



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

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Lecture-2



. Linguistic Diversity:

The census of 1961 listed as many as 1,652 languages and dialects. Since most of these languages are spoken by very few people, the subsequent census regarded them as spurious but the 8th Schedule of the Constitution of India recognizes 22 languages. These are (1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) zKonkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Tamil, (16) Telugu, (17) Urdu, and (18) Sindhi, (19) Santhali, (20) Boro, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri. But four of these languages namely Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Nepali and Sindhi are not official languages in any State of the Indian Union. But all these languages are rich in literature Hindi in Devanagiri script is recognized as the official language of the Indian Union by the Constitution.

The second largest language, Telugu, is spoken by about 60 million people, mostly in Andhra Pradesh. Most of the languages spoken in North India belong to the Indo- Aryan family, while the languages of the South namely Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada belong to the Dravidian family.

It is said that India is a “Veritable tower of babel”. In the words of A.R. Desai “India presents a spectacle of museum of tongues”.

This linguistic diversity notwithstanding, there was always a sort of link languages, though it has varied from age to age. In ancient times, it was Sanskrit, in medieval age it was Arabic or Persian and in modern times there are Hindi and English as official languages.

4. Religious Diversity:

India is not religiously a homogeneous State even though nearly 80 per cent of the population profess Hinduism. India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism Zoroastrianism. We know it that Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. According to the census of 2001 it is professed by 80.05 per cent of the total population.

Next comes Islam which is practiced by 13.04 per cent. This is followed by Christianity having a followers of 2.03 per cent, Sikhism reported by 1.9 per cent, Buddhism by 0.8 per cent and Jainism by 0.4 per cent. The religions with lesser following are Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

Then there are sects within each religion. Hinduism, for example, has many sects including Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. We can add to them the sects born of religious reform movements such as the Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, and The Ram Krishna Mission. More recently, some new cults have come up such as Radhaswami, Saibaba etc. Similarly, Islam is divided into Shiya and Sunni; Sikhism into Namdhari and Nirankari; Jainism into Digambar and Shwetambar and Buddhism into Hinayan and Mahayan.

While Hindus and Muslims are found in almost all parts of India, the remaining minority religions have their pockets of concentration. Christians have their strongholds in the three Southern States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya. Sikhs are concentrated largely in Punjab, Buddhist in Maharashtra and Jains are mainly spread over Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also found in most urban centres throughout the country.

5. Caste Diversity:

India is a country of castes. Caste or Jati refers to a hereditary, endogamous status group practicing a specific traditional occupation. It is surprising to know that there are more than 3,000 Jatis in India.

These are hierarchically graded in different ways in different regions.

It may also be noted that the practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus alone. We find castes among the Muslims, Christians, Sikhs as well as other communities. We have heard of the hierarchy of Shaikh, Saiyed, Mughal, Pathan among the Muslims, Furthermore, there are castes like Teli (oil pressure), Dhobi (washerman), Darjee (tailor) etc. among the Muslims. Similarly, caste consciousness among the Christians in India is not unknown. Since a vast majority of Christians in India were converted from Hindu fold, the converts have carried the caste system into Christianity. Among the Sikhs again we have so many castes including Jat Sikh and Majahabi Sikh (lower castes). In view of this we can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.

In addition to the above described major forms of diversity, we have diversity of many other sorts like settlement pattern – tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship pattern along religious and regional lines and so on.

India is known across world for its diversity. It is home to largest number of different socio-cultural groups based on race, religion, language etc. When India got independence, many political thinkers had commented that democracy in India will not survive because it's too diverse to be united as a single nation. However they have been subsequently proved wrong. What distinguishes India from other diverse nations is its unity that has stayed despite various conflicts that exist in the society.

Basis of diversity and its distribution

Language

It is the most prominent feature of India's diversity and in past has been a major source of unrest. There are more than 1600 languages spoken in India as recorded by 1961 census. Of then 22 are the official languages have been recognized as official languages under 8th schedule and about 197 are endangered. Indian languages are broadly classified under the following families:

- Indo-Aryan language family: Languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, Bengali, Kashmiri, Marathi etc. are part of this family and are spoken in most of the part of North India
- Dravidian language family: Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the prominent languages under this family spoken in the southern states
- Austroasiatic language family: most of the tribal languages spoken in Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha are part of this family e.g. Khasi, Santhali, Meitei
- Sino-Tibetan language family: Languages of the north-eastern state like Assamese, Manipuri, Bodo etc. constitute this family
- Others: Other languages like Andamanese, Sentinelese are restricted to small number of speakers and therefore face extinction

Language has been the major issue of conflict in the past like:

- Demands for state reorganization after independence based on languages – finally accepted through State reorganization act 1956
- Dravidian and anti-hindi movements against the imposition of Hindi as the official language and in schools under the 3 language formula
- Recently, it was the basis for Gorkhaland agitation

