



**1. "Dr.B.R. Ambedkar's Vision and the Constitutional Provisions for the Official Language of India"**

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**Abstract:** *Dr. B.R.Ambedkar was a visionary; he expressed his views on official language of India in Constituent Assembly. He wanted one Indian language Hindi should replace English and become a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India. He also supported the views of Mahatma Gandhi on National Language in the assembly. Unfortunately Dr.Ambedkars vision on Official language of India has not been implemented completely, still the country is depending on English. This paper is purely based on views expressed by Dr.Ambedkar on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1949 in the Constituent Assembly and the Constitutional provision for the Official language of India.*

**Key Words:** Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, Official Language of India, Constituent Assembly

**1.1 Introduction:** Dr. B.R.Ambedkar very much knew the importance language in nation building. He studied all western countries and their Constitutions, he knew western countries connected with one language that is the essence for patriotism hence he brought one Official language for India. The 17<sup>th</sup> part of the Indian Constitution deals with the official language of India.

**1.2 Dr.Ambedkar's Speech on Official language of India:** On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1949 when constituent Assembly met to elect language of the nation Dr. B.R.Ambedkar said "Mr. President : This brings the proceedings of this evening to a close but before adjourning the House I desire just to say a few words of congratulation. I think we have adopted a Chapter for our Constitution which will have very far reaching consequences in building up the country as a whole. Never before in our history did we have one language recognised as the language of rule and administration in the country as a whole. Sanskrit was the language in which all our religious literature and lore was enshrined and in which other literature was enshrined. That was studied no doubt in all parts of the country but it was never the language which was used for administrative purposes throughout the country as a whole. Today it is for the first time that we have got a Constitution, we are going to provide in our Constitution a language which will be the language of administration for the Union and that language will have to develop itself to suit the exigencies of time "

**1.3 Constitutional Provision for the Official language of India.** As per Article 343, Official

language of the Union- (1) The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devnagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals. (2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement: Provided that the President may, during the said period, by order authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devnagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union. (3) Notwithstanding anything in this article, Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of- (a) the English language, or (b) the Devnagari form of numerals, for such purposes as may be specified in the law.

It is clear in the Constitution that English was the official language of India during British rule will no longer remain as the Official language of India after 15 years of the commencement of the constitution.

**1.4 One Indian Language Should Replace English:**

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar wanted one Indian language should replace English. He said on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1949 in constituent Assembly" Our Constitution so far has evoked many controversies, and raised many questions which had very deep differences; but we have, somehow or other, managed to get over them all. This was one of the



biggest gulfs which might have separated us. Let us imagine what would have happened if the South had not accepted the Hindi language and the Devanagari script. In a small tiny country like Switzerland, they have got three languages which are recognized by the Constitution and everything has to be done in those three languages. Do we think, can we imagine, that we shall be able to keep together all the provinces, bind them together, if we thought of having as many languages as there are in existence, for central administrative purposes? One page of printing will have to be extended-I do not know-perhaps to fifteen or twenty pages.

And it is not only a question of expense. It is also a question of psychology which will affect our whole life. This language which we shall use in the Centre will tend to bring us together, nearer and nearer. After all, the English language has brought us nearer and nearer because it was one language. If in place of English we have adopted an Indian language, it is bound to bring us closer together, particularly because our traditions are the same, our culture is the same, and everything that goes to make our civilisation is the same. Therefore, if we did not accept this formula, the result would have been either a large number of languages to be used, for the country as a whole, or separation of provinces which did not like to submit or accept any particular language under pressure. We have done the wisest thing possible and I am glad, I am happy, and I hope posterity will bless us for this”

**1.5 Indian Constitution gives the direction for the development of Hindi language:** As per Article 351 Directive for development of the Hindi language- It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

It is clear from the article 351 that Hindi should adopt words from Sanskrit and languages mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution and prosper. Dr.Ambedkar said on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1949 in constituent Assembly” I do not claim to be a scholar

of Hindi or any other language. I do not claim to have made any contribution to literature but this much I can say as a layman that it is not possible today to foresee what form this language, which we have adopted as the language of administration of the Union, is going to take in the future. As it is, Hindi has undergone change in the past as many occasions and we have several styles of it, we have had literature written in Braj Bhasha. Khari Boli is now the prevalent style in Hindi. I think its contact with all the other languages in the country will give it opportunities for further development. I have no doubt that Hindi will benefit rather than lose by absorbing as much as it can of the best that is to be found in the other languages of the country”

### **1.6 Mahatma Gandhi's Views on National Language:**

Mahatma Gandhi said “Looking at the educated section of our society, one is likely to gain the impression that in the absence of English, all our work would come to a stop. But deeper reflection will show that English cannot and ought not to become our national language.

Let us see what should be the requirements of a national language:

1. It should be easy to learn for Government officials.
2. It should be capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic and political intercourse throughout India.
3. It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.
4. It should be easy to learn for the whole of the country.
5. In choosing this language considerations of temporary or passing interest should not count.

English does not fulfill any of these requirements. Then which is the language which fulfils all the five requirements? We shall have to admit that it is Hindi. No other language can compete with Hindi in satisfying these five requirements. Thus, we see that Hindi alone can become our national language. No doubt this presents some difficulty to the educated



classes of Madras. But for Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, Sindhis and Bengalis, it should be very easy. In a few months, they can acquire enough command of Hindi to be able to use it for national purposes. It is not so easy for Tamilians. Tamil and other languages of the South belong to the Dravidian group. Their language structure and grammar is different from that of Sanskrit. The only thing in common between these two groups is their Sanskrit vocabulary. But the difficulty in learning Hindi is confined to the present educated classes only. We have a right to appeal to their patriotic spirit to put forth a special effort to learn Hindi. If Hindi attains to its due status, then it will be introduced into every school in Madras. And Madras will be in a position to cultivate acquaintance with other provinces. English has failed to reach the masses, but Hindi will do so in no time. (*M.K Gandhi 1953 "TOWARDS NEW EDUCATION"*.)

Mahatma Gandhi aimed at the need to unite the northern & southern states of the country in the greatest interest of integration of the nation. Therefore he founded the Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in 1918 at Madras, as Hindi was spoken by the largest section of the people of India. Mahatma Gandhi was the life time President of this institution. This institution was founded to propagate the study of Hindi in the then Madras Presidency and princely states of Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, Cochin, Pudukkoti, Banganapalle and Sandur.

### **1.7 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Endorses the Views of Mahatma Gandhi on National Language:**

By supporting the views of Mahatma Gandhi Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1949 in constituent Assembly "We have now accomplished political unification of the country, such as it is. We are now going to fore another link which will bind us all together from one end to the other. I hope all Members will go home with a feeling of satisfaction and even those who have lost in voting will take it in a sportsman like spirit and will help in the work which the Constitution will now impose upon the Union in regard to language. I want to say one word about South India. It was in 1917 when Mahatma Gandhi wits in Champaran and I had the privilege of working with him that he thought of starting Hindi Prachar in the South and he decided to request Swami Satyadev and his dear son Devdas Gandhi to go and start the work which they did. Subsequently, in 1918 at the Indore Session of the Hindi Sahitya

Sammelan, this Prachar work was accepted as one of its primary functions by the Sammelan and the work progressed. It has been my privilege to be associated although I cannot claim to be associated very intimately-with the work throughout this period of nearly 32 years no. I have gone to the South from one corner to the other and it has pleased my heart to see how the people of the South responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi in respect of this language. I know the difficulties that they had to face, but the enthusiasm which they brought to bear upon this was simply marvellous. I have been associated with prize distributions on several occasions and it may amuse Members to hear that I have distributed the prizes to two generations at the same time if not three on some occasions; that is to say, the grand-parent, the Parent, and the grand-child-for having studied the language, having passed the prescribed examination and having come for the prizes and for their diplomas. The work has progressed and it has been adopted by the people of the South as their work. Today I do not know how many lakhs they are spending over this Hindi Prachar work and I do not recollect the figures, how many examinees are sitting at the examinations from year to year. This means that the language has been recognised by a large section of the people in the South as the language for All-India purposes and the enthusiasm which they have exhibited in this deserves congratulation, deserves recognition, deserves gratitude from the people of the North"

### **1.8 Failures in Implementing the Constitutional Provisions for the Official Language:**

Unfortunately rulers have not followed the constitution as per Dr. B.R. Ambedkar desired. English continued as Official Language of India. The scope of the meaning of the official language also been narrowed down. In western countries, official language has been used in all education, administration, judiciary, corporate sector etc. But in India, official language means mere language of Governments administration. Hindi even failed to become the language of administration; still English is the dominant language in central Governments administration. There has been attempts to misinterpret the constitution. Some people say all 8<sup>th</sup> schedule languages are also official languages. However, these languages are not mentioned as official in the Constitution. The name of the 17<sup>th</sup> part of the constitution is Official language of India and not Official languages of India. Some people also creating confusion about Official language and



National language. But the fact is, Official language is the proper political term. The official language of the Union Government is known as National language because Union Government is a National Government. India has no federal Government like US; the Indian Constitution used the term Union Government that is the governing authority of the union of 29 states and seven union territories of a proclaimed and established parliamentary democratic republic, constitutionally called the Republic of India. The official language of the governing authority of the union of 29 states and seven union territories is not a National Language?

**1.8 Conclusion:** Dr.B.R Ambedkar is known as the architect of the Indian constitution. The speeches given by Dr.B.R Ambedkar in constituent assembly on different issues are crucial in understanding and implementing the constitution. Unfortunately, executive and judiciary are not following the vision

of Dr.B.R Ambedkar in implementing the Constitution.

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