

## 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- **Outdated** - The real problem is that notwithstanding this multiplicity, we need one language to unite the country.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 19<sup>th</sup> 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**