

INDIAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MANIPURI LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The Manipuri language is one of the oldest languages in the Southeast Asia, with its own script and literature. It is the official language of the state of Manipur and one of the languages of the Eighth Schedule language of India. Manipuri Language (meiteilon) is the mother tongue of the Manipuris and Manipuri Muslim as well as the lingua franca language in the state of Manipur. The opportunities for the Manipuri language instead of Indian Language Policy since 1950s compared to other Indian languages can be analysed in two stage by studying Indian Languages Policies which are the first stages deals with equality opportunities for the Manipuri language and Indian Language Policy before it was included in Eighth Schedule and second stages deal with the equal opportunities for Manipuri language and Language Policy of India after it was included in the Eighth Schedule. In this paper I will try to analyze on the Indian Language Policy and its impact as well as opportunities for Manipuri language instead the Language Policy of India with its fact and evidences of this language.

Key Words: Manipuri, Manipuri Language, Language Policy etc.

Introduction:

The Manipuri language is one of the oldest languages in the Southeast Asia, with its own script and literature. It is the state official language of Manipur and is also one of the Eighth Schedule languages of India. Manipuri language (Meiteilon) is the mother tongue of the Manipurians and Manipuri Muslim (Pangal) as well as lingua franca language in the state of Manipur. The equal opportunities for the Manipuri Language instead of Indian Language Policy since 1950s compared to other Indian languages can be analysed in two stages by studying Indian Language Policy before it was included in the Eighth Schedule and second stage deals with the equal opportunities for Manipuri language and Language Policy of India after it was included in the Eighth Schedule.

Language Policy of India:

The languages of India belong to four language families. They are like (1) Indo- Aryan it has 21 languages, speaker with a total population of 76.86% (2) Dravidian it has 17 languages, speaker with a total population of 20.82%, (3) Austro-Asiatic it has 14 languages, speaker with total population of 1.11% and (4) Sino-Tibetan it has 66 languages, speaker with a total population of 1% . According to the 1961 Census there are 1652 languages in India. The Language Policy of India was clarified in the constitution, implemented through various executive orders that have been issued from time to time and judicial pronouncements since 1950. It deals with the use of languages in administration, education, judiciary, the legislature etc., pluralism its scope. The whole provision regarding language can be found in part 17 in Article 343-51 of Indian constitution. Article 343 stated that the official languages of the union would be Hindi in the Devanagari script. Articles 345 permit the states and union territories to have their own official language that could be used for all official purposes of the state. The policy was intended to encourage the citizen to use their mother tongue at certain levels and domains outlined through a gradual process, but the stated goal of the policy is to

help all languages become adequate communication vehicles in the areas designated language regardless of their nature or status as major, minor or tribal languages. The policy is one of the accommodative and judicial processes. The accommodative spirit can be tenuous at times and the decisions hesitant and uncomfortable, but this spirit has continually prevalent since the early days of the struggle for independence from the British rule. This was seen as a necessity in nation building. Political awareness related to maintaining the mother tongue language has been very high, both among the political leader and among the ordinary people who speak these languages.

The Manipuri language:

The Manipuri language is also called Meeteilon, Meiteilon, Meiteiron and Meithei in linguistic literature. It is a direct decedent of a accumulation of Kuki-Chin group of the Tibetan-Burman family of Languages. Its synonym form Meeteilon, Meiteiron and Meiteilon which etymologically means “ language of the Manipuris”. The Manipuri language has its dialacts consist of seven different clans(ie. Mangang, Luwang, Khuman, Aangom, Moirang, Khaba-Nganba and Sarang Leisangthem). It has their own scrip it known as Manipuri Script or Meitei Mayek. Manipuri language is the only Tibetan-Burman language in India with its own script. It had been the state language of Manipur since 3rd century AD. The ancient records of Manipur were at Meitei Mayek. However, part of this rich heritage of Manipuri language was destroyed as a result of Hindunisation in 18th century, it has been influence and enriched by Indo-Aryan languages of Sanskrit and Bengali origin from 18th century onwards and by English language since 19th century respectively.

The Manipuri language has been recognised by Ministry of Information and Boardcasting, as the language of AIR, Imphal(1963) with coverage of 78% and AIR Silchar(1978)broadcast half hour of daily programme onwards. The Manipuri language has been internationally recognised since 1762 in the treaty between Gourashyam, The king of Meekly(Manipur) and East India company. It has been recognised as a subject of MIL by CBSE, SEBA. Manipuri language has been taught as a subject of MIL in Guwahaty University,Guwahaty, Culcutta University, Culcutta, Delhi University, Delhi, Manipur University, Canchipur, DM University,Imphal and Assam University, Silchar as well as Elective language and Honours subject in above some of the universities. And also Post Graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D in University.

Indian Language Policy and Its impact on the Manipuri language:

The opportunities for Manipuri language behind Language Policy of India since 1950s as compared to other Indian languages can be analysed in two stage by studying Indian Language policy i.e. first stage deals with the opportunities for Manipuri language and language policy of India before it was including in the Eighth Schedule and second stage deals with the opportunities for Manipuri language and language policy of India after it were included in the Eighth Schedule.

First stage:

The first stage deal with the opportunities for Manipuri language and the language policy of India before it was included in the languages of the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution.

The opportunities for Manipuri language before it was including in the Eighth Schedule:

Since 1950s, when the constitution of India introduce the Indian language policy and under this policy, all 14 languages are recognised as the Eighth Schedule of India. However, no criteria were formulated for including a particular language in the Eighth Schedule. But looking at certain criteria of those 14 Eighth Schedule languages, we can assume that following criteria are necessary for the language of the Eighth Schedule.viz

1. Those languages must be have their literary tradition and script.
2. Those languages should be spoken by the largest number of people in large contiguous graphical area as a dominant language of certain regions.

3. It has their political concessions.
4. Those languages must be recognised by state as an official language of the state.
5. These languages should be recognised by Sahitya Akademi.
6. It should be spoken by more than a million people as a mother tongue.

Except for not being recognised by Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, the Manipuri language has all the above criteria when the time of the Indian constitution recognised the language of Eighth Schedule. But later it was recognised by Sahitya Akademi in the year of 1971. It was not included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution until 1992. After more than four decades fought by the inhabitant of Manipuri in Northeast, generally Manipur and Assam particularly in the different forms of struggles by sending and presenting of memorandum to the Govt. official, agitation, hunger strike up to death and band Schedule languages organised by different NGOs. As a result of all these effort the Manipuri inhabitant in Northeast states. Manipuri language was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 20th August, 1992, according to the 71st Amendment of the constitution.

The Indian Language Policy is intended to adopt the implementing measures for the promotion of Schedule Languages and unscheduled languages and for the reorganisation of deserving unscheduled languages as Schedule languages. These measures of the Indian Language Policy language that are not included in was not applied in the case of Manipuri language in the previous time, but it was eventually in included in the Eighth Schedule.

Opportunities of the Manipuri Language in Administration:

Due to their co-existence since time immemorial, plural societies with people of multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual origin belonging to different socio-cultural strata give rise to natural communication policies that adapt to their realities with a genuine understanding of inter-wined relationship. The language of the administration is no exception. A nation has historically evolved. Knowing the languages used by a country's standard's is essential for rulers of a country for the administration of their region. Many Indian rulers ruled territories in which their subject used different languages to communicate. Often the language of the king and the language of those he ruled were different. Historically in India, the language of the people and the language or languages used to rule them used to correspond with each other.

The official language of the Indian Union is Hindi with English as the secondary official language, the states of India can legislate their own official language. States specify their own official language(s) through legislation. Therefore the section of the constitution of India dealing with official language includes detailed provision dealing not only with the language used for official purpose of the union. But also with the languages that will be used for the official purpose. From every state and union territories of the country and languages to be used for communication between the union and the states. Each state and the union territory, including the union govt. have honoured linguistic plurality by accommodating interest of speakers of other languages as well as even after declaring one or two languages of the official languages of concerned state.

After the promulgation of the official language Acts the following 16 languages are the official languages in different state and union territories : Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Nepali, Manipuri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu become official languages in different states and union territories of the country. According to official language act 1965 followed by Manipur state assembly, Manipur official language act of 1979. Manipuri language became the official language of the state of Manipur.

Opportunities for the Manipuri Language in Education (Instruction of Mother tongue at Primary Stage):

The Indian Constitution provides for free and compulsory education for all the children until they reach the age of 14. But the constitution does not contain explicit statements about the language(s) to be taught in education or the languages(s) through which education must be delivered(except in the case of linguistic minorities). This could have been a tactical compromise or a statement

on the part of the framer of the constitution, because everyone could feel the great linguistic complexity of free and democratic India.

The NPE 1968 spoke about regional language and the Three Language Formula (TLF). The NPE 1968 policy retreated the previous position. The state reorganisation commission had asked the union Govt. to clarify a policy scheme for mother tongue education at the secondary stage. The All India Council for Education recommended the adoption of the TLF in September 1956. Support for this formula came from several directions. It has adopted by the conference of Chief Minister of India. The NPE 1968 recommended the inclusion of the TLF which include s the study of a modern Indian language preferably one of the Southern languages, in addition Hindi and English in the speaking states and Hindi along with the regional language and English in non Hindi speaking states up to secondary level. This was dropped in the education policy 1986 and was adopted as a POA 1992.

Manipuri language as a medium of instruction at primary level in Assam:

In August, 1949 a conference was held under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawarlal Nehru with the education minister of the state took a unanimous resolution was made to provide the facilities for linguistic Minorities in the mother tongue at primary level. And then a commission was formed under the nomenclature “ The Linguistic Minorities Vide part IV of the states Re-organisation Commission” according to the Report of commission , Ministry of Home Affairs took the step for safeguards of linguistic minorities and adopted a Bill under closed 21 of the constitution. Under this Bill a new Article 350A to the Indian constitution has been enacted on the medium of Instruction for the linguistic minorities in their mother tongue has enacted. The constitutional recognition to the medium in mother tongue for the linguistic minorities emboldened the Manipuri inhabited area of Assam in early part of the 1950s to move the Govt. of Assam for the primary education in their mother tongue.

The movement behind the introduction of the Manipuri Language as a medium of instruction in Assam was started in 1950s under the banner of different NGOs of Assam like Naha Marup, Cachar, Lakhipur, and Thougan Marup, Jaffirbond, Hailakandi. The movement begun to gather momentum in 1956. Seeing the momentum of the agitation to Govt. of Assam also began to send their Govt. representative Sri Radhika Ram Das (Dy. Education Minister) to investigate the matter in different Manipuri inhabited areas of Assam for this purpose. After visited to the different areas of Assam inhabited by the Manipuris he also suggested to the Govt. for the approval of Introduction of Manipuri Medium in primary level schools in Assam. Then, accordingly Govt. of Assam organized a cabinet meeting of the ministers under the chairman of Sri Bishnu Ram Medhi, Chief Minister of Assam. The cabinet meeting unanimously approved the resolution and according to the Govt. order “Letter No. EMI211/53/10 PF Shillong, The 7th June 1956 from under Secretary to the Govt. of Assam. Thus in the year 1956 as a result of straggle of Manipuris, the Manipuri language was introduced for the first time as a medium of instruction at the primary level in the schools of Assam.

Therefore under the provision of linguistic minorities of the Language Policy of India. Manipuri inhabitants in Assam, one of the linguistically minority community got the opportunities to learn their children in their own mother tongue at primary level.

Second Stages:

In this stage deals with the opportunities for Manipuri language and Language Policy of India after it was included in the Eighth Schedule of Indian constitution on 20th August 1992, according to the 71st amendment of Indian constitution. Since then Manipuri language became one of the Eighth Schedule languages of Indian constitution.

The following rights and opportunities can be used by any of the Eighth Schedule Languages of India:

1. In any Member of Parliament (LS/RS) who has belonging to the Eighth Schedule languages may delivered their speech in own mother tongue.
2. In any of the Eighth Schedule languages, its language has been broadcast on AIR and TV channels.

3. The candidate has the languages belonging to Eighth Schedule languages allowed to give his answer to his mother tongue in the examination of UPSC.
4. The MHRD has established CIIL for the development of Indian languages. It is to obtain opportunities to only the Eighth Schedule languages.
5. The Schedule language has got the opportunities to the preparation of syllabus and TLM in NCERT, New Delhi.
6. The Eighth Schedule languages can only participate in the National and International films award contest.
7. The Eighth Schedule languages has belonging state can implement their language as compulsory subject in their own state.
8. The Central Govt. give rupees one core to the state of the Eighth Schedule languages for the development of their language.
9. According to TLF one schedule language can learn as a third language in central Govt. schools and Navodaya Vidyalaya etc.
10. MHRD, Education Department , Language Devison, New Delhi give financial assistance to the Schedule language for the translation of their language into English and other Indian languages.
11. The Eighth Schedule languages has get only the National award of Sahitya Akademi.

However, the above right and opportunities are granted to those languages that which included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Manipuri language one of the Eighth Schedule languages cannot access all the above facilities given by the Language Policy of India.

Conclusion:

The development of all languages must be constitutionally guaranteed. However, apart from constitutional recognition, the biggest challenges are creating a fluid socio-cultural terrain in which each language is adequately nurtured. The equal opportunities for the Manipuri language instead the Indian Language Policy for the inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eighth Schedule is justification. As a matter of justification, the constitution of India also recognised the Manipuri language as one of the Eighth Schedule language of Indian constitution on 20th August 1992. However the Manipuri language was recognised by the constitution of India from 1992 onwards, but still could not obtain all the rights and opportunities granted by the constitution to the languages of the Eighth Schedule of India. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the central and state Govt. to development the Manipuri language, compare to other languages and their status, which has already included in Eighth Schedule languages of the Indian Constitution. The status of Manipuri language should be developed in many fields as mentioned in above.

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