Think India (Quarterly Journal)
ISSN: 0971-1260 Vol-22, Special Issue-06
International Conference on Indigenous Languages and Translation Studies
held on Saturday, 3rd August 2019
Venue- Seminar Hall**, School of Humanities and Social Sciences**, Jain Deemed-to-be-University, Palace Road, Bengaluru, India

Indigenous Languages In India: As Endangered Culture

Karan Alistair Kishore

Assistant Professor: St. Aloysius Degree College

martinsacademy@gmail.com

Abstract

In several parts of the world, indigenous languages are on the threshold of extermination. The increasing inclusive acknowledgement of indigenous languages, the expectation is that it will flourish and progress in both spoken and written forms has been called for attention. To refresh these indigenous languages many communities have presented their own systems and methods. There are 100 Indian languages that are fast endangered; to save this situation the Union Human Resource Development Minority has set various programs. The program decided to study the dying languages, reasons and methods to rejuvenate them, one method is to introduce them as school subjects in areas where they are spoken and to mobilize communities to endure their language traditions. A survey was done and well-structured that India has around 196 endangered languages. The reason why these languages are dying because of a fall in the number of people speaking them. The government along with UNESCO has enlisted these endangered languages as Manipuri, Karbi and Khasi in Meitei, Assam and Meghalaya respectively. Various suggestions were proposed to save the dying languages. The government will check the status on how to implement this. To set up libraries, museums with audio and video materials displaying the oral traditions of these languages, steps to revitalilse these languages through community participation, education and giving economic and social benefits have been the target, listing languages which affords assurance of job or some sort of learning is focused upon. Following a trilingual format in educational system is deliberated in detail. The question of upward mobility and language shift requires a discussion in detail. The threat when a language dies, methods to conserve a dying language, marginality, impact of colonization on Indian Languages, and our realistic life, protection and preservation, researching and documenting Indian languages, digitizing languages, preserving the orality and textual nature of languages needs attention. Renewing India's purported pluralism has been discussed elaborately.

Key words: *Indigenous languages, extinction, reasons and methods, orality and textual nature and pluralism.*

Introduction:

Across the globe various indigenous languages so rich and deep rooted in culture are on the brink of extinction. The awareness and realization have given us hope that indigenous languages will thrive, flourish and spread in both spoken and written forms. This spark has ignited in Indian Indigenous languages too. The Indian government has taken remedial measures to rejuvenate this spirit. The aim is to work towards their promotion, by introducing them in various schools and colleges as part of their curriculum. This will promote interstate harmony, understanding and peace. In India each state is giving prominence only to their own state language basically because they are politically colored

rather than looking at their cultural and aesthetic growth. Language traditions will flourish if they are encouraged holistically. In Tamil Nadu only Tamil is their first language which is deemed far superior than their other second languages which are offered in the curriculum. A child who gets a State Rank has been the one who has their 'State Language as their second language. This is the pathetic plight in all states in India. Political domination, it's blank and forth night. We call ourselves democratic! Ironical. A list of 196 languages has been enlisted as endangered languages in India. The major threat is the decline in the number of people speaking them. People are more clannish and selfish. In Karnataka especially in Bangalore people are cosmopolitic, they speak all languages, but this has become very professional and 'convenience sake'. How much do we know about the cultures, of other 'states', therefore what is our 'state'? The UNESCO has enlisted Manipuri,Karbi and Khasi as endangered languages, after a detailed study.

A source said:

"The Idea is to start schemes under which the speakers of minor languages may get certain employment or earning opportunities".

The government has planned to introduce short term courses in endangered languages at the primary and school levels. The proposed language departments in Central Universities have decided to set up Libraries / Museums with audio and video material depicting the oral traditions of these languages. Such documentation is expected to preserve these indigenous languages. This can give life to dying languages. Each language department in all schools and colleges can conduct courses /seminars /conferences at the state and national levels. This revitalization of languages can help in community participation, education, economic and social benefits. Political coloring and Caste discrimination stand detrimental in exterminating indigenous languages in India.

Politics has colored and reshaped language diversities. Each state has got its own importance and prominence to their own state language. Certain privileges are given to people supporting their state language. This has led to the decline of Indigenous languages. This political prejudice and biased attitude should be condemned; only then any language will find its growth. The culture of any state will stabilize and diversify. To preserve a culture is a difficult task.

According to Prof.Omkar N.Koul, former director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) has expressed his view.

"If a language is not getting enough role in these 3 domains, educational, political and media. There is every possibility that it will die. Any language becomes endangered if it is spoken by a minority……"

Another reason for language endangerment is a feeling of upward mobility among speakers of a minor language, when they shift to major languages. The endangered languages could be categorized as extinct, moribund and critically endangered seriously endangered and potentially endangered. Renowned literary critic and activist Ganesh Narayan Devy discovered that there are many languages which are spoken. He added close to 250 languages in India, had already died over the past 60 years.

When a language dies its speaker decide to migrate from one region to another, their traditional livelihood patters go down, their specific skills disappear. To avoid a language disappear we can create livelihood support for the speakers of the language; if they have this support then they will not look out for opportunities elsewhere. Social dominance also leads to make other languages marginalized. Sanskrit becomes more popular in ancient India because of social domination by speakers of Sanskrit. Economically also a language gains market value. Patterns of political domination; local usage in workplace / market areas and the ease of syntactical structure can make some languages more popular than the other. The impact of colonization has given official recognition to some languages and demerited others. Syntax is also one of the reasons why languages become marginalized. Language can be presented not just by documentation but by having a profession, people speaking them. India is one of the most linguistically rich countries; when a language deteriorates its cultural myths rituals and rich heritage also dies gradually. The knowledge and ability to understand the culture is threatened because its oral traditions are no longer transmitted among native speakers.

There are ways to preserve a language from dying. One such is the Internet, which can be used to raise awareness about the issues of language extinction and language preservation. Internet sites can be used to translate, catalog and store and provide information and access to languages. When technologies like Podcasts can be used to preserve the spoke mode of languages. A podcast is an internet facility with digital audio and video files which can be used to learn a language, the listener can listen or view at his own time to file. Today every iPhone comes with a podcast. Podcast is a new technology which can be used to learn and preserve a language. Various new learning methods are used to save a dying language.

Hundreds of languages are teetering on the brink of extermination. We are on the path of becoming a monolingual species. There are many imperiled languages and it is difficult to enlist a few. We should encourage oral existence of languages; encourage more people to speak their language fluently and with confidence. Today commercially all languages are deteriorating.

As David Hanson chain of the linguistic department and co-founder of Living tongue Institute for Endangered languages rightly put it:

"The smaller the number of speakers, the harder it is to get a headcount" It is not enough if one speaks it should be reciprocated well. It is our duty to encourage oral language. Languages reach the point of crisis after being displaced by socially, politically and economically dominant factors. Keeping in mind their jobs, education and further opportunities. Parents decide to teach communicates languages rather than their mother tongues deeming it as a potential hindrance to their success in life. Sometimes persecution and social resistance can hinder language stability. Not accepted in society can also be enumerated as a cause. Social acceptance and recognition stand as key factors in today's world. The more affluent we are in 'English' (no doubt a window to the outside world), the more becomes our social status. Languages are conduits of human inheritance. Languages stand as a basis to convey community songs, stories and poems. Any state is rich in its own culture, in varying degrees. Oral songs and dances have their own ethnic value which will soon be forgotten by the coming generation. Social mobility, materialism, western style of living and thought are the dangers which can engulf and wipeout our state values and culture. The states wear, its ethnicity, rich food and cultural values should be preserved, to retain the beauty of the language and its pride. Caught up in the web of materialism, people are forgetting, rather feeling ashamed to speak their own language.

Languages are a wealth of biodiversity, vital knowledge, life implementation and insights. Different languages provide distinct pathways of thought and framework for thinking and solving problems.

As Turin says:

"If there is really good documentation, then there is a chance that these languages could be revitalized in the future even after they cease to be spoken".

Conclusion:

To sum up any language can be preserved if it is spoken continuously by larger groups. To document necessary details for future reference using technology to preserve and store details can also save dying languages. The Educational Institutions and government policies can help awaken these languages. Provide adequate and enough job opportunities can help preserve a language. This will also enrich the nation by providing support and guidance to nation building. All political coloring and caste determination should be controlled to make indigenous languages gain momentum.

Paper Presented by Karan Alistair Kishore

Bibliography:

1.Abley, Mark (2003). Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages. London: Heinemann.

2.Crystal, David (2000). Language Death. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0521012713.

3.Hale, Kenneth; Krauss, Michael; Watahomigie, Lucille J.; Yamamoto, Akira Y.; Craig, Colette; Jeanne, LaVerne M. et al. 1992. Endangered Languages. Language, 68 (1), 1–42.

4.Harrison, K. David. 2007. When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge. New York and London: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-518192-1.

5.McConvell, Patrick; Thieberger, Nicholas (2006). "Keeping Track of Language Endangerment in Australia". In Cunningham, Denis; Ingram, David; Sumbuk, Kenneth (eds.). Language Diversity in the Pacific: Endangerment and Survival.

6.McConvell, Patrick and Thieberger, Nicholas. 2001. State of Indigenous Languages in Australia – 2001 (PDF), Australia State of the Environment Second Technical Paper Series (Natural and Cultural Heritage), Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra.

7.Nettle, Daniel and Romaine, Suzanne. 2000. Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

8. Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (2000). Linguistic Genocide in Education or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights? Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. ISBN 0-8058-3468-0.

9. Austin, Peter K; Sallabank, Julia, eds. (2011). Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-0-521-88215-6.

10. Fishman, Joshua. 1991. Reversing Language Shift. Clevendon: Multilingual Matters.

*****