An Appeal to Unify India with Hindi

What is the issue?

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the occasion of Hindi Diwas made an appeal to unify India with the country's most widely-spoken language - Hindi.

Why this idea won't be uniting India?

- **Historical -** Our tragedy was we were colonised by linguistically challenged islanders who couldn't think beyond one language.
- This idea is not in tune with our history, culture and civilisation.
- We are a multilingual society.
- Speaking more than one language comes naturally to us.
- **Outdated -** The real problem is that notwithstanding this multiplicity, we need one language to unite the country.
- Another problem is that can only be Hindi.
- **'One nation, one language, one culture'** is a 19th century European idea and it **failed** to create unity.
- It's good to move away from this colonial idea.

- **Relevance -** It does not matter how many speak Hindi.
- The issue is about whether it can connect the country.
- The Constitution is what that really connects the country which has made space for 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule.
- It upholds the language diversity principle.
- So, it cannot be said that one particular language should be brought forward to connect Indians.
- **Capacity -** When a language tries to expand beyond its semantic-carrying capacity, it starts breaking up.
- So, the government shouldn't interfere with the linguistic behaviour or choices of people.
- **Animosity -** If there is a mechanical idea of unity based on an entity, it would generate hostility beyond its immediate borders.
- **Majority -** As per the 2011 Census, there are 1,369 mother tongues in India.
- It may be true that Hindi is spoken by a larger number of people in India.
- It is also equally true that it is not spoken by a majority of Indians.

What would be its effect on other languages?

- All tribal languages are rapidly disappearing.
- That is because there are not enough livelihood opportunities in those languages.
- People are getting assimilated in some larger language.
- India is uniquely gifted in that out of the world's 6,000 languages, we have close to 10% of the spoken languages.
- It would be unwise to become a one language or only a bilingual nation.
- There may be semantic areas where English works but Hindi fails and vice versa. So, we need both and we need all Indian languages.

How to choose a common linguistic vehicle for communication, governance, etc?

- In 1955-56, linguistic States were created in India.
- Today nearly 35% of people are migrating daily for work.
- Any idea of one link language will be economically disastrous for India.
- It will slow down migration and reduce the ease of capital flow.
- In such a situation, we have to conceptualise a new form of language identity for our States.
- Our cities must be recognised as multilingual entities.
- This will help us in unhinging the education policy for some large metropolises.
- The current practice of clubbing together multilingual spaces with monolingual habitats is not fair to the large cities today.
- The language choice of citizens should be widened and not narrowed by the state.

Source: The Hindu

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