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Nationhood through Language: Legal Dimension of Hebrew Revival and Indian Multilingualism

Abstract:

Language isn't simply a tool of communication; it's a vessel of culture, identity and sovereignty. For legal systems, language becomes the vehicle of rights, duties and justice. Across history, the politics of language has shaped nations. Throughout history, the politics of language have played a defining part in shaping nations and their individualities. A striking illustration is the Zionist revival of Hebrew, where a liturgical language dormant for centuries was converted through political will, individual leadership by Eliezer Ben - Yehuda, and legal codification into the unifying, spoken sanctioned language of a ultramodern state. This reanimation was predicated in the legal maxim *salus populi suprema lex*, the well-being of the people is the supreme law justifying language as a matter of collaborative identity and survival. In discrepancy, India's language politics reflects a pluralist model. Following the Official Languages Act, 1963, India balances the contending demands of Hindi, English and multitudinous indigenous languages within a indigenous frame that protects linguistic diversity and fundamental rights. Crucial judicial interventions and the recognition of classical languages further illustrate the complexity of India's language policy. This article examines these divergent paths the resuscitation of Hebrew as a tool of public unity in Israel and the accommodation of multilingualism within India's popular fabric exploring why no other language reanimation matches the Hebrew experience in its legal, artistic and societal metamorphosis.

Introduction:

Language forms the soul of legal and political identity. In law, it determines not only communication but the expression of justice itself. Across civilizations, the choice of sanctioned language has reflected material power, artistic aspiration, and public harmony. This article explores two distinct legal approaches to the politics of language Israel's reanimation of Hebrew and India's plural indigenous accommodation. The central question addressed presently is how law and language intersect to shape public symphony whether by revival and homogenization, as in Israel, or by concurrence and pluralism, as in India. By positioning both experiences within the principles of constitutionalism and nation-structure, this analysis reveals how linguistic procedures reflect supporting dreams of identity and sovereignty.

Statement of Facts:

For Israel, Hebrew¹ had long been a sacred language confined to prayer and scholarship. The late nineteenth century witnessed the rise of Zionism, a nationalist movement that sought to establish a Jewish motherland and identity after centuries of diaspora. Central to this movement wasn't simply territorial recovery but artistic and linguistic revival, the restoration of Hebrew as a living as well as a spoken language. Under the introducing vision of Eliezer Ben - Yehuda, Hebrew passed a profound metamorphosis from a primarily liturgical and textual medium to an ultramodern conversational able of expressing contemporary study and wisdom. He introduced new vocabulary, formalized alphabet and even encouraged its use within families, seminaries and public institutions. This deliberate linguistic reanimation came a foundation of Jewish nation structure, climaxing in Hebrew's formal recognition in Israel's founding legal documents and introductory Laws, which institutionalized it as the unifying language of the ultramodern State of Israel.

¹ Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* (1908–1959).

In contrast, India's linguistic experience at independence in 1947 wasn't one of revival but of conciliation. Centuries of artistic diversity, concentrated with the legacies of British social administration, had produced a complex linguistic mosaic. The framers of the Constitution of India (1950) faced the challenge of shaping a public identity through language without suppressing the key's pluralism. Article 343 of the constitution of India, declared Hindi in the Devanagari script as the sanctioned language of the Union, emblematising the aspiration for public integration. At the same time, realistic considerations led to the durability of English for sanctioned purposes under Articles 343(3) and 348, ensuring executive durability and interregional communication. This binary language arrangement was further institutionalized through the Official Languages Act, 1963, which extended the use of English indefinitely alongside Hindi, reflecting a long-term concession between artistic nationalism and executive practicality.

Beneath these indigenous vittles' lay India's deeper commitment to linguistic democracy and fundamental rights. Articles 29 and 30 guaranteed the protection of cultural and educational rights of linguistic minorities, allowing communities to save their language and establish educational institutions. This indigenous architecture reflected the framers' understanding that language in India wasn't simply a tool of communication but a marker of identity and autonomy. Thus, while Hebrew's resuscitation was driven by the need to reclaim orchestration through a common heritage, India's indigenous approach sought to maintain orchestration through assortment, balancing the imperatives of public cohesion with respect for indigenous languages.

Together, these two linguistic narratives one embedded in revivalism and the other in pluralism illustrate how nations articulate identity through language policy. Where Hebrew came a singular hallmark of public revivification, India's multilingual frame came a living testament to federalism, diversity, and concurrence within a popular order.

Arguments and Legal Analysis

Zionism and the Revival of Hebrew

Historical Context: For centuries, Hebrew was used primarily as a religious and erudite language, not as a spoken language of day-to-day life. Jews across the diaspora spoke Yiddish, Ladino, Russian, German, and other vernaculars. The late 19th-century Zionist movement believed that a nation couldn't be revived without a unifying national language. Revival of Hebrew therefore became central to the design of Jewish self-determination.

Role of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda: Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858 – 1922), often called the “Father of Modern Hebrew²”, led efforts to Develop a contemporary vocabulary for wisdom, politics, and daily use. Publish Hebrew journals and dictionaries. Promote Hebrew in homes and schools as a living language. He viewed Hebrew as the essential condition of Jewish statehood and unity famously declaring that “a nation is revived by reviving its language.” Ben-Yehuda’s efforts were both intellectual and social:

- He systematically developed new Hebrew vocabulary for science, governance, technology, and everyday life, blending biblical roots with modern needs.
- He founded Hebrew-language journals and newspapers, spreading modern idioms and promoting literacy.
- He compiled the monumental “Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew,” providing linguistic structure and authority to the evolving language.

² Fishman, Joshua A., *Language Revival and Death*, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991.

- Most significantly, he spoke only Hebrew at home, making his son the first native speaker of Modern Hebrew in nearly two thousand years. This personal act of conviction became a symbol of the linguistic rebirth he envisioned.

Legal Entrenchment in Israel: In 1948, Hebrew was honoured as an official language alongside Arabic. The Nation- State Law of 2018 elevated Hebrew to the sole sanctioned language, granting Arabic only a “special status.” This legal recognition cemented Hebrew as the linguistic backbone of Israel’s nationhood. Legal Maxim Connection Salus populi suprema lex the well- being of the people is the supreme law. Reviving Hebrew was justified as a matter of common identity and survival. This legal recognition reflected its purpose as a unifying medium among immigrants from over a hundred linguistic backgrounds. Hebrew became the primary language of governance, education, media, and the service the practical and emotional foundation of Israeli identity. In 2018, the Basic Law Israel as the Nation- State of the Jewish People (generally called the Nation- State Law) elevated Hebrew to the sole sanctioned language of Israel, while granting Arabic a “special status.” This transition marked the capstone of a century-long process in which Hebrew evolved from a sacred textbook into the legal, communal, and artistic backbone of the Jewish state.

India’s Language Policy: Legal Codification

Constitutional Provisions: At the time of India’s independence, language surfaced as one of the most sensitive and contested issues in constitution- timber. Article 343 of the Constitution designated Hindi in the Devanagari script as the sanctioned language of the Union, signifying an aspiration to promote a indigenous linguistic identity in place of the social heritage of English. still, feting the immense linguistic diversity of the recently independent Republic and the practical dependence on English in administration, law, and advanced education, the framers permitted the use of English for sanctioned purposes for a transitional period of fifteen times from the inception of the Constitution. This concession reflected both the nationalist desire to establish Hindi as a symbol of unity and the realistic recognition that immediate linguistic uniformity was neither doable nor desirable in such a vast multilingual nation. Further, Article 348 maintained English as the authoritative language of the Supreme Court and High Courts, as well as for legislative enactments, statutory instruments, and authoritative legal textbooks. This assured durability and perfection in judicial and legislative converse, given that important of India’s justice and statutory law had been developed in English during the social period. It also reflected the framers’ understanding that law, as a specialized sphere, needed linguistic stability to avoid illuminative confusion across different linguistic regions. To guard the rights of communities whose languages weren’t espoused as functionary, Articles 29 and 30 elevated artistic and educational rights for people, guaranteeing their freedom to save distinctive languages, scripts, and traditions, and to establish institutions for their creation. They emphasized the principle that India’s unity must rest on diversity, admitting the concurrence of multiple linguistic individualities within a single indigenous frame.

As the nation progressed toward the end of the original fifteen- time period, strong opposition arose from non-Hindi-speaking countries particularly in southern India where the prospect of Hindi’s exclusive dominance was perceived as a trouble to indigenous culture and executive addition. In response, the Union Parliament legislated the Official Languages Act, 1963, which assured the continued use of English alongside Hindi for all sanctioned purposes of the Union government. This legislation effectively institutionalized a binary- language executive system, wherein Hindi and English accompanied as functional equals in governance, legislation, and interstate communication.

The attendant linguistic policy of independent India represents a delicate equilibrium between public integration and indigenous autonomy. It demonstrates how indigenous design, political concession, and

artistic pluralism gathered to forge a multilingual republic one that respects diversity while sustaining the idea of a unified nation-state.

English vs Hindi Debate: India's linguistic frame, unlike Israel's monolingual reanimation of Hebrew, is erected on balancing contending artistic, political, and practical imperatives. The debate over Hindi and English encapsulates the country's struggle to forge public unity while conserving diversity. Its retention under Article 343 and underpinning via Article 348 of the Constitution assured continued legal clarity and institutional durability, especially in advanced bar and statutory drafting. Beyond domestic mileage, English provides a vital link to global legal fabrics, commerce, academia, and tactfulness enabling integration into the world frugality and easing cross-border legal cooperation. Its impartiality comes from the absence of ethnical or indigenous origins within India's indigenous linguistic chart, avoiding comprehensions of artistic dominance.

Hindi, by discrepancy, was promoted as the emblematic marker of public identity, embedded in literal of an artistic - linguistic centre for the Union. Article 343 elevated it as the Union's sanctioned language, reflecting a vision that Hindi could serve as a cohesive force in nation-structure. Yet, in practice, its advancement has met sustained resistance, particularly from southern countries like Tamil Nadu and northeastern countries with their own rich linguistic heritage. These regions viewed Hindi duty as an corrosion of artistic autonomy, egging political agitation, policy safeguards, and legislative negotiations similar as the Official Languages Act, 1963, which formally rooted the continued use of English alongside Hindi in Union administration.

The state's language policy therefore evolved into a binary structure Hindi and English share civil functions, while countries maintain their own linguistic autonomy under Articles 29 – 30, conserving conversational identity. This duality sprucely contrasts with Israel's approach, where Hebrew came the sole sanctioned language through deliberate legal codification in the Nation-State Law (2018). Judicial Interventions:

- *Union of India v. Murasoli Maran (1977)*³: The Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Official Languages Act, 1963, and the presidential orders regarding the continued use of English in Union administration. The Court reasoned that the Act was legislated to address enterprises from non-Hindi-speaking countries and didn't limit the President's indigenous authority to issue instructions under Composition 344 (6). The retention of English, alongside Hindi, was set up harmonious with both the indigenous intent and the statutory frame because it defended the interests and rights of linguistic minorities.
- *Pradeep Kumar v. HRD Secretary (1995)*⁴: The Supreme Court held the addition of Sanskrit in educational institutions valid by recognizing Sanskrit's status as a part of India's ancient artistic heritage. The Court agreed the Constitution's commitment to guarding minority and artistic rights (Articles 29 – 30) and set up that promoting Sanskrit seen as the root of important Indian erudite and spiritual history didn't violate coequality or temporal principles.

Comparative Study Hebrew and Indian Approaches

Aspect Hebrew (Israel) India:

Hebrew was primarily a liturgical and scholarly tongue, used in sacred texts, prayers, and religious education but not in everyday dialogue. Across the Jewish diaspora, communities spoke Yiddish, Ladino, Arabic, Russian, and German, leaving Hebrew as a unifying but dormant artistic symbol of

³ *Union of India v. Murasoli Maran*, AIR 1977 SC 225.

⁴ *Pradeep Kumar v. HRD Secretary*, AIR 1995 SC 544.

ancient identity. India inherited a multilingual social fabric, with dozens of indigenous vernaculars similar as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Telugu, and Marathi spoken daily. There was no single public spoken language, though English remained settled in administration and law due to social legacy. Driven by Zionist doctrine, language reanimation came an act of public reconstruction. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda commanded sweat to contemporize Hebrew vocabulary, publish wordbooks, and make Hebrew the everyday medium of communication in homes and seminaries. His reforms integrated biblical roots, ultramodern terms, and influences from European and Middle Eastern cant. Mass relinquishment passed through education, media, the army, and communal life. India followed a balancing approach rather than reanimation. Through the Official Languages Act (1963), India institutionalized a bilingual civil system Hindi as the sanctioned language of the Union and English as a link language for administration and advanced bar. This model intermediated between public identity bourns and the indigenous verbal pluralism defended by southern and northeastern countries. The Hebrew reanimation constituted a complete verbal belle époque, reclaiming a language allowed “dead” for centuries and transubstantiating it into the everyday expression of an ultramodern nation. It came the cerebral and artistic cement for Jewish emigrants, incorporating religious memory with communal fustiness. India’s approach emphasized durability through diversity rather than uniformity. There was no attempt to revive Sanskrit or any classical language for diurnal use, but to insure inclusivity and concurrence of multiple verbal traditions. This model showcases India’s strength as a pluralist federalism, not a monolingual nation.

Why Hebrew Revival is Unique: No other “dead” or “ritual” language has been revived as a native, living language. Nation-building Tool Hebrew revival unified immigrants from dozens of linguistic backgrounds. Legal Codification rooted in Basic Laws and Nation-State Law, unlike symbolic recognition of other revivals (e.g., Irish, Māori). For the Zionist founders, language wasn’t a private or aesthetic matter but a question of collaborative reality. Unifying different people under one tongue served the advanced law of public survival, ensuring communication, solidarity, and durability. The reanimation of Hebrew fulfilled a binary function it was both a spiritual renewal and a realistic act of nation-building, securing the cohesion necessary for a popular and self-determined state.

Counterarguments:

Homogenizing language policy, as in Israel, may risk marginalizing minority tongues similar as Arabic or Yiddish. Again, India’s pluralism, while inclusive, frequently struggles with efficiency and emotional cohesion. Yet, within their separate public narratives, each system represents a lawful and contextually justified equilibrium between unity and diversity.

Conclusion

The stories of Israel and India show how law and language policy are inseparable from nation-building. In Israel, Hebrew revitalization demonstrates the extraordinary capacity of law and political will to convert a liturgical language into a living public identity. In India, the Official Languages Act and indigenous safeguards reflect a commitment to pluralism and balance rather than rejuvenation. Both models have their distinctions Israel exemplifies balance through regeneration, while India demonstrates strength through diversity. Yet, the Hebrew experience remains incomparable, a testament to how words, when empowered by law, can regenerate not just a language, but an entire nation.

Eventually, these divergent experiences reaffirm that language policy is further than executive choice it's a reflection of a nation's soul, its literal trajectory, and its vision of unity. Israel's Hebrew reanimation stands for unity through participated language and culture, while India exemplifies unity through regardful diversity and legal protection of multiple individualities. Each model carries its own wisdom the power of revivification and renewal in one case, and the adaptability of pluralism in the other. Together, they illustrate how deeply integrated law and language policy are in shaping the very substance of nationhood.