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Linguism--one of India's Boiling Pots: A Note to Myrdal's Asian Drama

E. J. DALY

A social scientist visiting India for the first time is in for a few surprises within minutes of deplaning at Delhi's international airport. Historically the Indian subcontinent is credited not only with inventing the zero digit but also for the scientific study of languages; linguistics had its start in ancient *Bharat*.¹ And, as though to demonstrate this partiality for languages, the government foreign exchange counter presents currency notes that have an eye-catching feature—to the trained eye. Something perhaps most citizens have never noticed our scientific tourist spots right away: each bill has fifteen different languages on it. The Reserve Bank of India's promisory notes symbolize the country's rich cultural mixture and its not always serene linguistic history.

Complexity squared

Fascinated by the exotic scripts on his rupee notes, the curious visitor buys himself a tourist guide and year book reference manual. In these he comes face to face, statistically at least, with some of India's achievements since independence. He reads how over the first three 5-Year Plans an irrigation

¹ W. L. Chafe, "Language," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII, McGraw-Hill Bk. Co., N.K., p. 373.

potential of 17 million acres has been created, with another 13 million acre irrigation potential in the process of being created during the fourth Plan. In Industry, during the period of the first three Plans production increased by around 270%. Thanks to three new steel plants, the finished steel capacity jumped from one million tons during the first Plan to 4.5 million tons at the end of the third Plan. Since the beginning of the third Plan much of the railway equipment has been produced indigenously, with progress recorded in the production of heavy chemicals, drugs, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, cement, cotton and jute textiles.² In any other country, save China, these figures and the realities for which they stand, would be reasons for considerable satisfaction. But India lives in its own unique context; it is a land at once undeveloped and over-leaping in its multi-digitated population which registered a 21.5% increase in the last decade. This figure alone makes national problems complexity squared. The world's largest democracy, India has today over 500 million citizens; of these 80-85% live in 570,000 villages, 10% of which are electrified. Linking these hamlets are 600,000 miles of roads, more than half of them unsurfaced (compare with the United States, which has three million miles of roadways). Communication industries to the urban sight-seer seem booming—cyclists and even bullock cartmen toting their own transistors, cinema houses packed for every show. These businesses show all the signs of phenomenal potential for growth in the near future—an observation true also for television which, at present, is restricted to the Delhi area. But judged in the vital terms of bringing emotional integration to a huge, linguistically and culturally fragmented nation, how do the communication media measure up? According to the 1961 census, the latest published, there are 1652 languages spoken throughout the sub-continent; most of these are dialects of the official State languages, enumerated in the Constitution's Eighth Schedule. In 1967, India produced 333 cinemas. These were distributed among 14 languages, plus five dialects of Hindi, and screened in 5,739 show houses to an

² *The New Year Book*, 1969, ed. P. C. Sarkar, S. C. Sarkar & Sons, Calcutta, 1969, *passim*.

estimated average annual attendance of 100 crores (one thousand million). In 1966 the daily papers published in 20 languages, and periodicals, in 46 languages. The leading publication figures for daily papers went to English with 5.5 million readers; Hindi had 3.9 million; Tamil, 2.7 million; Malayalam, 1.7 million; Telegru, 0.9 million; Urdu, 0.9 million. For 1966 the total newspaper and periodical circulation was 21.6 million. These statistics underline the fact that over 70% of the country's citizens are deprived of that one essential skill, literacy.

Triads of trouble

This high illiteracy rate has a strategic inverse relationship with India's chances of success in its much needed work-force switch from agriculture to industry. U.S. Foreign aid expert, Dr. Max Millikan of M.I.T. states that it is almost a definition of a developed country that less than 40% of its labor force is in agriculture. India at present has double this number engaged in farming. As one report gloomily remarks, too many people are spending too much time and effort producng too little food.³ At the end of the third Plan there were an estimated 20 million unemployed, with 50 million field laborers busy only part of the year. With half of its population under 18 years of age can the government provide enough jobs within the next decade to absorb the up-coming 100 million work-seekers? Agriculture certainly cannot supply the opportunities. But can industry develop enough to create so many openings for a predominantly

³ See *Span's* feature article on rice cultivation, 1966. The beleaguered Indian farmer is harassed not just by tiny holdings but by drought, floods, bureaucracy at village level block development offices and scavengers. One Indian government statistician projects the rat population at six times that of humans. Crops can't be left long lying in the fields after cutting, nor on the threshing floor. Only special provisions for storing can keep rodents away from a family's supply of food. Monkeys and cows also have their share of each season's crops. A small pack of jackals can strip a corn field clean. Faster harvesting and threshing methods, strong fences, concrete threshing and storage spaces, these are preventive measures relatively few Indian farmers can afford.

illiterate and semi-literate work group? Over-population, under-production, under-employment: these form one distinct problem triad. Underlying this is another inter-related set of troubles, just as pervasive and just as dangerous: casteism, provincialism, linguism. It is a debatable topic which triad must successfully be confronted first, if India is to "take off" and modernize enough to stay viable as a nation. Gunnar Myrdal dedicated almost a decade of study to analyzing these complexities in *Asian Drama* against the backdrop of other southeast asian countries.⁴ This work has been criticized for being too pessimistic in some of its overall judgments about India's future.⁵ Myrdal anticipated criticism about his methodology, especially his value premises in his institutional approach. We shall return to this charge of pessimism shortly. But here we would briefly indicate some of the roots of Indian linguism, how it flows from and back into the other two boiling pots, casteism and provincialism. First, a word on communalism and linguism.

Communalism in north India.

In his controversial *Asia and Western Dominance* the historian-diplomat K. M. Panikkar says that the 19th century

⁴ Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Pantheon, N. Y., 1968. The centrality of India in this monumental 2221-page study is explicitly referred to at least twice. "To say that this book is mainly about India with numerous and systematic attempts at comparisons with other countries in South Asia would not be far from the mark" (p. 40). "I have presented a relatively detailed account of events in India because that country is the largest and most populous in South Asia and its problems are, to a considerable extent, common to the region as a whole" (p. 1834).

⁵ In his short Foreword to Myrdal's work, August Heckscher, Director of the 20th Century Fund sponsoring this project, writes that *Asian Drama* may be better received than its author expects. "It may be claimed for his book," writes Heckscher, "that it honestly seeks to find and assert truth—the kind of truth that does not actually exist." Myrdal's creative approach may well set a new style for other studies of under-developed nations. He has rejected the "modern approach", the application of western concepts, theories and models to the countries under his study, and taken a comprehensive view studying the levels, modes of living, attitudes and institutions in relation to

Hindu Reformation was one of history's great movements both for its massiveness and far-reaching significance.⁶ This is certainly true as referring to contemporary Hindu communalism. Its fires were fuelled a century ago in northwest India, what is today the Punjab area.⁷

Partly out of admiration for the strong reaction to the Christian missionary movement, zealous Hindu leaders founded many social reform organizations throughout the last century.⁸ Some of these were genteel societies like Calcutta's *Brahma Samaj* and the esoteric *Prarthana Samaj* in Bombay; others were intensively violent like Dayananda Sarasvati's *Arya Samaj*, begun in 1875. Its birth and growth can best be understood in terms of the life-situation of 19th century Punjab, where three distinct communities existed—Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs—each with its own religion, its own language and proper script. Jones defines communalism as a consciously shared religious heritage, which becomes the dominant form of identity

development. He spent much time, moreover, in a critical appraisal of available statistics. ("Most of the general figures so confidently quoted in the literature, such as those pertaining to trends in income, population, literacy, and school enrollment, proved to be no more than extremely crude guesses, often palpably wrong. To establish this was itself a time-consuming process") (p. xi).

⁶ K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1953, p. 319.

⁷ See Kenneth W. Jones, "Communalism in the Punjab, the Arya Samaj Contribution", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVIII (1968), pp. 39-54.

⁸ See J. N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1929. And the more recent work of Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J., 1964. In our remarks here we have perforce condensed, and therefore partially over-simplified the picture. Communalism, for example, is never pure and unadulterated. A genuine type of religious sense, a desire, even a passion for, social reform, and a natural, praiseworthy spirit of nationalism are interwoven in a man like Dayananda Sarasvati. As Grisvold points out, Dayananda, however aggressive he may have been toward other religions, did achieve an indigenous Indian theism, non-polytheistic, non-idolatrous and he did this on the homegrounds of pantheism, polytheism and idolatry. See Heimsath, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

for a given segment of society.⁹ From its birth the Arya Samaj strove to make Hindus conscious of their shared religious heritage and to make this common patrimony their main form of identity as Indians; this identity was to be expressed in the "Aryan language"—Hindi—and in the ancient "Vedic language"—Sanskrit—both written in the Devanagri script. Religion, language, script, these became vehicles of Neo-Hinduism's identity. Writing in both Hindi and Sanskrit, Dayananda's main works were *Satyarth Prakash*, *Veda Bhashya*, and *Rigvedad Bhashya Bhumika*. In these the main religious and social tenets of the new society were set forth: God as the primary source of all wisdom and knowledge; the Vedas as the books of God's eternal utterance, to read which constituted the paramount duty of every Aryan and, having read them, to preach them; the improvement of the physical, spiritual and social conditions of mankind as the primary object of the Arya Samaj; the prohibition of child marriages; the permission to virgin widows and widowers to remarry; the prohibition of remarriage for widows and widowers who have had cohabitation with their spouses; and the ancient law of *niyoga*, which allowed them sexual relationships with certain people¹⁰; the reading of the Vedas as open not just to the three highest castes but to all men and women; transmigration of souls according to *Karma* and salvation through good works; the denial of belief in divine incarnations and the prohibition of idolatry, as of ancestor worship and animal sacrifices; the injunction to burn adulterers alive. Throughout the *Satyarth Prakash* there is much criticism of sectarian Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam. Since the Punjab was then, as it is today, religiously pluralistic, Dayananda's attacks met with prompt counter-attacks resulting not only in Hindu Communalism but also in communalism among the other re-

⁹ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁰ See Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 122. Also *Sanksipt Hindi Shabsagar*, ed. Ramchandra Verma, Kashi, U. P., 1958, p. 544. The ancient practice of *niyoga* has parallels in other countries, e.g., levirate law of the Jews.

ligious camps as well.¹¹ All of this was in the context of British colonial rule.

Not long after the death of its energetic and stormy leader, the Samaj split into two. The first party was the "college" or "culture" group under Keshab, who stood for progressive, modern education and freedom in diet. This party declared that the Arya Samaj is the one true universal religion and it must be spread around the world. The second branch was conservative, led by one Debendra. This party was called the "vegetarian" or "mahatma" society; it supported vegetarianism, ancient Hindu education and the conviction that Arya Samaj was neither pure Hinduism nor the universal religion.¹² Common to both of these groups, however, was a new missionary character towards India's sub-continent. The Samaj wanted to attract Indian converts to the beauties and riches not only of the Hindu beliefs but of the Hindu language. Already in the 1890's the Samaj leader Lekh Ram stated in his platform of reforms that Hindi must be the medium of instruction. A few decades later the Indian National Congress adopted this and pledged the party to make Hindi the national language upon India's achievement of political independence from England. (An interesting study would be to ascertain what part the Hindu communalists played in the Congress programmes of the 1920's and in the 1948 debates over the draft constitution that made Hindi, not Hindustani, the national language effective as of January 26, 1950. B. R. Ambedkar, who has been called the Father of the Constitution, claimed that this issue was the most controversial of all and

¹¹ The definition of communalism given by Jones can be verified also in Muslim and Christian polemicists. The preferential treatment of Christians, particularly of the Church of England, under the British colonial government understandably galled sincere Hindu nationalists. That there was not a greater, more violent backlash at independence is due in large part to the Indian temperament and to the extraordinary balance of Indian leaders. Nehru, to take a prime example, spent some of his best years in British jails, yet he did not grow embittered by the experience.

¹² See Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

was passed finally by a majority margin of one vote.)¹³ From the Punjab, through men like Lekh Ram and other leaders of zeal and organized skill the Arya Samaj exported their communalistic programme to other parts of India.

A full fifty years before independence, then, there were northern spokesmen at work on a *Hindi prachar*; they were rallying Hindus to a sectarian kind of unity that expressed itself in "pure" Aryan cultural forms and especially in Hindi written in Devanagri. The communal element was perceived by men like Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who in the early 1930's referred publicly to the political dangers of the Hindu mind, the Hindu sentiment and Hindi attitude.¹⁴ Of the equation between Hindu unity and Indian unity in post-independent India as well, Selig Harrison remarks that this is the facile first answer to all doubts about the future of the Indian Union, as far as Hindu communal thinking goes.¹⁵ We must not overlook the regional tone of this sectarianism. To the Arya Samaj, India is not only *Hindustan* but also the land pre-eminently of Aryan culture and language. Neither India's present day 50 million Muslims will accept this nor will the 150 million Dravidians of the anciently cultured sections of South India, "south" being, in general, any section below the Calcutta-Bombay line. We may understand a little more clearly now with this background how the 19th century Arya

¹³ See Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 270; or more fully, Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1966, chapter 12, "Language and the Constitution—the half-Hearted Compromise."

¹⁴ See Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 233. As indicated in the text, there was and is a double opposition to Hindi, not just because it was being pushed by Hindu communalists but also because it came from the north, from the "Hindi imperialists". See Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 298, for reasons given for including so many languages explicitly in the Constitution's eighth schedule and from there onto India's currency notes. Said one expert of the Constitution, "to protect them from being ignored or wiped out by the Hindi-wallahs [proponents]."

¹⁵ Selig S. Harrison, *India, The Most Dangerous Decades*, Oxford University Press, Madras, reprint, 1965, p. 96.

Samaj communalists helped light the fires that erupted in Madras State's anti-Hindi agitations in 1965.¹⁶

Language problems at independence

Excepting the Philippines and Ceylon, India began its era of political freedom with proportionately more capable government officers than any other country in south Asia.¹⁷ It is a commonplace but nonetheless important fact that British colonial power had built two strong, durable pillars on which free India based its new government; these pillars were the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Army. Myrdal observes that with these two service branches the Congress party for decades had worked out its policies which then were progressive. Congress leaders at that time were disciplined and committed to the point of heroic self-sacrifice.¹⁸ Two decades and more later, the discipline and commitment will have definitely waned; the stability is there but it shows

¹⁶ See Duncan B. Forrester, "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965: Political Protest and its Effects on Language Policy in India," *Pacific Affairs*, XXXIX (Spring & Summer, 1966) pp. 19-36. The author concludes, "The Madras agitation is over, but not forgotten. But the language crisis of which it was one expression remains a chronic affliction of Indian politics."

¹⁷ Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

¹⁸ Gandhi's ability to inspire extraordinary sacrifices and dedication not only in his Congress associates but also in casual crowds is exemplified in Louis Fischer's *Gandhi, His Life and Message for the World*, New American Library, Signet Books, N. Y. 1954. See Fischer's description of the Salt March, 1930, pp. 100-102. Quoting an eye-witness:—"Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whack of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of marchers groaned and sucked in their breath in sympathetic pain at every blow. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. . . . The survivors, without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. . . . Although everyone knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no sign of wavering or fear. . . . The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle, the marchers simply walked forward until struck down." Commenting on the Salt March's heroism and its after-effects, Fischer says, "When the Indians

signs of being the stability of stagnation.¹⁹ Some of the reasons for this bear examination.

Interestingly, two major policy decisions of Congress, a) the unification of India according to linguistic States, and b) the choice of Hindi as the national language, were both called for as necessary. Inherent in the implementation of each, though, were the destructive forces of that trio, casteism-provincialism-linguism. The huge task at independence was how to form one nation out of more than five hundred, autonomous, princely kingdoms. By adroit diplomacy it was achieved remarkably peacefully. Once this barrier was crossed Congress' plan for linguistic States moved ahead. At first twenty-eight areas were demarcated provisionally. In half of these most of the people spoke a single language. These fourteen States eventually became the component members of the Indian Union. Subsequently other States have come into the Union on the basis of dominant language. Although Congress leaders today have called a halt to further creations, men like Jaya Prakash Narayan foresee that this process may continue, if not on a linguistic basis, then for equitable economic reasons. A few comments are in order on the form of Indian democracy thus created by demarcation according to language.

allowed themselves to be beaten with batons and rifle butts and did not cringe they showed that England was powerless and India invincible. The rest was merely a matter of time." Nearly forty years later we hear Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, warning the Congress leaders at Bangalore's All India convention, July 13, 1969, that the Congress Party would not last as a political party for long unless it could convince the people about its serious commitment to socialism. There has been too much glib talk and not enough achievement.

¹⁹ See Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 295. Director of India's Press Institute, Canchal Sarkar, writing on Telengana's troubles in June-July, 1969, underlines this same stagnation and decay. Language, he says in this case is not the prime motive for a new State demand. The Telengana situation is the end-product of the manipulative politics which the Congress Party has made typical in the Indian States. "Andhra," he writes, "is showing all the signs of decay that sets in when a party—in this case the Congress Party—has been in power too long." (*Indian Nation*, "Hell-Raising in Hyderabad", July 3, 1969).

Certain observers have challenged whether the country has ever enjoyed "democracy". The term is not univocal. American democracy is one type, that of Britain's Labor Party another. The guided democracy of Indonesia differs from Pakistan's basic democracy. The Indian Congress Party's democracy is structurally different from what Sarvodaya leader J. P. Narayan is promoting, a communitarian socialist democracy. The interplay through the centuries of historical, linguistic, social, and economic factors has produced diverse patterns in different regions of India. A Constitution alone cannot bring about unity. Legislation is but one means to introduce change and growth into unity. The ruling party is vulnerable to many charges but one of its undeniable feats has been the maintenance of the Union. To appreciate this we must compare India's situation with Europe's. Linguistically Europe has a score of languages, India has over 1600. Racially Europe is diversified; India is not less so. The efforts to form a western European Federation has yet to succeed; India has achieved this out of almost 600 kingdoms. It is well to remember this when we talk of unification and democracy in India, a sub-continent with a population that dwarfs Europe's, and a culture that is more ancient.

The "easy" solution of linguistic States Myrdal sees as coming from pressures exerted by the power blocks of provincial and rural elites. He writes that linguistic patriotism was symptomatic of a gradual shifting of political power to the states and the village elite.²⁰ This stratum of society lived by caste hierarchy for centuries. With the advent of democracy, the village landlord class raised its banner of linguistic patriotism. By so doing it eventually succeeded in swinging political power from the centre to the provinces. Casteism using linguism to promote a centrifugal provincialism! One of India's leading sociologists, M. N. Srinivas, points at the windfall the new democracy brought to the opportunistic and unscrupulous village lords:

The rural elite has emerged as a class keenly conscious of the political and economic opportunities lying before it. . . . The rural elite are, as a

²⁰ See Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

group, aggressive acquisitive and not burdened by feelings of guilt towards the people they exploit. Hierarchy and exploitation are so deep-seated in rural India that they are accepted without questioning. Neither the urban politician nor the administrator can do without the rural elite and the latter know it.²¹

In a chapter on linguism and the regional elites, Selig Harrison quotes an Indian political scientist as saying that those who benefited by the advent of linguistic states were the middle class job hunter, the place hunter and the middle class politicians. The linguistic states created for them an exclusive reservation of jobs and offices in the name of the regional culture. Of the pressures of patronage, especially in the form of nepotism, there is no lack of evidence in rural Indian politics.²² Former Chief Justice K. Subba Rao recently went on record as stating that casteism is the main factor corroding Hindu society.²³ This was another form of repeating a warning that Asoka had given in 1957 that provincialism reinforced by caste was the biggest danger that Indian democracy would face in the ensuing twenty years.²⁴ Straight-talking J. P. Narayan observed that the caste system was feeding upon parliamentary democracy. If any real form of democracy is to work, it must work at the village level. Narayan describes what is happening in one of his books:

You take the village as it is and you give it the right of electing the *panchayat* (five leaders) and carrying on certain functions and duties. What will happen in such a village? Either the dominant castes or a few leading families or the bullies will capture the *panchayats*, and run them for their own use. Therefore, there is need for a revolution before the foundational units of democracy could be created.²⁵

²¹ As in Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

²² See Harrison, *op. cit.*, Chapter III, "The New Regional Elites," esp. pp. 90-91.

²³ M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*, Asia Publishing, Bombay, 1962, chapter one, *passim*.

²⁴ As in Myrdal *op. cit.*, p. 294.

²⁵ J. P. Narayan, *Towards a New Society*, p. 94, as in Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 299. As if to prove how complicated the demands for linguistic States can be, J. P. is in favour of breaking larger States up precisely to avoid linguistic fanaticism. The fanatics have been the ones pushing hardest for smaller States. Hardly a friend of such linguistic chauvinists, Narayan, nonetheless, justifies his stand in con-

The formation of Indian States out of over 500 princely kingdoms into compact linguistic areas was a facile solution, but, unfortunately, the forces that demanded — and continue to demand — this solution were in large part a rural elite. They were not always motivated by the interests of national unity; rather, often under the guise of linguistic and provincial patriotism the local leaders set out to feather their own nests. In the process power shifted from the Centre, where men were capable and dedicated, to the provinces, where state nationalism and particularism were fostered for personal gain, and where “mediocre men band together to keep other mediocre men out of office.”²⁶

*Hindi, Language of the Union*²⁷

Ever so briefly, we turn now to the Congress' other decision, to make Hindi the official language of the Indian Union. We have already seen how for over fifty years before independence Hindu communalists were pushing for this. There is, however, another side to this complex problem, a side which

sideration of the United Provinces. Nagaland has only 400 thousand. The dominance of U. P. is borne out by the fact that all of India's Prime Ministers have thus far belonged to it. (*Searchlight*, Patna, July 1969.)

²⁶ Myrdal quoting the growing cynicism of Indian intellectuals, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

²⁷ The literature on this thorny problem is very large. It can be broken into two divisions, the educational aspects and the political-cultural. For the first, a prime source is the *Report of the Education Commission*, 1964-66, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India Press, 1966. This remarkably balanced study, also called the Kothari Report, after its Chairman, begins with the statement: “The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms.” Turning to some problems of national development it comments that growth of local, regional, linguistic and state loyalties tends to make the people forget ‘India’ (p. 2). “Of the many problems which the country has faced since independence, the language question has been one of the most complex and intractable and it still continues to be so. Its early and satisfactory solution is imperative for a variety of reasons, educational, cultural and political” (p. 13). To this end the Commission recommends that regional languages be the media of education and administration. English and Hindi are link languages for academic and intellectual

shows the real need for an Indian language which would bring a multi-lingual, multi-cultured mass of peoples together into one body politic with its own identity, sense of tradition and psychological thrust.

Experts still do not agree as to how much a language forms the thinking, attitudes and world-vision of its speakers. Culturally, however, there is no doubt about the importance of language. It is the most essential way to transmit those historically created "designs for living" that bind individuals and groups into one society.²⁸ Which of its more than 1,600 languages should India choose? English, Hindi and Hindustani were the main choices as link languages. For more than a century English had been the medium for colonial government. At independence—and 22 years later, today—it has become the language of a small elite, the "in group", which constitutes less than 1% of the populace. Hindustani, a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, is spoken by 42% of the people and, moreover it is symbolic of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, mixing as it has both the Aryan and the Arab traditions. The purist pandits have disliked Hindustani for this very reason, and have pledged themselves unconditionally to a "sanskritized" Hindi. To the common man of the north and particularly to south

inter-communication. 'It is, however, equally obvious that English cannot serve as the link-language for the majority of the people. It is only Hindi which can and should take this place in due course' (p. 614). English would be an important "library language" and play a vital role in higher education (p. 292). The formulation of this three-language policy for the non-Hindi speaking areas of India, advocating the regional tongue first, then Hindi and English, is reasonable and has been reinforced by the National Policy on Education's report of July 24, 1968. What these secondings and thirdings do, however, is fly in the face of stubborn facts. The Education Commission's recommendation of a three-language policy is reasonable *but the political climate is not ready to accept it*. See A. Fonseca, "National Integration Council", *Social Action*, New Delhi, Sept.-Oct., 1968, pp. 362-68 and *Social Action*, Apr.-June, 1969, pp. 148-50, "National Policy on Education". Other works recently are V. V. John's *Education and Language Policy*, Yadav's *The Indian Language Problem* and Kodesia's *The Problem of Linguistic States in India*.

²⁸ See F. Lynch, "Anthropology, Cultural", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGraw-Hill Co., N. Y., 1967, pp. 597-605.

Indians this is linguistic chauvinism. Both Gandhi and Nehru came out strongly many times for a popular and living national language, Hindustani. During the constitutional assembly debates no article was more calorific than the one on the Union's official language. When votes were counted, 78 were for Hindi and 77 for Hindustani.²⁹ The formulation finally agreed upon appears in article 343 of the Constitution as follows:

#343. (1) The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals. (2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement...³⁰

Prophetically, south India's most popular newspaper, *The Hindu*, editorialized that 15 years should have been a minimum date rather than the maximum.³¹

On January 26, 1965, the deadline set by the constitution, Madras witnessed an anti-Hindi agitation that was spontaneous and violent.³² Three months later at Aligarh Muslim University in north India, a riot and bedlam occurred over the same issue of Hindi imperialism.³³ A deeply disturbing innovation within the past two years has been the formation of provincial armies. To commemorate India's 20th Republic Day, the *Asia Magazine* on January 26, 1969 ran a feature article on "India's private armies—Mass Hate Movements."³⁴ It tells of provincialism arming itself with its own troops. The

²⁹ Austin, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

³⁰ *Constitution of India*, art. 343.

³¹ See Forrester, *op. cit.*, on the Madras riot on January 26, 1965, the deadline date set by the Constitution.

³² One of the surprising phenomena against "Hindi imperialism" was the student solidarity and implacability. Chanchal Sarkar, analyzing the 1969 agitations in neighbouring Hyderabad, notes that the students there too were in the van of the agitation. Political leaders, he says, miss noting this new element.

³³ Theodore P. Wright Jr., "Muslim Education in India at the Crossroads, *Pacific Affairs* (Spring-Summer, 1966), pp. 50-63.

³⁴ "Special Report," *The Asia Magazine* January 26, 1969.

Dravida Munetra Kazagham's (DMK) communal forces have as a favourite slogan "down with Hindi!" These Tamil-speaking nationalists have and will shed blood in order to protect their rights.¹⁵ The article estimated the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS), the militant communalist organization to further and promote an exclusively Hindu socio-political life within India, as having 350,000 "volunteers". It was from among the RSS that the assassins of Gandhi came; it was due to RSS initiative that one of the main accomplices in that murder received a civic reception in Poona upon his release from jail. The RSS is the strong right arm of the political re-vivalist Jan Snagh, which wields considerable power in Delhi municipality, Bihar, U. P. and the Punjab.

Communist-run Kerala has its own Gopal Sena—christened after Red leader, A. K. Gopalan. With 13,000 members in its militia, it is organizing 5,000 men for every one of the state's nine districts. Recent history shows, one might recall, that the Communists won their majority in Kerala's 1957 elections by exploiting casteism and regionalism.³⁶ Union Home Minister Chavan has pointed out how the Reds have espoused the Muslims as their *Bhai* (brothers) as a ruse to foster communalism. The communists are not the friends of Indian communities, says Chavan, but of Peking.³⁷ In early February 1969, the Indian Communists won the West Bengal's mid-term elections. Judged by past performances it took no prophet to foretell that the Reds would keep up their anti-Hindi, pro-Bengali propaganda to further weaken the ties of its state with the Centre. The first 127 days of the United Front Government in West Bengal produced the following fruits:— 54 political murders, 750 political assaults, 166 illegal and violent gheraos, 100 illegal and criminal trespasses on agricultural property and fisheries. In his article, "Can Freedom Last?" (*Himmat*, July 11, 1969) R. M. Lala has shown the vicious

³⁵ See "Fires of Hatred" *Time-International*, Feb. 21, 1969, p. 19; and "The week in India", *Himmat*, Bombay, March 28, 1969, p. 11. *Himmat* puts the number of regional armies at 53, quoting Government sources.

³⁶ See Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

³⁷ "The Week in India", *Himmat*, Bombay, January 31, 1969, p. 11.

circle in this situation: the moment Delhi dismisses Bengal's Ministry for mal-administration most Bengalis would consider it as interference. "The ultimate saviour of democracy in Bengal," comments Lala, "cannot be New Delhi, but only its own people." Casteism-regionalism-linguism are three pots at boil in many states of the country, not just Bengal of Kerala. Communists are having great fun in stoking the fires.

Time—the crucial variable

We now return to the criticism of Myrdal's work as being pessimistic. As has been stated above his approach is creative and very broad-based. It is not just an economic study. He has not hesitated to suggest drastic reforms especially in education. In doing so, he warns that India and the rest of southeast Asia is working against the clock.

There is not much time left for gradual changes to evolve, and in the short run democratic decentralization, like general suffrage at all levels, works mostly for reaction and stagnation. All of this points up the urgency of raising educational levels. But these efforts are hampered by the population increase.³⁸

³⁸ Myrdal, *op. cit.*, p. 300. One fears that since Myrdal's book has been published the stagnation has grown. See Chanchal Sarkar "Why do Nagpurs Happen", *The Asia Magazine*, August, 25, 1968, p. 3: "I had just been to Nagpur, where I watched the aftermath of a riot in which some 50 persons had been killed, 450 houses burnt and 6,500 people made homeless. I've seen human distress in many places... In Nagpur I had seen wounds caused by human frenzy. I now know that there is no distress so unlovely as that caused by man." He describes the unrealistic oratory of politicians to explain away the real causes of the communal riot. "That was what wore me down... the peculiar resilience of politicians who, while mostly invisible during the crisis, were now in the aftermath not unwilling to peddle hatred to build up power for themselves." Nagpur was not the end of communal rioting; it has been a regular feature since independence. Radio and newspapers have by and large submitted reports uncritical, in the name of "responsibility." Sarkar calls for an end to this: "What I want to see now is that all the skill technology and energy we have—those of us who believe that race, region, caste, or religion mean nothing if they divide—should be used to prevent and heal places like Nagpur wherever they happen."

He points out another obstacle, the "double talk" of planners and politicians, passionate in their proclamation of modernization but over-gradualist in practice. Social changes must be radical and deep, but "caution" is the by-word in implementation.³⁹ Myrdal spells out some needed policy reforms in education in chapters 32-33. There he stresses the need for mass literacy drives and the use of mass media to disseminate knowledge and skills, and to influence the attitudes of the population at large and in special groups. He closes with a postscript:

The future lies, of course, in the lap of the gods. If the vagaries of the monsoons give India a number of really good crops, it is not impossible that the articulate strata of the population will become fired by a new determination to tackle with firmness and efficiency the social and economic reforms needed for national consolidation and economic development. The misfortunes that have afflicted India in recent years may even serve to give momentum to such a movement.⁴⁰

Considering the events within India since these words were written—the rise and spread of the pro-Peking Naxalites, with their gheraos and violent demonstrations, the crippling strikes by central government employees, the communal disturbances, the further deterioration of Centre-State relationships, the continued decline of Congress, the splintering of more states in the offing—the future would seem not to be hopeful and the closing judgment of Selig Harrison's *India: The Most Dangerous Decades* seems more to point:

...a realistic Western approach to India must rest on a clear recognition that the odds are almost wholly against the survival of freedom

³⁹ As an example of the double-talk, Myrdal states on p. 278: "The persistence of the caste structure in Indian society provides a striking example of the divergence of precept and practice. *Caste was outlawed in the constitution...*" (itals added). This is a mis-statement found in several other western scholars, confusing untouchability and caste. Under part III, Fundamental Rights, article 17, the constitution abolishes and forbids "untouchability." Caste, of course, was not outlawed. It is very much alive. As Srinivas observes, "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who are most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action." *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ Myrdal, *op. cit.* p. 1834.

and that in 'the most dangerous decades' the issue is, in fact, whether any Indian state can survive at all.⁴¹

If Harrison's proves to be the correct evaluation, linguism will have had a large share in the dissolution of freedom.

⁴¹ Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 338.