁴³ Address at Kashi Vidyapith, August 31, 1950. Ibid. 264.

⁴⁴ Speech on the formation of Andhra State, July 16, 1952. Ibid. 384.

⁴⁵ Views on nationalization of Film Industry, March 17, 1953. SWND. IV. 37.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 37-40.

⁴⁷ Address to Bihar Rastra Bhasha Parishad, April 21, 1954. SWND. IV. 60-62.

of 'national language' as compulsory subject in non-Hindi speaking areas, which we would discuss later in this paper).⁴⁸

'A common language'; argued Narendra Deva, 'a common code of civil laws, a common dress and observance of certain common festivals will go a long way to strengthen national unity'.⁴⁹ He recognized the role of Muslim settlers in other states, Hindi speaking laborers, of Hindustani cinema in spreading and promoting Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas, and that the Hindi had been accepted as national language because of its 'wider territorial jurisdiction' than others. He elucidated that Hindi could not be forced on those who are not wanted to accept it today.

In June 1955, President of India had appointed an Official Language Commission under the chairmanship of B G Kher.⁵⁰ This commission was provided with the task of making recommendations to the President on certain issues regarding language policy of the Government of India. The Official Language Commission submitted its report in July next year. In its concluding portion, Commission expressed the idea that all Indian languages had 'close and strong affinities', it believed that with energetic steps in the direction of 'rapprochement' among the various regional languages of the country would certainly reduce the 'distance' between these languages, it suggests that in a polyglot country like India, we should promote 'multilingualism amongst members of all linguistic regions', and for achieving this end appropriate provisions should be made in 'the secondary and university systems of education', viewing the language problem as the problem of 'contemporary generation' and emphasized that not 'a priori perfection' but a general acceptance was needed for language policy, it also recognized the role of Union and the State Governments, other official and non-official agencies, and most importantly the role of the ordinary citizen, and urged for the co-operative engagement amongst them, further advocated the 'interplay of working use and coinage of vocabularies, recommended flexibility in language policy regarding details and time-periods, firmness regarding objectives, and specificity regarding proximate programs, and last but not the least, viewed language as an 'instrumentality' and believed that with proper approach and reasonable solutions we could solve the problem successfully.⁵¹

Rambriksh Benipuri⁵², renowned Hindi author and Socialist leader from Bihar, argued in 1957 that even after ten years of independence 'Hindi' provinces did nothing for providing Hindi its due space in their Secretariats, Courts, Universities, and in everyday transactions, then how we can expect that non-Hindi speaking provinces could do so. He urged that Hindi speaking people had to begin their movement in favor of Hindi, from Hindi speaking areas itself, and for this he advocated the removal of English from Hindi speaking areas. He further recommended that every University from Hindi speaking areas should give space to at least one Indian language in their curriculum, and besides the Government and the Universities, associations and publishers of Hindi were also responsible for authentic translation of good

⁴⁸ Linguistic Redistribution, 1954.CWRL. V. 262-263.

⁴⁹ Presidential address in the Second National Conference of Praja Socialist Party, April 21, 1954. SWND. IV. 145-153.

⁵⁰ Other members of the Official Language Commission were: B K Barua, S K Chatterji, Maganbhai Desai, D C Pavate, P N Pushp, M K Raja, P Subbarayan, G P Nene, P K Parija, Sardar Teja Singh, M Satyanarayana, Babu Ram Saxena, Abid Hussain, R P Tripathi, Balkrishna Sharma, Mauli Chander Sharma, Hazari Preasad Dwivedi, and Jai Narain Vyas.

⁵¹ Report of the Official Language Commission, 1956, pp. 424-425.

⁵² Rambriksh Benipuri, b. 1899; founder member Bihar Socialist Party, 1931, Vice-President, All India kisan Sabha, 1941, Propaganda Minister Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1929, General Secretary Bihar Hindi Sahitya Sammelan (BHSS), 1946-1950, President BHSS, 1951; d. 1968.

works from all the Indian languages into Hindi. He denounced the tendency to promote regional dialects (bolis) in the place of Hindi (he was referring to Janapadiya Bhasha andolan), and viewed it as an attempt to destroy the unity and affinity of Hindi region. He became a bitter critic of sarkari-Hindi, and firmly rejected the dictionaries prepared by Dr. Raghuvir by arguing that such a Hindi was in-the-making under official patronage that even the Hindi scholars would find them clueless with its vocabulary, leave alone the ordinary masses. But he further went up to an extreme end by placing Banarasidas Chaturvedi and Maulana Azad, with Dr. Raghuvir as the 'three enemies of Hindi' (Hindi ke tin dushman).⁵³

In 1958, Rammanohar Lohia wrote an essay titled 'Removal of English, Not the Establishment of Hindi', where he clarified the misapprehensions related with the 'banish English' campaign (Angrezi Hatao andolan). Addressing the people of non-Hindi speaking states, he assured them that 'they should have the option not to use Hindi at all'. He contended that while using their own language, they must remove English. A 'correct language policy', reasoned Lohia, would be combined of measures: 'a. Hindi as the language of central Government; b. reserving gazetted posts of the central Government for non-Hindi speaking areas for 10 years; c. regional languages as the medium of education up to graduate courses, while for Post-graduate level Hindi would serve the purpose; d. use of regional languages in District courts, while in Supreme Court and High Court Hindustani should be used'.⁵⁴

Lohia believed that the language policy was faulty because it was based on the policy of 'developing language first, before it is used'; he further elaborated the relationship between language and power. He had defined the characteristic features of 'ruling class' in terms of wealth, English education, and high caste. He argued 'Hindi will come in its own time. I am confident about it. The issue at hand is that English must go and national languages must come' (emphasis is mine).⁵⁵ Here it would be interesting to note that he emphasized on languages, not the language. Later, while explaining his thought on anti-Hindi agitation in South India, he argued that the problem is not between North and South, but between the 'coastal region and the heartland'.⁵⁶ Advancing further his idea on the intricate relationship between language and power, he pointed out that as long as English language would continue to enjoy prestige and power those, who can afford the cost of English education would always send their offspring to English school.

Jayaprakash Narayan, in the wake of question over the position of Bengali in Assam argued: 'The reorganization of states on a linguistic basis did not mean that there should be in each state only one so-called state language'. He even welcomed the idea of a bilingual or multilingual state, and urged that status of 'state language' should also be accorded to those languages which were spoken by a 'substantial' linguistic minority. He was also afraid of a condition which would promote the linguistic patriotism and thus, domination and arrogance of majority linguistic group.⁵⁷ Reviewing his opinion on the issue of 'linguistic states', Jayprakash Narayan opined that his earlier advocacy of linguistic states was a 'mistake'. He believed that in a vast country like India: 'There are bound to be differences and disputes', but 'national integration' could be achieved only through settling them by peaceful means.⁵⁸ Later, he also argued that there was no disagreement over the issue of learning a foreign language, and no one had argued, except a few 'extremists', that English and other foreign languages should be

⁵³ Rambriksh Benipuri, *Swadhinta aur Samajvaad*, edited by Ramvilas Sharma, Delhi, 2001, pp. 376-389.

⁵⁴ CWRL. V. 264-267. See also 'Banish English' (1958), Ibid. 268-278.

⁵⁵ 'English and the People's Languages in India' (1959), Ibid. 279-297.

⁵⁶ 'Coastal Areas and the Heartland' (1964), Ibid. 323.

⁵⁷ 'On Status of Bengali in Assam', June 2, 1961. JPSW. VIII. 150.

⁵⁸ 'Linguistic States and National Integration', September 1, 1962. Ibid. 256.

banished from schools. But he believed that education through a foreign language could only be resulted in 'mediocrity and stunting of originality and creativity'. He favored the Vinoba Bhave's suggestion that 'the non-Hindi speaking states themselves should be left free to determine the period of time required'. He further opined that steps should be taken to see that 'the Central exams were held both in English and Hindi', and that for defining the period within which 'English could be given up as an associate or inter-state language, and Hindi alone could come to acquire that status'.⁵⁹

In Indian context Lohia saw English as 'feudal'. And for him 'banish English' movement draws a line between a 'feudal and people's language', and for this purpose he showed his firm belief in people's action. He used both Hindi and Hindustani interchangeably, and believed that even Urdu could be used so, as he contended 'They are three different styles of a single language, actually only two'.⁶⁰ For him it was not the poverty of Indian languages but the lack of will on the part of Government of India which was responsible for the unremoval of English. He criticized both, 'Hindi fanatics like Seth Govind Das and Ganga Saran Sinha' and those who are in favor of retaining English, and advocated the cause of 'mother tongue'. He held that 'the war of Socialist Party on English is for the sake of the mother tongue, which means Oriya, Bengali, Tamil, and Telugu, as much as Hindi'. He gave Hindi an 'optional' status, while provided three alternative to 'coastal states', i.e. a. multilingual centre, b. Hindi centre with safeguards, c. 'bifurcated' centre.⁶¹

On April 13, 1963, when Official Language Bill⁶² was introduced in parliament then it was marked by wild scenes of loud and angry protests by some Socialist and Jana Sangh members. Later Jayaprakash Narayan had criticized both of them, and argued that English which had no roots in the life of the people of India could not survive as its 'national language', and that it was a fact beyond doubt that Hindi and regional languages would in due course of time took their place in national and regional levels, respectively. He supported the bill by arguing that through it 'the Home Minister has done his best to reconcile different views and carry out the directions of the Indian Constitution'. He expressed his deep anxiety over the danger of 'mixing up religion with language', and warned the supporters of Hindi that the question of Hindi must be kept strictly apart from religious sentiments.⁶³

Keeping in mind the Chief Ministers' Conference to be held on February 23, 1965, Lohia furthered his ideas regarding the 'language policy' for public consideration. The main points of his arguments were:

- a. The arguments for 'gradual or ultimate' acceptance of Hindi as mere illusion, and the policy of the Hindi as compulsory subject in non-Hindi areas should be stopped, and also favored the removal of irritating presence of Hindi as a 'meaningless adjunct';
- b. 'establishment precedes development' in case of language;
- c. the continued practice of English as the cause for increasing inequality and corruption;
- d. peaceful competition between areas that were in favor of removal of English and those in favor of retaining English;

⁵⁹ 'Nehru's Stand on the Language Problem not Proper', October 7, 1962. Ibid. 261-262.

⁶⁰ 'Feudal Language Versus People's Language' (1962), CWRL. V. 324-337.

⁶¹ 'Speak in Mother Tongue' (1963), CWRL. V. 338-339.

⁶² The Official Language Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by the then Home Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri on April 13, 1963. It provided that the English would continue to be used in addition to Hindi for all official purposes, even after the expiration of the period of 15 years.

⁶³ 'Misguided Hindi Zealots', April 16 1963, JPSW. VIII. 287-288.

- e. language of communication between centre and states was not as important as the activities like administration, judiciary, education, railways, industries etc.;
- f. the removal of English must include its removal from 'central functions';
- g. the action of the removal of English by any state (if it decided to do so), must be performed compulsorily, not optionally.⁶⁴

Speaking on the issue of language controversy and keeping in mind the scheduled Chief Ministers' Conference, Madhu Limaye⁶⁵ in his parliamentary speech delivered on February 18, 1965, questioned the policy of Government of India to provide linguistic autonomy to the provinces by giving them opportunity to function in their own languages, and argued that this policy only resulted into the continued use of English. He also supported the notion of Dr Lohia that in case of languages 'establishment precedes the development'. He further argued:

*In the schools of non-Hindi speaking provinces, regional languages (janbhashayen) must be used as medium of instruction in the schools in the place of English. At any level of education where English is accorded with the status of 'compulsory' language, it should be converted into 'optional' language. If they are still opposed to Hindi, then even Hindi should be put into the category of 'optional' language. Hindi should not be imposed on anyone by any means...Prime Minister should invite a conference in which leaders of various political parties of the parliament, other leaders representing various political groups, linguists, independent representatives of the common people should be invited.*⁶⁶

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to examine the language policy of the CSP leaders (later leaders of the Socialist Party) in detail, through their own writings and speeches. After exploring their writings and speeches we can aptly conclude that leaders like Dr Lohia and his fellows were not 'monolingual or parochial' at all.⁶⁷ Barring a few socialists and few instances of deviations (though for a short while) among some, language policy of socialists in India, pre- and post-independence period, followed a consistent line which they had pursued, no matter whether they remained within or without INC.

Firstly, they strongly favored the idea of 'removal of English', as they considered it a 'feudal language' and a remnant of colonial rule. Secondly, though they tried their level best to promote the cause of Hindi as 'national language' (*rastra-bhasha*), and to build consensus across the country in favor of it, they never tended to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking areas. Thirdly, they advocated the use of Hindi and other Indian languages in the place of English, in areas like administration, education, and judiciary, so that the common people could understand the administrative function and the judicial procedures without any difficulty, and thus not falling prey in the hands of the mediators; and so that the capability of genuine and original thinking could not be marred by necessity of acquiring a foreign language and forced further, to think in it on more sophisticated philosophical and social problems. Fourthly, while there were many critics of language policy of the Government of India apart from socialists, socialists came with alternatives and practical suggestions like Open Discussions among not only the members of Parliament, but also inclusive of local leaders of political parties and groups,

⁶⁴ 'English: Hindi' (1965), CWRL. V. 259-261.

⁶⁵ Madhu Limaye; b. 1922, educated at Fergusson College, Poona; associated with INC, 1939-48, CSP, 1939-48; member of the National Executive of the Socialist Party at Nasik Conference, 1948; Joint-Secretary PSP, 1953; participated in Goa Liberation Movement; active role in the JP movement.

⁶⁶ Madhu Limaye, *Madhu Limaye in Parliament A Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 152-154.

⁶⁷ See also, Sudhanva Deshpande, 'Lohia and Language' (EPW, Vol. 44, No. 48, pp. 76-79) and Yogendra Yadav, 'Was Lohia Parochial and Monolingual?' (EPW, Vol. 44, No.43, pp. 70-71.)

representatives of voluntary language associations, linguists, and writers of various regions of India, so that the dissenting voices could be heard most clearly and further actions could be taken. And last but not the least; keeping themselves in the line of Gandhiji and INC's 1938 Resolution, socialists favored the idea of a simple Hindi (call it Hindi, Hindustani, or Urdu), different from a 'Persianized' Urdu or 'Sanskritized' Hindi, and in their writings they used Hindi and Hindustani interchangeably.

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