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***Introduction***

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India is a Democratic Republic and has a constitution of its own. It is also home to several languages. Many of them are listed as the official language of the country. The Constitution of India includes Articles 344 to 351 which deal with languages. These are included in the eighth Schedule which recognizes 22 languages.

Article 345 of the Indian Constitution, provides Constitutional recognition as "Official languages" of the Union to any language adopted by a State Legislature as the official language of that state. In the Constitution, its provisions have been mentioned as follows –

***Language of the Union******Official Language of the Union:***

The following clauses regarding the Union's official language are found in the Constitution.

- ❑ Devanagari-scripted Hindi will serve as the Union's official language. However, the international form of Indian numerals and not the Devanagari form of numerals must be used for official purposes of the Union.
- ❑ However, the English language would continue to be used for all of the official functions of the Union for which it was being used before 1950 for a period of fifteen years following the start of the Constitution (i.e., from 1950 to 1965).
- ❑ The Parliament may nevertheless make provisions for the continued use of English for the designated purposes beyond fifteen years.
- ❑ The President should form a panel to offer suggestions regarding the gradual use of Hindi, limitations on the use of English, and other relevant concerns after five years and again after ten years from the start of the Constitution. A committee of Parliament will be established to look over the

commission's recommendations and report back to the President on them.

As a result, in 1955, the B.G. Kher was appointed as the Chairman of an Official Language Commission. In 1956, the Commission delivered its report to the President. A committee of Parliament established another commission in 1957, headed by Gobind Ballabh Pant evaluated the findings of previous commission. However, in 1960 there was no appointment of a new Official Language Commission as required by the Constitution.

The Official Languages Act was later passed by Parliament in 1963. The statute mandates the use of Hindi and English for all official Union functions as well as for the conduct of business in Parliament (even after 1965).

Notably, there is no time limit on the use of English under this act. In addition, this act was revised in 1967 to mandate the use of English in specific circumstances in addition to Hindi.

***Regional Languages******Official Language or Languages of a State***

The Constitution does not specify the official language of different states. In this regard, it makes the following provisions:

- ❑ Subject to the provisions of articles 346 and 347, the Legislature of a State may by law adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State:
  - Provided that, until the Legislature of the State otherwise provides by law, the English language shall continue to be used for those official purposes within the State for which it was being used immediately before the commencement of this Constitution.
- ❑ Most States have made the main regional language their official language in accordance with this clause. Examples include the adoption of Telugu by

Andhra Pradesh, Malayalam by Kerala, Assamese by Assam, Bengali by West Bengal, and Odia by Odisha. Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, and Rajasthan are the nine northern states that have embraced Hindi as their official language.

- ❑ Along with Gujarati, Hindi has been embraced in Gujarat. Similar to Goa, which also uses Konkani, Marathi has been embraced. Urdu, not Kashmiri, has been embraced by Jammu & Kashmir.
- ❑ While others, like Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagaland in the northeast, have adopted English.
- ❑ Notably, the State has a wide range of options to choose from in addition to the languages listed in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule.

#### ***Official Language for Communication between One State and another or between a State and the Union***

- ❑ The language for the time being authorised for use in the Union for official purposes shall be the official language for communication between one State and another State and between a State and the Union
  - Provided that if two or more States agree that the Hindi language should be the official language for communication between such States, that language may be used for such communication.

#### ***Special Provision relating to Language Spoken by a Section of the Population of a State***

- ❑ On a demand being made in that behalf, the President may, if he is satisfied that a substantial proportion of the population of a State desire the use of any language spoken by them to be recognised by that State, direct that such language shall also be officially recognised throughout that State or any part thereof for such purpose as he may specify.

#### ***Languages Used in Judiciary and Laws:***

Language to be used in the Supreme Court and in the High Courts and for Acts, Bills, etc-

- 1) Unless otherwise specified by Parliament, the following shall only be in the English language:
  - a. The Supreme Court's and all High Courts' proceedings.

- b. The official texts of all constitutional bills, acts, ordinances, orders, rules, regulations, and by-laws at the federal and state levels.

- 2) The authoritative texts of all bills, acts, ordinances, orders, rules, regulations and bye laws at the Central and state levels.
- 3) The use of Hindi or any other state official language, however, can be authorised by the Governor of a state with the President's prior approval for proceedings in the state's top court, but not for decisions, decrees, or orders made by the court. In other words, until Parliament specifies otherwise, the top court's rulings, decisions, and orders must continue to be in English alone.

The Parliament has not made any law prescribing Hindi to be used as a language of the Supreme Court, and hence the sole language of the Supreme Court has been English. Incidents have occurred in the past, wherein a petition in Hindi was rejected by Supreme Court on the ground that the language of the court was English and allowing Hindi would be unconstitutional.

#### ***Special Directives***

Language is to be used in representations for redressal of grievances to any officer or authority of the Union or a State in any of the languages used in the Union or in the State, as the case may be.

#### ***Protection of Linguistic Minorities:***

- ❑ Children from linguistic minority groups should have access to suitable facilities for instruction in the mother language at the elementary stage of education from every state and every local authority within the state. The President has the authority to issue the directives required for this.
- ❑ There shall be a Special Officer for linguistic minorities to be appointed by the President. It shall be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters.
- ❑ Every individual who feels aggrieved has the right to submit a representation in any of the languages used by the Union or the state, as the case may be, to any official or authority of the Union or a state for the redress of any grievance. As a result,

a representation cannot be disregarded because it was not written in the language of the official document.

***The 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.

Currently, the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution contains 22 languages-Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.

In terms of the Constitution provisions, there are two objectives behind the specification of the above regional languages in the Eighth Schedule:

- ❑ the members of these languages are to be given representation in the Official Language Commission; and
- ❑ the forms, style and expression of these languages are to be used for the enrichment of the Hindi language.

However, no time frame can be fixed for consideration of the demands for the inclusion of more languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

***Parliamentary Committee on Official Language:***

The Official Languages Act, 1963 provided to set up of a Committee on Official Language for reviewing the progress made in the use of Hindi for the official purpose of the Union. The Committee was to be constituted after ten years of the promulgation of the Act under the section 3 of the Official Languages Act 1963.

***Mandate:*** The Committee shall review the progress made in the use of Hindi for the Official purposes of the Union and submit a report to the President making recommendations. The President shall then lay the

report before each House of Parliament and send it to all the State Governments.

***Composition:*** The Committee comprises of 30 members of Parliament elected with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

- ❑ 20 from Lok Sabha
- ❑ 10 from Rajya Sabha

The Chairman of the Committee is elected by the members of the Committee. As a convention, the union Home minister has been elected as Chairman of the Committee from time to time.

***Functions:***

- ❑ to review the progress made for the use of Hindi for Official purposes of the Union
- ❑ To submit a report to the President for making recommendations thereon
- ❑ President laid the report before each House of Parliament and sent it to all the State Governments

***Classical Language***

According to Article 343, the official language of India should be Hindi in the Devanagari script. As per the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, we have 22 languages. In 2004 it was decided by the Indian Government to proclaim Indian Languages meeting certain requirements as “Classical Language”.

***Criteria for declaring Classical Languages in India***

In February 2014, the Ministry of Culture in the Rajya Sabha gave the guidelines for declaring language as classical. These are:

- ❑ The high antiquity of its early texts is recorded in history.
  - ❑ A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by the generation of speakers.
  - ❑ The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community.
  - ❑ The classical language and literature are distinct from modern; there may also be a discontinuity between the classical languages.
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### ***Classical Languages***

- ❑ In 2004, the Government of India declared Tamil as the Classical Language of India.
- ❑ In 2005, right after Tamil, the government declared Sanskrit as a Classical Language of India. These two languages are undeniably parental sources for several languages belonging to the Indo-European family and the Dravidian family of language groups.
- ❑ The Government gave the classical language status to Kannada and Telugu in 2008.
- ❑ Malayalam was declared as a classical language in 2013 and in 2014, Odia was also given the status of the Classical language.

### ***Benefits accorded to Classical Languages in India***

Two major annual international awards are given for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages.

- ❑ Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages
- ❑ A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up
- ❑ The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared.”

### ***Issues Related to Indian Language***

- ❑ A language is an umbrella term which contains many mother tongues.
- ❑ 43% of Indians speak the Hindi language, which includes many mother tongues such as Bhojpuri, Rajasthani & Hindi.
- ❑ Only about 26% of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue under the broader Hindi language grouping (according to Census 2011).
- ❑ Close to 40% of the Hindi language speakers speak mother tongues other than Hindi.
- ❑ Despite being spoken by a large number of people, Bhojpuri and Rajasthani are not listed as scheduled languages, while Bodo and Nepali which are spoken by relatively fewer people are in the Eighth Schedule.

### ***People’s Linguistic Survey of India 2013***

- ❑ According to the People’s Linguistic Survey of

India 2013, around 220 languages has been lost in the last 50 years and 197 has been categorised as Endangered.

- ❑ Government of India currently defines a language as one that is marked by a script and effectively neutering oral languages. Therefore, government recognizes 122 languages which is far lower than the 780 counted by the People’s Linguistic Survey of India (along with a further 100 suspected to exist).
- ❑ This discrepancy is caused primarily because Government of India doesn’t recognise any language with less than 10,000 speakers.
- ❑ Many unscheduled languages have a sizeable number of speakers: Bhili/Bhilodi has 1,04,13,637 speakers; Gondi has 29,84,453 speakers; Garo has 11,45,323; Ho has 14,21,418; Khandeshi, 18,60,236; Khasi, 14,31,344; and Oraon, 19,88,350.
- ❑ A significant proportion of the estimated 370 million indigenous people in the world today “still lack basic rights, with systematic discrimination and exclusion continuing to threaten ways of life, cultures and identities. This contradicts the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “with its promise to leave no one behind”.

### ***Case for Tulu Language to be included in Eighth Schedule***

- ❑ Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- ❑ The Census reports 18,46,427 native speakers of Tulu in India. The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.
- ❑ Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages, called Tulu as “one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family”.

### ***Three Language Formula***

- ❑ Introduced by the first National Education Policy, the three-language formula stated that state governments should adopt and implement a study

of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states.

- ❑ The draft policy recommended that this three-language formula be continued and flexibility in the implementation of the formula should be provided.
- ❑ On promotion of Hindi, the NPE 1968 said every effort should be made to promote the language and that “in developing Hindi as the link language, due care should be taken to ensure that it will serve, as provided for in 351 of the Constitution, as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.
- ❑ The establishment, in non-Hindi States, of colleges and other institutions of higher education which use Hindi as the medium of education should be encouraged.
- ❑ Incidentally, the NPE 1986 made no change in the 1968 policy on the three-language formula and the promotion of Hindi and repeated it word to word.

### ***Hindi as Official Language***

#### ***Merit***

- ❑ ***Common Identity for India:*** As India is the country

of different languages, one common language would reflect the identity of India in the world.

- ❑ ***Unity among the people of India:*** Hindi is the most widely spoken language in India, the common Hindi language will unite people from different parts of the country.
- ❑ ***Glory in the multilingual nation:*** The people of this nation of different states are sometimes not able to communicate with each other, just because of the diversity in languages. Adopting a common national language helps them communicate with other linguistic groups.
- ❑ ***National Language:*** Indians can't accept a foreign language as a national language. As Hindi has already been accepted as the Official language, imposition can provide its national status.

#### ***Demerit***

- ❑ ***Hindi Imperialism:*** Many of the critics believed that imposition of one common language for India as an imposition of Hindi imperialism for others non-Hindi speaking
- ❑ ***Against Diversity of this country:*** As India is a diverse country with many languages, the imposition of Hindi as a common language will break the beauty of diversity in languages.