



Our Cultural Health and Depletion of Linguistic Diversity

¹Bhadauria Manishkumar Kishansingh,² Dr Dushyanat Nimavat

¹PhD Research scholar,²Prof., PhD Supervisor (Guide)

¹Department of English, School of Languages Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat India

²Department of English School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat India

Abstract : This paper aims at studying the cause and effect of our depleting linguistic diversity. The paper highlights our rich linguistic heritage and its benefit when it comes to decoding the body of knowledge and records the importance of language when it comes to harnessing the knowledge and bridging the gap between different societies and cultural identities. It is the link to relate and co-relate. Languages have remained like mother shielding and guarding the cultures across the harsh times. But languages are like Prince Rupert's drop which has very strong head and foundation but also has a very weak tail, which when disturbed it gets shattered. Native speakers when chose to go with flow and mix with other through popular languages like English, Hindi they lose their own identity

IndexTerms – Language, Linguistic diversity, Depletion of Languages

1.1 Introduction

India has been known for its rich and varied culture since the inception of the civilization. People belonging different race, continents, countries and following different religions migrated to this land of opportunities. This resulted in beautiful amalgamation of civilizations, languages, traditions and cultures, which in turn resulted in a beautiful heritage. As we all know that culture is a big body rather than being one single and large unit. So we can say culture is a sum total of beliefs, morals, customs, traditions, rituals, language, architect, history and every other aspect of human life. India holds the esteem reputation of being the one of the earliest cradle of human civilization. It is the land of Vedas, Scriptures, Stone carving, Cave Inscriptions, and of Languages and their thousands of dialects. And it is one of the undisputed fact that dialect changes at every 100 km and language changes at 200 km. So India is at the pinnacle position when it comes to cultural diversities. Languages and dialects are the part of our cultural health and every language and dialect holds a key to open the gate of treasure house of the knowledge and this is the land which can boast of having the earliest libraries called 'Dharmgunj' in one of the earliest and the biggest universities of that time called 'Nalanda' and 'Takshshila'. Hindi the one of the most popular languages across India is also a result of different dialects like *Hindawi*, *Hindustani*, *Sadhukhadi*, *Urdu* and *Sanskrit*. From earliest *Hindawi* creation 'Prithviraj Raso' depicting love story and valor of Prithviraj Samrat by his poet friend Chandrabardai to latest Mumbaiiya Hindi, dialect and languages have remained one of the most fertile crops of cultural crossovers which this country has seen since the time immemorial. Beside amalgamation of different indigenous languages many exotic languages brought in by people who migrated to this land to avoid persecutions. Zoroastrianism to Jewish culture to Ben Israeli culture we find a typical unison. So the languages form the very basis of our culture identity. **Cultural Health can be broadly defines as a condition in which well being and co-existence flourish across the geographic, demographic and social sectors which leads to fostering healthy equitable communities and to a condition where everyone has the opportunity to make choices that lead to healthy life style.**

1.2 Foundation of Indian Culture

Indian culture has deep roots and these roots have gone deep into the bedrock; gaining nutrients from different sources like Religions, Customs, Clothing, Cuisines. But it is the language that runs like water into the veins of this flourishing tree. Languages hold the key to unlock the Literary and Historical heritage. It is the link to relate and co-relate. Languages have remained like mother shielding and guarding the cultures across the harsh times. But languages are like Prince Rupert's drop which has very strong head and foundation but also has a very weak tail, which when disturbed it gets shattered. Native speakers when chose to go with flow and mix with other through popular languages like English, Hindi they lose their own identity, their own dialect and language. And it is quite ironical that popular languages like English which has kind of swallowed many dialects and language can serve as the defibrillation to restart the current which lost its way in the torrential flow.

1.3 Languages in India

Indian languages have evolved from different language family having variety of ethnic elements which have arrived to this land since the dawn of History. Such ethnic elements are numerous but can be categorized in to six major groups namely...

1. Negroid
2. Austric
3. Sino-Tibetan
4. Dravidian
5. Indo-Aryan
6. Other Speeches

The interaction between these languages resulted in to major linguistic divisions of present India. Among the above group Aryans and Dravidians influences have remained dominating. Important languages in this group are Sanskrit, Punjabi, Sindhi, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Pahari, and Kashmiri. Sanskrit marks the beginning of literary arena in India. Sanskrit is the mother of many other Indian languages. It is the language of Vedas, Classics and Epics. Hindi or Khadi boli has produced two great literary streams of Hindi and Urdu literature. Both these languages have same grammar and vocabulary. The Dravidian family of languages came into India centuries before the Indo-Aryan family. It splits into three branches

1. Brahui spoken in Baluchistan and Kurukh and Malto spoken in Bengal and Orissa. Kurukh is also spoken in Bihar and M.P.
2. The central branch is composed of Telugu and a number of dialects spoken in Central India - Koli, Khond, Holan, Konda, Gondi, Naiki, Parji, Koya and others
3. The southern branch is made up of Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu, Badaga, Toda, Kota and Kodagu.

The major languages of the Dravidian group are: (i) Telugu (Andhra Pradesh), numerically the biggest of the Dravidian languages, (ii) Tamil (Tamil Nadu), apparently the oldest and purest branch of the Dravidian family, (iii) Kannada (Karnataka), another ancient Dravidian language that has developed individually (iv) Malayalam (Kerala), the smallest and the youngest of the Dravidian family.

1.4 Multilingualism

India never had a common language however during ancient time Sanskrit remained more or less a common medium. It was considered to be the language of the learned class. But when Britishers came to this land English became lingua franca. But again it remained restricted to educated few. Of the 1652 mother tongues listed in the census, only 33 are spoken by people numbering over a hundred thousand. So what killed so many languages and where are the native speakers of many languages. It will not be an exaggeration to say the garden which boasts of having variety of flowers in the form of different languages is also a grave yard of many languages. However every Indian knows at least two languages and learned class mostly know three or more languages. So a country having the largest population when have the largest group of people speaking two or three languages today dealing with depleting language. For example Uttar Pradesh, Madhyapradesh and Bihar is not all about Bhojpuri and Hindi only. Kannoji, Vraj, Avadhi are also the major dialects of Uttar Pradesh. Similarly Magahi, Maithili, Angika, Bajika and Surajpuri are one of the fastest disappearing dialects. So today when language politics is being played a question arises that so called savior of the particular state culture and languages are not actually aware of the problems around major dialects of our indigenous languages.

1.5 Depletion of Linguistic Diversity

Today the depletion of language has also become as global problem. Languages and cultures associated with them disappearing with an alarming speed. One may think of it as natural process. Unlike the human languages are not born to die, they need to be evolved and change. Earlier we have no specific information or data regarding the languages in India but in recent times depletion of linguistic diversity has successfully gained the global attention. As a result first time in 80 years a survey was conducted in 2014. As per that latest survey conducted by the People's Linguistic survey of India more than 220 languages are lost in the last 50 years. This number is huge and threatening. It puts a question mark against our rich literary traditions and culture. The survey has found two major reasons for the linguistic deterioration.

1.5.1 Migration

India has changed a lot economically and socially. Industrialization and Urbanization on the one hand risk in agriculture sector on the other hand pushed many people to migrate towards the cities leaving behind their cultural and ethnic value. The culture in city is a strange juxtapose of many cultures. This result in to formation of new linguistic compound where new properties arise and originality is lost. One of the major findings of this survey revealed that most of the languages belonging to sea coast lines are more venerable than languages spoken well within. Because of change in the sea farming technology, local people have lost their livelihood. They have migrated out of their language zones. Whenever people move from one place to another for livelihood they carry their languages too but these languages were thrown like old stuff on finding the new stuff waiting for them.

1.5.2 Urbanization

Urbanization is also one of the chief reasons for depletion of linguistic diversity. Cities don't kill languages directly but the process of being city class does. For example when two people speaking Maithili meet in a city they generally won't speak their native language but Hindi or any other local language spoken in the particular region. As a result speakers of native language go on decreasing

1.6 Impact of Criminal Tribes Act

The criminal tribe act though not taken into the consideration in the above mentioned survey, it is the prime suspect when it comes to India. This Criminal Tribes act was laid down on the tribes which remained away from the development and known as 'Thugs' as community. These tribe used to loot the people and kill them so they were declared criminal by birth by the law of British Raj. This terrible law implemented as Nomadic Criminal Tribes act in 1871 was passed gain by the government of India in 1952. Such inhuman law has forced many tribal people to lose and hide their cultural identity as the law declares them as an offender by birth. Under this act, many communities were described as criminal by birth, not criminal by act. So those communities got stigmatized. They are mostly Nomadic in habit, and today in India those people are trying to move away from their cultural identity. They are trying to conceal their cultural identity. Therefore they are giving up their languages.

1.6 Aftermath of the dead language

The effects are culturally devastating. Each language is a key that can unlock local knowledge about Medicinal secrets, ecological wisdom, weather and climate patterns, spiritual attitudes, and artistic and mythological histories. In rural Indian villages, Hindi or English are in vogue with younger generations and are often required travelling to larger towns for work. In big cities, colonization as well as globalization has also spurred a switch to English and other popular languages. But a complex mix of economic, social and cultural factors is now causing them to disappear at a faster pace. Experts believe that more than half of the world's roughly 700 languages will vanish by the end of this century alone at the rate of one language every two weeks. What is primarily lost is the expression of a unique vision of what it means to be human. Definitely 10 to 20 % of all Indian languages are in bad shape and on their death bed, but the Munda languages are the most vulnerable. Over the last few decades, linguists have analyzed over Munda languages such as widely spoken Santali and Mundari, but the majority are poorly studied and sparsely documented. Many have yet to be rendered into computer typefaces, unable to cross the digital divide.

Methods to preserve the Linguistic Diversity

Many people have the misconception that English can be the substitute of every other language of the world. And it is true to some extent. But the information provided through English will always be the second hand information. And such second hand will be dysfunctional without the native speakers who can prove its worth. So this is the high time to preserve our own roots by preserving the languages.

- Language dies when people abandon it. One should always be proud of its native roots one should not feel ashamed or see his mother tongue as a mark of being uneducated or recessive.
- Dying language can be preserved by digitalization. Computer typefaces or multilingual platforms can be created
- Translations and translational studies must be encouraged to preserve linguistic diversity.
- Such languages can be included in to syllabus at primary level.
- Literature of such languages can be popularized by reprinting with original and translations side by side.
- Government should make special initiative to provide incentive towards saving such languages
- Language forms the base of our cultural heritage to it must be given as much importance as any other World Heritage Site.

Conclusion

Thus we may sum up that our cultural health is directly proportional to linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity is the key to cultural growth and the transfer of rich heritage to future generation. Every lost language is a lost opportunity and our failure to preserve our own roots.

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/>
- [2] <http://blogs.reuters.com/india/2013/09/07/india-speaks-780-languages-220-lost-in-last-50-years-survey/>
- [3] <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/02/090226--dying-languages-india-missions.html>