

PRESS-NOTE

“AMBEDKAR NEVER WORKED TO INSTALL SANSKRIT AS NATIONAL LANGUAGE”

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Hon. Justice, Sharad Bobde, the Chief Justice of India, on April 14, 2021, in an inaugural function of the academic building of Maharashtra National Law University, at Nagpur, while remembering the Chief Architect of Indian Constitution, Dr. Ambedkar on his 130th birth anniversary, in a reported statement in national print and other media stated that “Ambedkar had proposed Sanskrit as National Language”, “Ambedkar worked to make Sanskrit Official Language” has not gone down well among all the well studious scholars of Dr. Ambedkar and his multi-dimensional national contributions.

However, the lordship, being the Chief Justice of India was cautious enough in his statement by saying that, “He (Dr. Ambedkar) had prepared a proposal. I don’t know if that proposal was tabled? It had signatures of some mullas, pundits and priests and of doctor Ambedkar himself.” Further while quoting his statement, the Indian Express, Mumbai, April 15, 2021 and many other national daily’s have reported that, “the proposal which did not succeed.” However, with great respect to his reported statements, it needs to be duly noted that the statement was made without elaborating its context and got published as it is in almost all leading national print and electronic media, thus sending a message to countless people. Since the Statement is made by the Chief Justice of India, it is backed by his authority and so the people are tend to believe it as true.

In our country, various people with vested interests, calculations often quotes and misquotes the great leaders for various purposes, not only causing enormous irreparable damage to the society but also causing great injustice to the great leaders themselves. In 2016, the BJP old guard Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi has made a similar statement that was reported in The Times of India, 25 April, 2016 with a title “Ambedkar wanted Sanskrit as national language”. To a

great extent Dr. Ambedkar has always been a great victim to such unfortunate comments, statements made by eminent personalities either due to lack of in-depth research or due to incapacity to grasp great leader's contextual dynamism or for some other ulterior motive.

Dr. Ambedkar's love for Sanskrit and his quest for learning of Sanskrit, to understand and expose the Brahmanical conspiracy to oppress and persecute lower strata's is well known. But the record of the Constituent Assembly, or the Constitution making process, reported in any authority, does not substantiate Hon'ble Chief Justice's reported, claimed statement. Nevertheless, it is very much clear that, his reported statement's source, if I am not mistaken, has been the news item, dated September 11, 1949 compiled on pages 357-358 of the "Source Material on Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and The Movement of Untouchables", Vol. I, published by the education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra (1982).

In fact, in the Constituent Assembly, on 12th September, 1949, on behalf of the Drafting Committee headed by Dr. Ambedkar, the declaration of an acceptance of Hindi with Devnagari script as the language for all official purposes of the Union, under the new constitution was announced by the N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar. Accordingly the provisions are present in Part XVII of the Constitution from Article 343 to 351.

As far as Sanskrit proposal is concerned, Pandit Lakshmi Kanta Maitra, another member of the Constituent Assembly in his long speech on 13th September 1949, moved an amendment with an appeal for acceptance of Sanskrit as a national language by saying that, "let us bury our hatchets and cheerfully accept Sanskrit as the National and Official language of free India." In the Constituent Assembly from 12th September 1949, to 14th September although many speakers spoke on the subject neither a single member referred to Dr. Ambedkar's proposal nor Dr. Ambedkar himself had moved any proposal for Sanskrit as a national or official language.

It also needs to be noted that, neither the Draft Constitution prepared by B. N. Rao-Constitutional Adviser nor the draft of the Drafting Committee under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar contained any provisions relating to official language. Sensing divergent views, in August, 1949, the Congress party in Assembly decided that Hindi should ultimately be the official language and to take a final call, a special committee was appointed consisting of members of

the Drafting Committee and, in addition Abdul. Kalam Azad, G. B. Pant, Purushottamdas Tandon, Balkrishna Sharma, Syama Prasad Mookerejee and K. Santhanam were to draft an appropriate provision. On the basis of proposal of the committee, on August 24, 1949, Mr. K. M. Munshi and Gopalaswami Ayyangar prepared detailed draft for inclusion in the draft Constitution. In the Constituent Assembly, the same draft was moved by Dr. Ambedkar.

In the Constituent Assembly, on the issue of national language, there were near about 350 amendments ranging from acceptance of Sanskrit to the retention of English, besides profound focus on Hindi. And from the archives of the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly, it is on record that, after deliberations on 12, 13 and 14th September, 1949, on the day of voting, that is, September 14, 1949 almost all the amendments were withdrawn and the rest, some were rejected by vote, in which nowhere, Dr. Ambedkar's proposal was reckoned, mentioned or discussed. Rather, on September 17, 1949 with regard to the language used in Parliament, Dr. Ambedkar had moved an amendment to Draft Article 99 for Hindi or English language and to Article 184 for State's language or Hindi or English languages for the use of State legislatures. Finally, due to some member's plea for inclusion of Sanskrit, the language found the place in 8th Schedule of the Constitution, the list of national languages, which currently include 22 languages.

In this factual background, and the governmental record of the constitution making process, there is absolutely no question that Dr. Ambedkar had worked for Sanskrit as national language. On the contrary, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar consistently maintained that "by speaking in one language you have to unite India and for that you must learn Hindi." However, the source on which the Chief Justice (might) have relied on, is the news item published in "The Sunday Standard", Dt. 11 September, 1949 where, on being questioned by a PTI correspondent on Sanskrit language, Dr. Ambedkar, the then Law Minister, had answered by a counter question by saying that, "What is wrong with Sanskrit?" Based on this circumstantial scenario, saying that, "Dr. Ambedkar worked for Sanskrit as National Language", is not only distortion of historical fact but a great injustice to Dr. Ambedkar.
