

FOREWORD

The State Survey of the Office of the Registrar General, India is an important step for understanding the broad linguistic scenario of the states. It does not however give a profile of the Indian linguistic space in terms of its speech varieties and their socio-cultural role; it does not give a profile of state linguistic diversity in conjunction with the emerging demographic profile. Language, though the foundation of knowledge base, is not reflected in the state survey.

Linguistically, Sikkim is as diverse as the rest of India. Out of 76 main languages, of Sikkim, according to 2001 Census, out of the first 15 major languages, Hindi is the 3rd, Bengali is the 9th, Urdu is the 10th and Punjabi, Malayalam, Assamese and Marathi are from 12th to 15th In the list. If one leaves out immigrant Tibetans (11th in the list) then Nepali, Bhotia, Lepcha Limbu, Sherpa, Tamang, Rai are counted as languages by Pundits. The rest are called mother tongues, minor languages, dialects, endangered languages.

So far India and its Sikkim state is concerned, Bhotia of Sikkim or Dan-Jong-Ka, Bhotia of Bhutan or Lhoke Kagate, Bhotia of Tibet or Tibetan, Sherpa Bhotia, Bhotia of Baltistan or Balti, Bhotia of Purik, Bhotia of Ladakh or Ladakhi, Bhotia of Lahul or Lahauli, Bhotia of Spiti, Bhotia of Upper Kanawar of Nyamki, Bhotia of Tehri Garhwal or Jad, Bhotia of Khams and other Bhotia group of dialects are recognized by Grierson. But their linguistic analysis could not be attempted by Grierson. However, the linguistic analysis of Bhotia, Tibetan, Sherpa, Lepcha, Limbu, Rai, Tamang, Gurung, Magar, Sunwar and Newari has been attempted in the LSI Sikkim (Part-I).

LSI-Sikkim (Part II) is a departure in many ways from the usual State Survey volumes. It is the recognition of the fact that States have boundaries, whereas languages do not. In this volume besides Sikkimese Nepali, Nepali spoken in West Bengal, in Himachal - Uttarkhand (known as Parbatiya) are put together and a comparative statement is given.

This volume opens up the possibility of studying together major as well as minor **languages of the states' leading to the State as a Linguistic area in spite of diversity.** It has been seen that recognition and respecting different identities lead to coming together of languages and non-recognition and disrespect of identities lead to breaking away of the languages. Konkani and Maithili are two such languages which through identity assertion movements have separated from Marathi and Hindi.

There being no language policy and planning in any of the States, comparative pedagogy and Area studies have not found place in the development debate in education and state formation. Shrinkage of languages at the grass root level leading to language shift

is a pointer to language death. Death of a language signifies death of a culture and death of a world view. It is the shrinkage of indigenous knowledge systems. Stopping language death is in the interest of both dominant and minority language speakers.

The State language survey volumes could help rationalize district boundaries and constituency boundaries taking language as a factor. Drawing the state maps on the basis of language gave the false impression that each state is monolingual. The State survey has broken this illusion. The States now face the challenge of bridging the mother-tongue with the State dominant language and implement mother tongue based multilingual education. These volumes in spite of their limitations will go a long way in stopping language right and human right violation.

I am sure these volumes will find favour among demographers, planners, educators and social-scientists.

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