

## Language Education in Karnataka Since 1956

**Prof. B. Mallikarjun**  
Former Director  
Centre for Classical Kannada  
Central University of Karnataka  
Kadaganchi, Aland Road  
Kalaburagi District - 585311  
KARNATAKA, INDIA  
[mallikarjun56@gmail.com](mailto:mallikarjun56@gmail.com)

### Abstract

In Karnataka, now in 2020, Kannada education is at a perilous stage. This paper, “Language Education in Karnataka Since 1956”, (full title -- ‘Language Education (language as a subject and as a medium of instruction from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards) in Karnataka - A Journey from 1956’) intends to take the reader through twists and turns that school education in the multilingual state has taken in dealing with language issues. The role played by the committees, government and judiciary in formulating language policy is analysed. The changes that have taken place in language education are highlighted.

An attempt is also made to look at the socio-economic and socio-linguistic issues that have played a role in this struggle for existence of Kannada in the multilingual maze.

The journey passes through: the primacy of mother tongue in the primary schools from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards (1956); status of Kannada as a ‘sole’ first language in the secondary schools (1982); only students whose mother tongue is English can study in English medium from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards (1994) and now, the student or on his behalf parents or guardian has right to choose the medium of instruction (2014).

Ultimately it is proved beyond doubt that legal issues are important for judiciary and not the academic or cognitive issues.

The poor response of the students to study through their mother tongue, extraordinary love of English medium and support of the government for the same through setting up of new English medium sections, attempt of the government to compulsorily teach Kannada either as first or second language in schools, with ‘The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015’ not taking off the ground in letter and spirit are discussed in this paper.

**Keywords:** Kannada as medium of education, legal issues, judiciary intervention, focus on English as the preferred medium, parental/student choice as legal instrument, downgrading value and importance of mother tongue as medium.

## **Introduction**

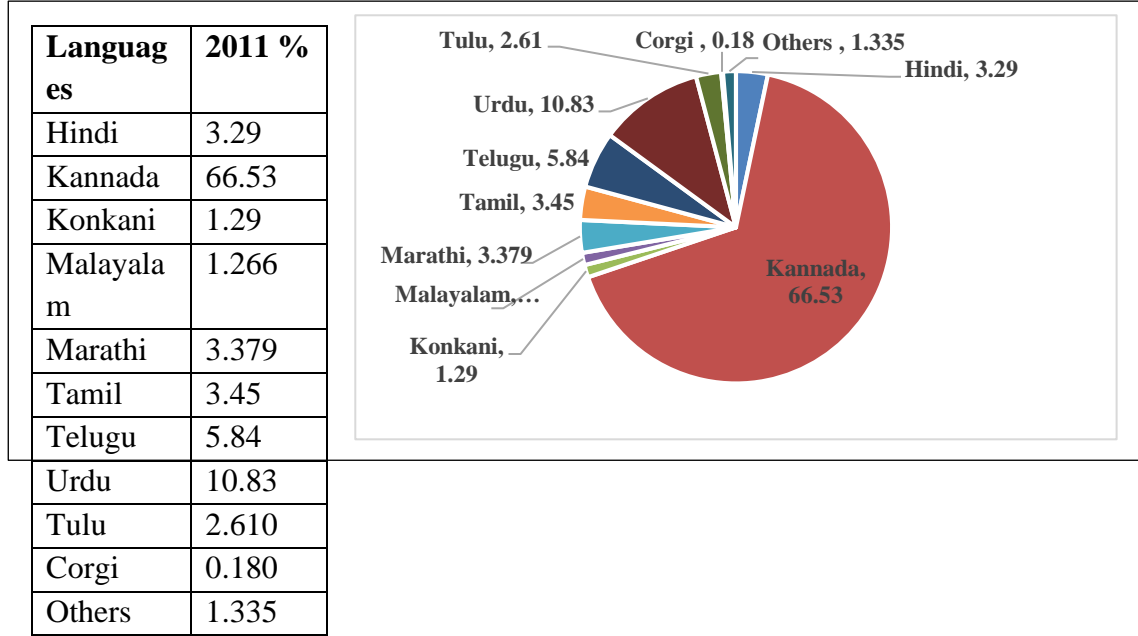
Karnataka, one of the states of the Union of India, was formed on Nov 1, 1956 by integrating different Kannada speaking geographical units on the basis of the language used by the majority, and geographic contiguity. One of the important reasons for bringing various parts into a single administrative unit was to facilitate effective administration and give an impetus for the development of the people. The integration of the geographical units that had Kannada as the dominant language was expected to help the people to work united for faster economic development and help wider participation of common people in the developmental activities initiated by the State. It was also expected to help develop Kannada as a fit vehicle of communication and education to meet the modern needs. So, the linguistic re-unification was followed by the enactment of the Karnataka Official Language Act, 1963 which declared

Kannada as the Official language of the State. Karnataka has common borders with Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Maharashtra, and Kerala states where Telugu, Tamil, Konkani, Marathi, and Malayalam are the Official Languages respectively. The bordering districts of these states have a large number of bilingual populations.

## **Linguistic Landscape of Karnataka**

Like India, Karnataka too is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual pluralistic state. The linguistic demography of Karnataka presents a rainbow combination of mother tongues and it is the most multilingual state in the country. As far as multilingualism is concerned there is no parallel to Karnataka in India, so are the issues of language education in the state. This multilingualism is unique not only because of coexistence of many languages but also because more and more people are having competence to use more languages other than their mother tongue. It is to be remembered that Census of India in 1971 records 166 mother tongues in Karnataka. According to 2011 Census of the number of speakers of the 18 languages are: Kannada-4,06,51,090; Urdu-66,18,324; Telugu-35,69,400; Marathi-20,64,906; Tamil-21,10,128; Tulu-15,95,038; Konkani-7,88,294; Malayalam-7,74,057; Hindi-20,13,364; Kodava / Coorgi-1,10,508; Gujarati-1,14,616; Bengali-87,963; Tibetan-27,544; English-23,227; Odia-64,119; Nepali-19274; Punjabi-25981; Sindhi- 16,954 and 4 mother tongues are Lamani/Lambadi-9,74,622; Marwari-1,00,214; Banjari-25,373; Yerava-26536. First three of them are part of Hindi language and the last one is part of the Malayalam language.

### Languages in Karnataka: 2011



The socio-economic survey of Karnataka conducted by the Government of Karnataka (2015) elicits information from its citizens about the following mother tongues: Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Malayalam, English, Kodava, Konkani, Tulu, Byari, Arebhashe and Others (not named). Interesting additions are English a non-scheduled language, Arebhashe and Byari and exclusion of Lamani / Lambadi, Yerava, Marwari, Gujarati, Bengali, Tibetan which have a greater number of speakers than English in Karnataka. This indicates the increasing influence of English on society and the state government and in socio-economic-educational policy formulation. So, mother tongues like Lamani/Lambadi or Yerava are of no consequence in the language policy formulation in Karnataka. However, in the 2020-21 Karnataka budget establishment of Lambadi Academy is announced. It has to be noted that the Census of India 2001 provides a list of 146 mother tongues in Karnataka along with their population. This present survey may not yield meaningful data for language planning purpose, since the booklet to the enumerators did not have clear instructions as to how the mother tongue data should be elicited from the people. This inclusion of English reminds us the attempt of the British to know the number of people who know ‘to read and write English’ in 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 through decennial Census in India, as part of colonial administration.

Before unification, the different geographical units that came under the umbrella of Karnataka state had different patterns of school education, but as a result of unification, they were supposed to come under one system. A perusal of the documents from these regions that comprise the present-day Karnataka indicates the existence of three different kinds of schools: Vernacular schools, English schools, and Anglo-Vernacular schools. The vernacular schools taught the regional language and other subjects in the same language. Similarly, the English schools taught English and other subjects in English. Both these types of schools existed in almost all the regions. Although several common elements in the curriculum adopted in the different regions could be identified, there were differences in the curriculum from one region to another. Only languages having their own script had found a place in formal education at the time of unification. The aim of this education system was to spread "...European knowledge throughout all class of people and this was to be imparted to the upper classes through the medium of English and to the masses through their own spoken languages."<sup>1</sup> But precisely, after the unification, the role of Sanskrit in school education was the major crux before the *Shiksha Naekataasamiti*, at state level, chaired by the minister for education that went into the issues of common curriculum for the reorganized state. This committee included Sanskrit in the list of first languages in the school education. Though Karnataka was formed with Kannada as a major language of the state, it could not escape from including Sanskrit in the school curriculum at the secondary stage, though in reality it is not mother tongue of any person. According to this decision even the students with Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil can study Sanskrit as a first language. Here, many people are not very clear when they speak first, second, third language etc., in schooling. Pedagogically, it is the language which is first introduced to the student in the school and also it is the language through which he learns other subjects, that is it is going to be a subject of study as well as the medium of instruction. Chronologically it is the language to which the student is formally introduced first in the school. In most of the cases, logically first language is going to be mother tongue of the student. Sanskrit does not fulfil these pedagogic criteria. First language and medium of instruction are supposed to have correlation at the primary stage.

### **Primacy of Mother Tongue in the Primary Schools from 1st To 4th Standards (1956)**

Karnataka adopted for a uniform curriculum and syllabus for all its regions/districts in the state from 1959-60, and by the end of 1962-63 all the schools had totally switched over to the new uniform curriculum. Karnataka established the following pattern of language choice for education in schools since the linguistic reorganization of states in 1956.

1. **I to IV Standards:** The students would study only one language, that is, the mother tongue. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass.
2. **V to VII Standards:** One more language out of the following ten languages -- Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass, and this minimum was reduced to 35% for students from the VII Standard. The students from the III Standard to VII Standard could also study Hindi, or composite Kannada, but this was not

obligatory. A composite course may be defined roughly as the higher standard of its counterpart at the ordinary level. A composite course carried, generally speaking, more marks than the ordinary level and the students may have more than one paper for the final examination in the subject concerned.

### 3. VIII, IX, and X Standards:

- i. **First language:** Any one of the following languages: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course of one of the following languages consisting of three periods per week: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Marathi and two periods of one of the following languages: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, or Hindi. The First language consisted of Papers I and II carrying 100 marks and 50 marks each respectively, together with the total of 150 marks.
- ii. **Second language:** Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi as the Second language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language. It consisted of two papers with 50 marks each.
- iii. **Third language:** Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. The Third language consisted of only one paper carrying 50 marks. *This was compulsorily taught, but it would not count for a pass. It was left to the students either to appear or not to appear for the examination in that paper. (italics mine)*

When this was accepted, adopted and practiced, there were very less awareness as to the implications of such a formula both among the parents, language policy thinkers. What was important was Kannada should find the place in schooling from the point of Kannadigas and from others point of view it should be possible to study their mother tongue in the school. English was not much in demand as a medium of instruction. All were satisfied with English as a subject.

This pattern of language choice in school education was practiced for more than two decades in Karnataka. The late sixties and the early seventies witnessed strong opposition to Hindi since it was perceived as a threat to the existence, use, and development of Kannada. This had forced the Kannada mother tongue speakers to lean towards English. However, many among them also felt that Kannada faced a threat to its continuation as the dominant school language from Sanskrit. It was found that the students from the Kannada majority or other minority mother tongue groups also opted for Sanskrit as a subject of study in the schools. Students availing Sanskrit as first language scored more marks in the final examinations than their Kannada counterparts. It was perceived by many that the easy instructional materials used

in the Sanskrit classes, and a liberal evaluation system adopted by the examiners helped students to obtain higher marks in the final examinations contributed to its popularity among the parents as well as the students. The report of the Secondary Education Board constituted to examine the issues confirmed these views about Sanskrit. It was also possible to pass the State Board examination at 10<sup>th</sup> standard without passing the Kannada course in the scheme outlined above (*see italics*). Thus, it was realized that the Official Language of the state had no appropriate place and role in the language education system of Karnataka in the primary and secondary schools.

It was but inevitable, then, that this pattern of language choice created and widened the incompatibility between the policy of language choice for administration and the languages chosen for the purposes of education in the state. The State government employees lacked adequate knowledge of Kannada to use it as an effective medium of administration. This was found to be an impediment in using Kannada in the administration of the state at all levels. At the political level, there was a growing desire to use Kannada in as many departments of the government as possible. This pressured the State Government to create extra avenues to enable its employees to acquire a working knowledge of the State Official language through other formal or non-formal avenues.

Language movement initiated by various political parties, groups of Kannada teachers, students, college and university professors, literary critics, playwrights, and creative writers created an awakening among the Kannada speaking majority to seek a place of pride or pre-eminent place for Kannada in the affairs of the State. Their dream was to restore the primacy and the lost glory of their language as the only medium of governance in the linguistically re-organized Karnataka state. This awakening in favor of using Kannada as the language of administration was a consequence of many factors including linguistic movements, political agitations, and the general political awakening among the backward classes. This description of the linguistic situation in Karnataka can be easily applied to many other linguistically re-organized Indian states also. Spread of literacy mainly in Kannada, and the spread of general education among the people, also had led to a new awakening. The large-scale migration of people, mainly from adjacent states, for employment opportunities that opened up through fast industrialization of the state was perceived to be curtailing the employment opportunities for the Kannada majority. All these needed an avenue for the expression of anger and disgust among the people. The language choice in education provided an avenue to meet the challenge thrown up by industrialization and consequent migration of people from other linguistic groups. The *akhilabhaarata 49neyakannaDasaahityasammeeLana* held at Shivamogga during 1976 asked the government to (i) remove Sanskrit from the list of first languages and (ii) to create facilities in the schools to teach Kannada compulsorily from first to tenth standards. Also, *akhilabhaarata 51neyakannaDasaahityasammeeLana* held at Dharmasthala during 1979 asked the government to make Kannada compulsory first language in all the high schools of the state.

In post-independence India, after the reorganisation of the state on linguistic lines in Karnataka, Kannada failed to develop to the extent to which it was anticipated, failed to become a language of economic opportunities for Kannadigas, as medium of instruction it worked against Kannada medium students. The results of the 10<sup>th</sup> standard and 12<sup>th</sup> standard for decades together say a pathetic story of pass percentage of Kannada medium students. More students were opting of Kannada medium and more students were failing in it as compared to English medium students, year after year. Growth in economy, job openings allowed entry for English educated youngsters than others. Hindi has a pan Indian employment market and English has worldwide job opportunities. Kannada has employment market only in Karnataka which is consumed by English educated from Karnataka and migrants from other states. Thus, creating an imbalance in employment markets for Kannadigas. Kannada and Kannadiga's losing ground in the state of Karnataka found expression in the formation of Gokak Committee (1980) on school languages and Sarojini Mahishi Committee (1983) on linking land-language with employment.

The government decided to delete Sanskrit from the list of first languages in 1979 and included it in the second/third language list. But the government that took this decision did not remain in power to implement its decision. The subsequent government reconsidered the stand of the previous government and decided to maintain the status quo. Pro-Kannada groups protested against this decision. This agitation against retaining Sanskrit in the first language list made the government to think afresh about the language choice in school education. For this purpose, the Government of Karnataka constituted a committee (July 5, 1980) with Prof. V.K. Gokak as the Chairman and placed the following questions before it for appropriate recommendations.

1. Should Sanskrit remain as the subject for study in the school syllabus?
2. If so, how to retain it without it being offered as alternative to Kannada?
3. Would it be proper to have Kannada as a compulsory subject as per the Three Language Formula, and should the option of selecting the remaining two languages be left to students themselves?

Fairly well conceived questions that reflect the role that languages (role allocation in language planning terminology) have to play as subjects in the schools in a multilingual situation. This was aimed at repairing the damage that the decision of the *shikshaNa eekataa samiti* had done for decades to the state official language.

The Committee after eliciting opinion from the public and due deliberations recommended (January 27, 1981) to the government that:

1. Kannada should be introduced as a compulsory subject for all children from 3rd Standard.

2. Kannada should be the sole first language for the Secondary Schools (i.e., 8th, 9th and 10th Standards) carrying 150 Marks.

The Committee further recommended that this should be implemented for the education of Kannada speaking pupils from 1981-82 itself, and, in respect of others, from 1986-87, after taking necessary steps to teach Kannada to them from the 3rd Standard beginning with the academic year 1981-82 itself.

It was set up to suggest whether Sanskrit should be retained in the school curriculum, if retained how it can be retained as a subject of study without being an alternative to Kannada, and whether Kannada should be a compulsory subject and other two languages are left to the choice of students. The committee did not say anything about Sanskrit but focussed on providing primacy or so to say supremacy for Kannada. The report by the Gokak committee was devoid of understanding of multilingual nature of the state of Karnataka and played into the Kannada gallery. It messed up the issues that it was supposed to deliberate upon and make recommendations. The avoidable errors in formulation of language policy by looking into grouse of one linguistic group and forgetting multilingual nature of the state also is one of the causes of failure to implement its recommendations. In the recommendations, we can see a total shift of focus from Sanskrit to Kannada.

The order (April 30, 1982) issued by the Government of Karnataka on the basis of this report prescribed the following pattern for language study:

- At the secondary school level First Language Kannada or Mother tongue: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, or Hindi to carry 150 Marks.
- Two other languages Kannada, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, or Marathi, to carry 100 Marks each.

**NOTE:**

1. Students offering a language other than Kannada as First language will study Kannada as a compulsory language and any one of the remaining languages (from Group-B) both of which will be examination subjects for the S.S.L.C.
2. Students offering Kannada as First Language will take any two of the above languages (from B Group) except Kannada.
3. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII, IX or X Standard and who have not studied any of the languages listed as First language may be allowed to take Additional English or Hindi as First language.
4. The Teaching of Kannada from III Standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1982-83 itself and the language pattern for the High Schools prescribed in Para (1) above will come into effect from the academic year 1987-88.



*It may please be noted that the above order issued by the government really addressed to the basic issue of Sanskrit which the Gokak Committee did not address and deleted it from the list of first languages though Gokak Committee did not make any statement on Sanskrit. It was included in the list of other two languages. The Kannada-speaking majority did not find this solution adequate to meet their demand for according a pre-eminent place to Kannada.*

### **Kannada a 'Sole' First Language in the Secondary Schools (1982)**

The Government after reconsidering its order issued the notification (July 20, 1982) detailing the language choice for school system and modus operandi for its implementation through the circular (August 11, 1982). According to this order:

1. At the secondary school level, the language pattern to be adopted shall be as follows (from the academic year 1987-88) A. First language: Kannada shall be the sole first language (to carry 125 marks) B. Two other languages from the following: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Malayalam or Kannada. (To carry 100 marks each). Note: 15 grace marks shall be given for a period of ten year(s) in the first language examination, to students, whose mother tongue is not Kannada, and (b) in Hindi examination to students who study Hindi and whose mother tongue is not Hindi .
2. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII or IX Standard in the State of Karnataka and who did not study Kannada earlier may be permitted to take English or Hindi as first language.
3. The teaching of Kannada from the 1<sup>st</sup> standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1983 itself and the language pattern for High School prescribed in Para (1) above will come into force from the academic year 1987-88.

*The students who are joining to 8<sup>th</sup> standard from the year 1982-83 cannot take Sanskrit as first language or as a composite language. Pursuing this order, the Director of Public Instruction issued a Circular (August 11, 1982) indicating the strategy to be followed in the implementation of the order. Accordingly:*

"All the non-teaching Kannada schools in the State should begin to teach Kannada language from the 1<sup>st</sup> standard in the year 1982-83 as per instructions contained in para 3 of the Government order. For that purpose the following periods of subjects and textbooks and lessons for study are prescribed as under:

1. Periods: Five periods a week i.e., two periods from work experience, two periods for physical training, and one of singing education.
2. Textbooks: Kannada Bharathi.
3. Lessons for study: 1 to 16, 18 and 36 lessons.
4. Marks: This being a subject for examination, 100 marks are fixed.
5. Marks giving: Marks giving, and examination rules as prescribed for the 1st standard are made applicable to this."

An analysis of this language formula reveals an inadequate understanding of the concepts like 'mother tongue', 'first language' and strategy adopted for choosing languages for education. Also, this formula stands out as an exceptional case where a regional (majority) language/Official Language of the State is ascribed a special status of 'sole first language' in the secondary school, and this language is made a compulsory language for all students irrespective of their mother tongue with the same syllabus. This formula does not grade languages as first language, second language, etc., either in terms of pedagogical concepts, or in terms of chronology of their introduction in the school system. In this formula, the Kannada mother tongue student had an advantage over the students of other mother tongues. A mother tongue Kannada speaker has Kannada as first language. The Urdu or other mother tongue student has to take Kannada as the first language. He might select Urdu or another language as one of the other two languages. The third language may be English. Thus Hindi, one of the languages of the three-language formula will not become a part of his education. If he desires to take Hindi, his mother tongue will not become a part of his education.

Up to this point, in the debate or agitation over the choice of languages for school education, only Kannadigas were in the forefront. The linguistic or religious minorities or others did not participate in the debate actively. However, the Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee (*General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka and others*), challenged the July 20, 1982 order and the circular of Aug 11, 1982 by the Director of Public Instruction in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition moved from the Single judge Bench to the Division Bench and then to the Full Bench. The following three questions came up before the Full Bench.

1. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982 or any part of it is void being violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the petitioners under Articles 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution
2. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982 or any part of it is violative of the pledge of equality guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution.
3. Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the Circular dated August 11, 1982 issued by the Director of Public Instruction of the State Government is violative of Article 14, 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution?

This became a classic case in multilingual India and formed a basis for wide debate on the role of the Regional language/Official Language in the school curriculum and also on the question of student's mother tongue as medium of instruction. And who will decide the medium of instruction, state or parents? This has no analogy to the cases decided by the Courts till day in the country. After hearing all the concerned parties, the two Judges in the three Judge Bench ruled in one direction and another Judge ruled in another direction. However, the majority opinion, by law and practice, was to be accepted as the Judgment to guide the language policy of the State. So it is fascinating to find how different Judges of the same Bench looked at the language issues and the legal provisions that sought to address the issue.

The litigants (Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee and others) argued that - there is no rational basis for making Kannada as the sole first language; it is unreasonable for the State to compel the students to study the official or regional language if they do not have aptitude and if they intend to reside in the state only temporarily; providing opportunity to study their language is as much in the national interest as is the study of the regional language; to achieve primacy for Kannada, minorities need not be compelled to study it from the first standard in the schools; the parents and students should choose whatever they want to study and the State cannot 'indulge in regimentation' in the matter relating to the study of languages; children must have the benefit of having education in their mother tongue; children whose mother tongue is not Kannada get a discriminatory treatment and they cannot study Kannada and compete with Kannada mother tongue students; the right to equality under Article 14 is affected; the linguistic minorities have the right under Article 29 to take steps to conserve their language and also a right under Article 30 to establish institutions of their choice, which right includes a right to take a decision as to what language should be studied as first language; it is for them to decide in what manner their language should be conserved, preserved, produced and it is not for the Government to decide and the Government under the guise of public interest cannot impose conditions.

The State while arguing in favor of its policy said that - it has power and right to take steps for the development of Kannada, including making the study of Kannada compulsory to all the children from the primary school stage and as the sole first language in the secondary school since Kannada is the declared Official Language of the State and hence it is rational to make it compulsory; this is necessary to give primacy to Kannada in the affairs of the State; also 'the State has power to make regulations in the interest of excellence in education and any regulations so made by the Government cannot be regarded as infringing on the rights of the minority groups; the usefulness of a language is measured in terms of its use in administration, trade, industry, defense, managerial decision-making and such other wide variety of a range of domains and in social and family affairs. Such domains can be covered by more than one language used complimentary to each other. Language development is central to educational advancement on a mass scale; is central to economic, cultural, and political developments; is corollary to national development. India is a country with a population of sizable numbers, speaking and using different languages and therefore the problem becomes difficult and complex' and 'A child belonging to a minority section of the community in any State speaking a language other than the regional or the local language will thus develop its personality with two languages; one spoken at home, the other spoken beyond the threshold of his home, for in the absence of knowledge of the local language an individual would be at a severe disadvantage in participating in the daily life of the State. When a child or person learns two languages, one as his mother tongue and the other as the language spoken by the people around, both become his language. Therefore, it cannot be said that a child speaking a language other than the regional language at home is totally alien to the regional language'.

The Judges examined the submissions made before them. The majority opinion of the Bench on the teaching of Kannada compulsorily in the primary stage, and as the sole first language in the secondary schools and its insistence led to the violation or otherwise of various Constitutional provisions. Their opinions can be summarized as follows:

1. The Government order compelling all children to learn Kannada in the primary schools in the State including those established by minorities is arbitrary and violative of Article 14, because, this Article 'incorporate an injunction both to the Legislature and Executive not to deny equality before law and equal protection of the laws'. The children with Kannada mother tongue and others are dissimilarly placed because the children with Kannada mother tongue will not study any additional language, whereas the children with other mother tongues are forced to study the regional or the Official Language causing additional burden. This burden may cause dropouts. Curtailing the periods allotted to other subjects to accommodate Kannada is irrational and arbitrary.
2. The order prescribing Kannada as the sole first language at the secondary school level is also discriminatory because it prevents the students from having a language of his choice as first language. This will place him in a disadvantageous position from the student who comes with Kannada as first language from the first standard. The grace marks to be awarded to bridge the gap itself accepts this discrimination. Since grace marks are awarded only to the students who fail to secure minimum marks for pass and not to others, the order places everyone in unequal position. Since Kannada mother tongue students can study Kannada both as first language and as other language gives them an advantage over others who have to study three different languages in high school. This is against the three-language formula. Also from the point of view of Kannada, even the Kannada mother tongue children are denied an opportunity to take any other language as first language and enhance their knowledge (*Hidden meaning is Sanskrit*). The students coming from other States for VIII to X standards cannot opt for their mother tongue and have to opt for Hindi or English. This is a clear case of discrimination and is against all other regional languages. It is the opinion of various committees and commissions that children should not be burdened with an additional language in the primary school itself.
3. The issue of medium of instruction and first language are intimately connected. In most of the cases, the language chosen by the student as first language happens to be his medium of instruction also. So 'it would be incongruous to say that a linguistic minority's choice for medium of instruction is absolute but the choice of first language is not'.
4. From the point of view of the Karnataka Civil Services Rules, it is enough if an employee has obtained knowledge of Kannada from 'Having Kannada as medium of instruction or by studying Kannada as main or first language, or by studying Kannada as an optional subject, or as second language, or by passing an equivalent examination'. So, it is possible for a person even without studying Kannada as the first language but by studying as one of the languages can carry on the function of the Government in its

Official Language. Hence it is not necessary to study Kannada as first language alone to gain the knowledge of the Official Language. So, 'the study of the same can be insisted as one of the languages for study in the high schools, but not necessarily as the first language'. Hence, prescribing the study of the Official Language of the State as one of the three languages in the high schools under the three-language formula will not violate Article 14.

5. The language and script can be conserved through educational institutions. The rights guaranteed under Article 29 and 30 are not subject to restrictions. The State cannot either directly or indirectly take away or abridge, infringe or impart the right guaranteed by these articles. This language rule is not in the interests of the minority. Here the choice is of the minority groups themselves. The Government has only the right to prescribe the general standards to secure excellence in education in each of the subjects.
6. People in this country have one citizenship and under Article 16 have right to employment in service anywhere in the country. Since no other State has such a language policy this policy will be inconsistent with personal liberty and equality guaranteed under the Constitution.
7. In Karnataka minorities are not opposed to the use of Kannada fully in administration. Even then Kannada has failed to replace English. It is fancy for English that has retarded the progress of Kannada and its replacement in different walks of life.
8. The judges felt that this 'does not mean that Kannada, the Official Language, cannot be made compulsory subject for study for the students in this State'. They made it clear 'that the State which has, subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the power to prescribe the syllabus to regulate education, can prescribe Kannada as one of the compulsory subjects. It is also the duty of every citizen who is a permanent resident of this State to study Kannada. But the regulations made in this behalf must be of general pattern and should apply uniformly to all'.
9. They agreed that 'there are no two opinions on the primacy for Kannada in the affairs of the State and its occupation of pride of place in the affairs of the State' and 'that position must be accorded to regional/Official Language of each and every State of our country'. However, in the process of arguments, the possibility that the minority language speaking students who have already accepted Kannada as mother tongue may try to misuse the provision of grace marks by reverting back to their minority mother tongue, and that the allocation of grace marks is likely to condone under-achievement in Kannada, and thus frustrate the very purpose were ignored. Thus, in language-related litigation academic issues take a back seat and the legal issues come to forefront.

Justice Sri Balakrishna gave the note of dissent. According to him:

1. Kannada to be an intra-state vehicle of thought; undisputed spoken language of the masses; knowledge of the language of the state as imperative to one and all.

2. The element of compulsion for acquiring the Official Language of the State cannot be called reprehensible; here compulsion leads to enlightenment and enrichment; primacy to the official language is mark of distinction and not discrimination.
3. Language is a part of the syllabus, and State is entitled to formulate its domestic policy; access to mother tongue is not denied when offered as a second language.
4. No detriment is caused to the minorities in the matter of conservation of language, script and culture.
5. 'Extra efforts for extra knowledge cannot be regarded as undue burden compared with the benefits that flow to them; compulsion to teach Kannada does not affect the right to establish and administer educational institutions of the choice of the minorities.
6. And since possible disadvantages are overcome by the reasonable and adequate provisions in the notification; the government order in question has not violated any Constitutional provisions.

Based on the majority opinion, the court directed that the Government of Karnataka will be at liberty:

1. to introduce Kannada as one of the two languages from that primary school class from which the study of another language in addition to mother-tongue is made obligatory as part of the general pattern of primary education.
2. to make the study of Kannada compulsory as one of the three languages for study in secondary schools, by making appropriate order or Rules, and make it applicable to all those whose mother tongue is Kannada and also to linguistic minorities who are and who become permanent residents of this State, in all primary and secondary schools respectively, whether they are Government or Government recognized, including those established by any of the linguistic minorities.

Regarding medium of instruction, the High Court (General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka) had said that the state government:

1. to provide and ensure that primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education is imparted in mother tongue of the children concerned, in Government schools as also schools established by any private agency including linguistic minorities which are recognised, whether receiving financial aid or not, subject to the existence of prescribed minimum number of children having a common mother tongue who have got themselves admitted to the school concerned; and
2. to leave the choice of selecting the first language for study in the High Schools to the students.

On the basis of the direction of the High Court, the Government of Karnataka elucidated the language policy for school education in its order (June 19, 1989) pending the decision of the Supreme Court. This now combines the issue of language as a subject and language as

medium of instruction in the schools. This is the first time that the government used the word '*language policy for education*' in its official document. Karnataka seems to be the first state in India to use the wordings *language policy for education* in the official documents.

Accordingly:

1. From 1<sup>st</sup> standard to 4<sup>th</sup> standard, mother tongue will be the medium of instruction, where it is expected that normally only one language from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English will be the compulsory subject of study. From 3<sup>rd</sup> standard Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students. This will be taught on a purely voluntary basis and it will not be at the cost of any other instruction imparted in the school or any other school activity in which all school children participate. There will be no examination at the end of the year in Kannada language.
2. From the 5<sup>th</sup> standard onwards, where, in the normal course a second language is introduced, the child has to study a second language selected from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the First language, subject to the condition that the child who has not taken Kannada as the First language will have to take Kannada as the Second language.
3. From 5<sup>th</sup> standard, provision will be made for the study of the third language which will be other than the languages studied by the student as First and Second language. This has to be chosen from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.
4. Attendance in the third language class will be compulsory, writing of the examination in the third language will also be compulsory, but from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standards it will not be obligatory to pass the third language examination. No extra credit will be given in rank, division, class, etc., on account of the marks obtained in the third language examination from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standard.
5. At the secondary stage, i.e., from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards, three languages will be compulsory. First language carrying - 125 marks, Second language - 100 marks and the Third language carrying - 100 marks. It will be obligatory to pass the examinations conducted in all these three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.
6. The standard expected in second and third languages at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> standard will be what would have been achieved at the end of 6 years of study, if the language subject had been chosen as First language.
7. As contemplated in Government Order No. ED 113 SOH 79, July 20, 1982, Kannada-speaking students will not be given any grace marks in Kannada. Non-Kannada speaking students will be awarded up to a maximum of 15 grace marks to enable the students to pass the Kannada language examination.
8. Exemption from studying Kannada as a compulsory language can be given to the students whose parents have come to the state on temporary transfer.

The main differences between 1959 and 1989 formulae are:

1. In 1959, from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards only one language was taught that is mother tongue. In 1989 mother tongue was declared as medium of instruction. List of mother tongues got restricted to 8 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. In 1959, from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standards one more language was to be chosen from the list of 10 languages: Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. In 1989 from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> standards second language was to be chosen from the list of 11 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the first language. It may be noted that Gujarati and Sindhi are deleted, and Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit are added. This indicates the sociolinguistic changes that have taken place in the span of 30 years in Karnataka. The students who have not opted for Kannada as first language have to opt for it as a second language compulsorily. Thus, Kannada becomes a compulsory subject from the 5<sup>th</sup> standard for all the students fulfilling the desire that the official language of the state has to be a part of the school education.
3. In 1959, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards, three languages are:

First language: one of the following 8 - Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course

Second language: Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi as the Second language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language

Third language: Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. This was optional for studying.

In 1989, from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards three languages:

Three languages will be compulsory taught. It is compulsory to pass the examinations conducted in all the three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.

First language: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit.

Second language: Hindi, English or Kannada

Third language: Hindi, English, Kannada, Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic

The Sanskrit re-enters into the list of first languages.



Meanwhile, the government, in order to implement the Education Policy 1986, issued curriculum guidelines (April 24 ,1992) to be adopted from 1992-93. According to them, the students could opt for mother tongue Kannada, English, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi or Urdu in the 5th, 6th and 7th standards. The second language will be English for Kannada mother tongue students and Kannada for all others. The third language can be one of the following: Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic or English. Here each language carries 100 marks. Learning Kannada is made compulsory. *The students opting for Sanskrit should answer in Sanskrit only.* In the secondary school, the first language consists of Kannada, Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Marathi, English or Hindi. The second language list has Hindi, English or Kannada. The third language list has Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Persian, Kannada, or Arabic. One of the three languages should be Kannada. Here the first language is for 125 marks, and other two 100 marks each.

The validity of the judgment of the High Court was questioned in the Supreme Court on the ground that the linguistic minorities are discriminated and they cannot be forced to study Kannada (violation of Article 14); linguistic minorities cannot be prevented from an opportunity to choose languages (violation of Article 350-A).The order of June 19, 1989 was litigated (*English Medium Students Parents Association vs State of Karnataka and Others*) in the Supreme Court of India. The court not only discussed the legal issues but also cognitive issues of the students and emotional issues of the people seeking a place for their mother tongue in the schooling. On Dec 8, 1993 it said that:

1. the element of compulsion at the primary stage is no longer there because the GO is unequivocal when it says from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards mother tongue will be the medium of instruction...
2. from 3<sup>rd</sup> standard onwards Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students ... the GO is in consonance with Article 350 A.
3. it cannot be contended that a student studying in a school from Karnataka need not know the regional language. It should be the endeavor of every State to promote the regional language of the state.
4. The state knows how best to implement the language policy. It is not for the court to interfere.

The choice of medium of instruction in Karnataka was also based on the statements in the Constitution and the Grant-in-Aid Code of the State government since Oct 19, 1969. According to this arrangement, 'In all primary schools, the medium of instruction shall ordinarily be the Regional Language or mother tongue of the child'. The English medium schools or English medium sections in the primary schools were permitted by the Director of Public Instruction to cater to the needs of migratory groups and 'Students whose mother tongue is a minority language for which there is no provision in the schools of the locality. 'The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional language, gave rise to fast growth of education in English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic

minorities who could opt for English due to their perceived threat from the regional language. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing an universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through English medium.

So, the primary and secondary education in English medium, like engineering and medical education, had become donation/capitation-oriented, and ultimately a tradable commodity. The legal provisions that were framed to protect minority rights became an effective means for every section of Karnataka society to make capital out of the very same legal provisions. There were institutions of the linguistic minorities imparting higher education and primary education in English medium but not through their mother tongue. The government took a policy decision not to sanction English medium schools, except in rare cases, where a considerable number of non-Kannadiga residents and minority institutions were involved. This led to litigation by those who failed to get permission or recognition for their English medium schools.

This policy was challenged by the Sahyadri Education Trust (*Sahyadri Education Trust vs State of Karnataka*) on the ground that the medium of instruction is one aspect of freedom of speech and expression. The student cannot be compelled to express in one particular regional language and not in English. The parents have every right to give education to their children in English and if there is a language policy it should be applicable to all the primary schools uniformly and according permission to some and not doing the same for others is a clear case of discrimination. The High Court saw a valid argument only on the ground 'that many other institutions have been given permission to impart primary education in English medium, but the petitioners have been singled out by denying them the right to impart education in English medium.' It directed the government to accord 'permission to the petitioners to start English medium primary schools'. However, this Judgment was viewed by many as support to the cause of English medium schools.

The rules of the government apply to the government and the institutions aided by it. But they do not apply to other private institutions. The law of demand and supply operated in Karnataka. Gradually, demand for English medium schools in the government and aided sector was there but the government had its own reason not to meet this demand from its resources. Hence, the private and un-aided schools mushroomed in the state to meet this demand and at the same time, the aided schools were in no mood to cater to the demand by levying reasonable fee. Thus, schools imparting education through English medium created by this demand and supply chain wanted that they too should be recognized. There are two socioeconomic forces in medium of instruction jugglery. Staunch Kannada medium interests and staunch English medium interests taking refuge under linguistic minority umbrella or under legal umbrella.

In order to guide the government in taking a policy decision regarding medium of instruction the government constituted a committee with Prof. H. Narasimhaiah as

Chairperson. The objective of the committee was to “... suggest remedy for the problems arising from the unrecognized English Primary Schools and also examine the question of Medium of primary schools...”. This is one of the best reports on medium of instruction for any multilingual context to decide about the medium of education for school education. The recommendations of this committee are linguistically professional, cognitively sound, socially and economically development oriented. But, politically may not be digestive, since a large number of politicians in the state run the private educational institutions either directly or indirectly, mainly teaching in English medium. On June 3, 1991 the committee recommended that:

- a. Permission should not be given indiscriminately to the existing unauthorised schools. After holding inspection of the schools if minimum facilities are available and if the rules and regulations of grant-in-aid Code are fulfilled, permission can be given to such unrecognised schools. No permission be given to other schools. Admission to the 1<sup>st</sup> standard should be given to study only in Mother-tongue in such recognised schools from June 1991. In case this condition is not fulfilled, the recognition of such schools should be withdrawn.
- b. In schools recognized as indicated above, opportunity should be given to complete the study in 4<sup>th</sup> standard in the medium in which the student are studying at present in 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> standards.
- c. In case required number of students is not available to study in mother tongue medium or if facilities could not be provided to study in mother tongue medium, such schools should opt for the regional language as their medium.
- d. In the primary stage, no permission should be given to CBSE, ICSE schools in the state. Such existing schools should satisfy only the needs of the students who have the right to study in English Medium as per the Constitution, court decisions and as per provisions of Grant-in-Aid Code.
- e. In the existing recognised English Medium schools also, it is proper that medium of study should be the mother tongue of the student from the academic year 1991-92. In case required number of students is not available to study in the medium of mother tongue or for any other reason it is not possible to provide facilities to study in mother tongue, it is necessary to opt for the regional language as their medium of study. The Government shall take steps to provide facilities such required for this.
- f. In order to improve the position of Kannada Medium Schools and to raise their standards, the Government should take necessary steps on priority basis.
- g. Conditions should be inserted in the Rules of appointment, that those who seek appointment in Government and Aided Institutions should have studied Kannada language as their first language in SSLC.

### **English Medium Only for English Mother Tongue Students (1994)**

In pursuance of the Supreme Court Judgment of Dec 8, 1983, in the background of the recommendations of the H. Narasimhaiah Committee the Government issued the order of April

29, 1994 wherein it made a comprehensive policy relating to *language as a subject in the school education and medium of instruction* in Karnataka. Accordingly:

1. From 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards, the child's mother tongue will be the medium of instruction. It will be one of among-Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. From 3<sup>rd</sup> standard Kannada should be optional subject to non-Kannadigas. There is no examination in it at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> standard.
3. From the 5<sup>th</sup> standard, the student has to choose second and third languages. They can be one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. The student who is not studying Kannada as first language has to study it as second language. Attendance for classes and appearing for examination for third language is compulsory and it is not an examination subject.
4. From the 8<sup>th</sup> standard to 10<sup>th</sup> standard in the secondary schools three languages will be taught compulsorily. The first language for 125 marks will be any one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English. The second and third languages for 100 marks each can be any two of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. One of these should be Kannada. The students whose mother tongue is not Kannada and the students whose mother tongue is not Hindi will get grace marks up to 15. This will be in vogue for 10 years.
5. This order also had certain other clauses relating to medium of instruction. They are:(i) in all the government recognised schools from 1<sup>st</sup> standard to 4<sup>th</sup> standard medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada from 1994-1995.(ii) students admitted from 1994-95 should be taught in mother tongue or Kannada.(iii) change over to English or any other language medium is permitted from 5<sup>th</sup> standard. (iv) only the students whose mother tongue is English will be permitted to study in the existing recognised English medium schools from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards. (v) the unrecognised schools will be considered for regularisation if they fulfil the necessary conditions...the unrecognised schools which do not comply will be closed down etc.,

This was challenged in the High Court of Karnataka by the linguistic/religious minorities, parents associations, children/parents through their educational institutions run by majority etc.(*Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka vs The State of Karnataka and Others*)This was referred to and adjudicated by the Full bench of the High Court. The questions that the bench answered after examination are:

- a. Is right to choose a medium of instruction a fundamental right?
- b. Whether parents and children have the right to choose the medium of instruction?
- c. Whether every citizen, a religious denomination and a linguistic or religious minority has a right to establish an educational institution of his/its choice?

The Full Bench ruled that:

- a. Right to education is a fundamental right. It flows from Article 21, right to life. Free and compulsory primary education is guaranteed to all the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years under Article 21 A as a fundamental right.
- b. Right to education includes right to choose a medium of instruction. This is the fundamental right of the parent and the child.
- c. Right to freedom of speech and expression includes the right to choose a medium of instruction. Right under Article 19(1)(g) to establish and administer an educational institution of one's choice, one's choice includes choice of medium of instruction.
- d. Also under the Articles every citizen, every linguistic and religious minority have right to establish and administer educational institution under 19(1)(a)(g), 21, 26, 29(1) and 30(1) and it also includes right to choose the medium of instruction which is the fundamental right of the management concerned.
- e. The policy that mother tongue or regional language shall be the medium of instruction in primary schools is valid and legal for the schools run or aided by the State.
- f. This policy is not valid in case of other recognized primary schools since it will be violative of Articles 19(1)(g), 26 and 30(1).

The government in 1992 had decided to give permission to (i) un-authorised English medium schools if they fulfil the conditions of the code of primary education (ii) English medium schools if they are not eligible for imparting education in English medium can impart education in Kannada or other language medium if they fulfil the rules of the grant in aid code. The students of these schools were at liberty to switch over to any other language medium from 5<sup>th</sup> standard. The Daffodils English School (*Daffodils English School vs State of Karnataka and others*) had questioned the validity of some of the clauses of this order of 2002 in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition was sent to the single Bench for decision in the context of the judgment of the Full Bench. The single judge bench of the High Court struck down the following clauses of the government order: (i) The medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada in all the state government recognised schools from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standards with effect from the academic year 1994-95 and from the year 2002-03 from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> standards the medium of instruction will be only mother tongue or Kannada. (ii) Permission can be granted to only students whose mother tongue is English, to study in English medium in classes 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> in existing recognized English medium schools. (iii) All unauthorised schools which do not comply with the above conditions have to be closed down.

The Government of Karnataka did not accept the judgment and filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court requesting for stay of the High Court order of 2008. The Council appearing for the state argued that "...the children will imbibe better if the medium of instruction was in their mother tongue. We have to take care of the interest of the children. Learning through mother tongue is the universal law for all." The Chief Justice Balakrishnan who was hearing in the three-judge bench remarked that "It is easy to say things. They are unable to get even a clerical post. How do we survive in this world? Parents are ready to pay

Rs.20,000 to 50,000 for admission in English medium schools. This is the real state of affairs. They do not want to send their children to mother tongue medium schools. The choice should be left to the parents.” The Supreme Court refused to grant the stay. [The Hindu, July 5, 2009]

### **English from the 1<sup>st</sup> Standard (2007)**

Introduction of English in the schools of Karnataka from the first standard as a subject is one of the important steps. On Oct 29, 2006 it was decided to teach English as one of the languages (as a subject) from the first standard itself in all the Kannada medium schools and the schools of the linguistic minorities. In the year 2007, English was introduced as a subject of study in all the government and aided schools from the 1<sup>st</sup> standard without any training to the teachers and necessary pedagogic preparations that are needed for such an initiative. It has to be noted that hardly anybody opposed this move of the government, including the persons who were opposed to the introduction of Kannada on the ground that it creates a burden on children.

### **Right to Education and Languages (2009)**

I consider that the Right to Education (Aug 27, 2009), in the 21st Century is in search of a new paradigm for language education. In the document the “Right to Education” the language issue comes up directly at 3 points. They are extracted below for the help of readers.

- (i) “...child belonging to disadvantaged group” means a child belonging to the scheduled caste, the scheduled tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification; (ii) medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue;(iii) For sixth class to eighth class at least one teacher per class so that there shall be at least one teacher each for – (i) Science and Mathematics; (ii) Social Studies; (iii) Languages.”

The debate educational or legal hardly considers these language issues in the Right to Education Act. But, many other points of this are debated and attempts to implement are made. The important, dangerous and intelligent word (here in italics) provides an escape path to open English medium schools/classes: ‘medium of instructions shall, *as far as practicable*, be in child’s mother tongue’.

### **Student/Parent/Guardian has Right to Choose Medium of Instruction (2014)**

The Supreme Court which took up the petitions on the 2008 judgement of the High Court of Karnataka (*State of Karnataka and Anrvs The Associated Management of (Government Recognised Unaided English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others*) and on July 5, 2013 decided to refer the same to the Constitutional Bench with the following questions to be addressed by it:

1. What does Mother tongue mean? If it referred to as the language in which the child is comfortable with, then who will decide the same?
2. Whether a student or a parent or a citizen has a right to choose a medium of instruction at primary stage?
3. Does the imposition of mother tongue in any way affects the fundamental rights under Article 14, 19, 29 and 30 of the constitution?
4. Whether the Government recognized schools are inclusive of both government-aided schools and private and unaided schools?
5. Whether the state can by virtue of Article 350-A of the Constitution compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as medium of instruction in primary schools? Apart from the above said issues, the Constitution Bench would also take into consideration any other ancillary or incidental questions which may arise during the course of hearing of the case.

The Constitution bench after due deliberations and listening to both sides on May 6, 2014 decided that:

1. Mother tongue...means the language of the linguistic minority in a State and it is the parent or the guardian of the child who will decide what the mother tongue of child is.
2. ... a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to the medium of instruction in which he will like to be educated at the primary stage in school.
3. ...imposition of mother tongue affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19,29 and 30 of the Constitution.
4. ...government recognized schools will not only include government aided schools but also unaided schools with have been granted recognition.
5. ...State has no power under Article 350 A of the Constitution to compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

I personally feel that the arguments from the government side as reported in the copy of the judgment fail to convince even people who are not that conversant with law. But the arguments from other side, succeeded in drawing the attention to their side. Two valuable reports one on *shikshaNa tagnara salahaasamitiya varadi* (Prof. Chandrashekhara Patil -1999) submitted to Sri. H. Govinde Gowda the then Minister for Primary and Secondary of the Government of Karnataka and *shikshaNa mattu boodhanaa maadhyama niitiruuupaNaa varadi* (Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa -2001) though are of high value as academic inputs to the government, people and judiciary - do not find worth implementing or emulating. It is the tragedy of language education policy in Karnataka.

This judgment is rebirth and revitalization of minute of Thomas Babington Macaulay in India in 1835 though there is a sea of change in the country. The 21<sup>st</sup> century may go into another kind of self-inflicted linguistic colonization.

In this context I like to recapitulate contribution of Lord Macaulay. He (Dec 28, 1859 to June 10, 1859) came to India (Madras) on June 10, 1834 as a member of the Supreme Council of India. Within seven days after he came to Madras, he went to Nilagiris via Bangalore and Mysore. The following is an extract from his famous minute of February 2, 1835:

“We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the west... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.”

On March 7, 1835, William Bentinck the Governor General agreed with Macaulay’s Minute and said that “all the funds...be henceforth employed in imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language.” Macaulay returned to England in 1838, after making a long-lasting impact on the language policy of the India. But we are yet to come out of this mania.

In the last few decades, India achieved rapid industrialization in several sectors and states. This has resulted in the relocation of people in the social hierarchy and mobility in some manner. This has also led to planned and unplanned growth of major Indian languages with the help of Constitutional, institutional, and individual support. Some languages achieved better status because of the support they received from the Union and the State governments. However, the last decades of the century are the decades of globalization and Information Technology. These two developments have jointly begun to make a great impact on the education scenario of the new millennium. Globalization and information technology have created a greater demand for English education, and education through English. The state governments are vying with each other, taking steps to cope up with the demands for English education and education through English. This is a new development. Hitherto the governments always were forced to take steps to curtail English education and education through English. Now some states have decided to introduce English from the first standard, and some others from the third standard as a subject of study. In India, English was never replaced, in spite of all the efforts, by any other Indian language, as a medium instruction of Science and Technology. Karnataka, at this juncture, is facing two challenges, one from the point of view of the preservation and development of Kannada language and culture as the Official Language of the State, and another from the point of view of coping up with the challenges thrown in by the market forces.



The language formulas that we come across for schooling are political ideas based on social, cultural, pedagogic, cognitive and economic considerations. All these are ignored when it comes to legal interpretations. The law has looked at language issue only on theory of equality, since all are supposed to be equal before law. By now after reading the earlier sections of this paper one is aware of the stand taken by aided, unaided etc., schools during the legal debate. Now, because of the judgment of the Supreme Court, and insistence of the High Court to the Government of Karnataka to implement the decision of the Supreme Court, the day may come when the numerical strength of such schools will go beyond fifty to eighty per cent. Already we are reading in the newspapers about closure of the Kannada medium classes/schools.

### Numbers Voice the Truth

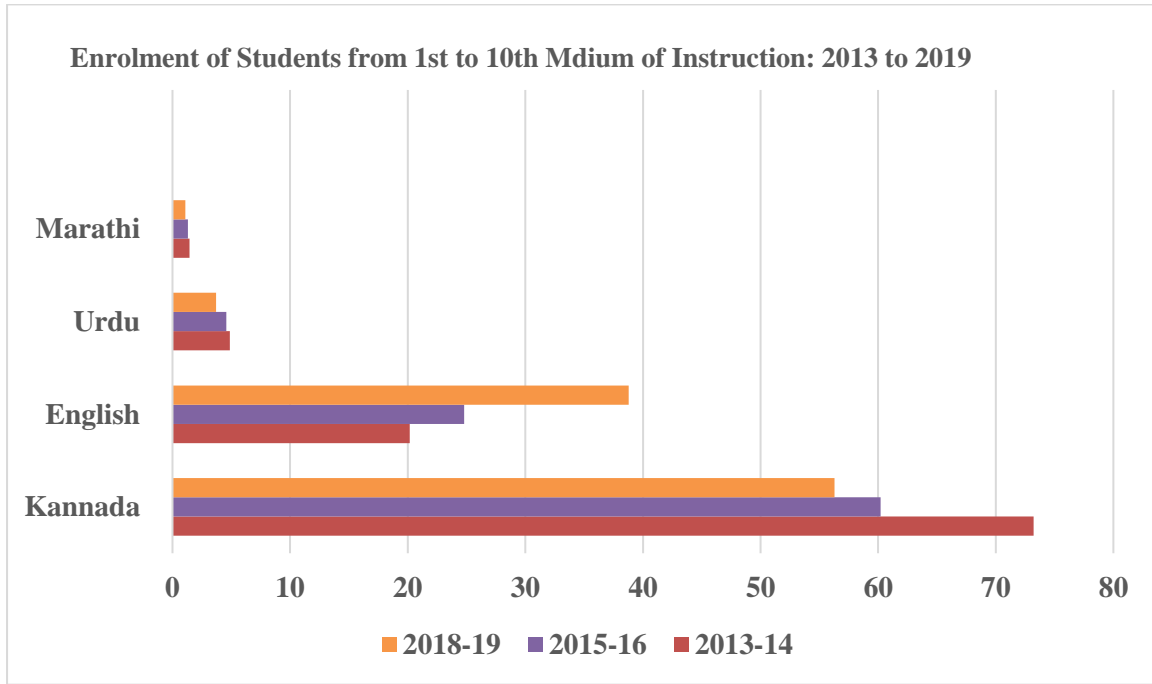
With this pedagogic and legal scenario of language education in Karnataka, it is essential to look into the fast-changing language education picture through statistics that are available in public domain. Source of Educational Statistics: U-DISE Reports, Government of Karnataka.

**Table-1**  
**Comparative Table Showing the Number of Students Enrolled For Different Medium of Instruction In 2010-11, 2015-16 And 2018-19**

Medium	Class	2012-13	2015-16	Difference 2012-13 & 2015-16	2018-19	Difference 2012-13 & 2018-19
<b>Kannada</b>	<b>L P</b>	41,01,132	39,36,732	-1,64,400	31,41,884	-9,59,248
	<b>U P</b>	14,42,032	19,05,406	+4,63,374	16,96,302	+2,54,270
	<b>Sec</b>	18,33,245	6,59,404	-11,73,841	10,01,423	<b>-8,31,822</b>
	<b>Total</b>	73,76,409	65,01,542	-8,74,867	58,39,609	-15,36,800
<b>English</b>	<b>LP</b>	8,70,548	11,11,550	+2,41,002	20,73,518	+12,02,970
	<b>U P</b>	4,62,713	8,50,968	+3,88,255	12,29,850	+7,67,137
	<b>Sec</b>	6,69,815	5,43,836	-1,25,979	7,21,332	+51,517
	<b>Total</b>	20,03,076	25,06,354	+5,03,278	40,24,700	<b>+20,21,624</b>
<b>Urdu</b>	<b>L P</b>	3,14,438	2,79,328	-35,110	2,25,867	-88,571
	<b>U P</b>	1,05,625	1,29,206	+23,581	1,07,487	+1,862
	<b>Sec</b>	81,086	53,190	-27,896	52,128	-28,958
	<b>Total</b>	5,01,149	4,61,724	-39,425	3,85,482	<b>-1,15,667</b>
<b>Marathi</b>	<b>LP</b>	73,986	63,013	-10,973	54,749	-19,237
	<b>U P</b>	32,214	41,485	+9,271	35,384	+3,170
	<b>Sec</b>	45,892	28,806	-17,086	24,368	-21,524
	<b>Total</b>	1,52,092	1,33,304	-18,788	1,14,501	<b>-37,591</b>

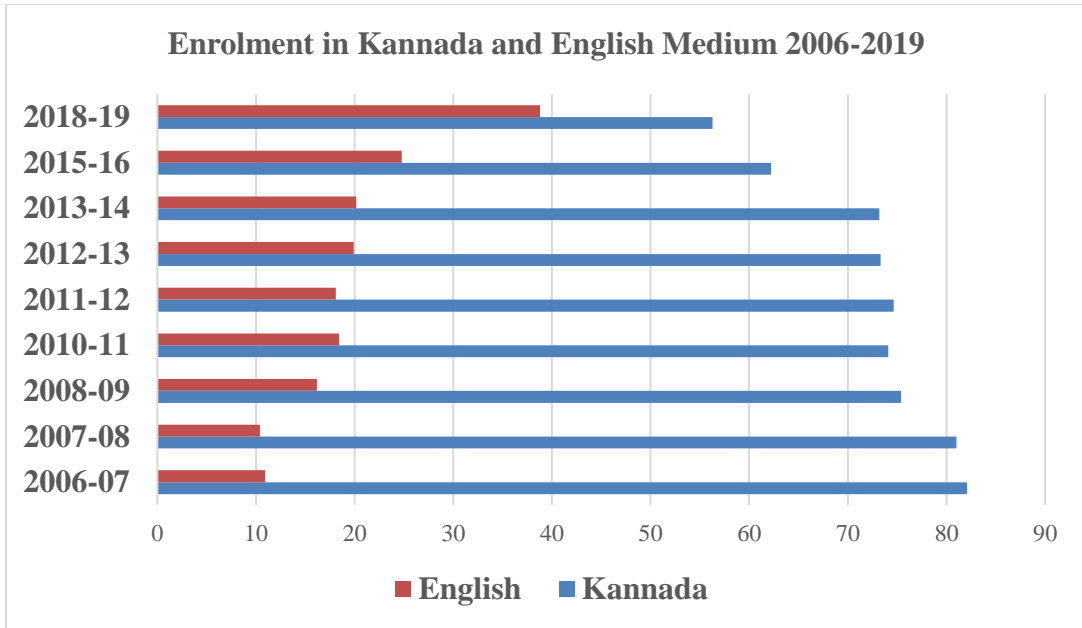
**Table-2**  
**Enrolment of students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> in four Medium of instruction**

	2013-14	2015-16	2018-19
<b>Kannada</b>	73.210	60.210	56.288
<b>English</b>	20.179	24.789	38.794
<b>Urdu</b>	4.877	4.566	3.715
<b>Marathi</b>	1.454	1.318	1.103



**Table-3**  
**Enrolment of Students From 1<sup>st</sup> To 10<sup>th</sup> Standards in Kannada and English Medium**

Year	Kannada	English
<b>2006-07</b>	82.10	10.93
<b>2007-08</b>	81.02	10.40
<b>2008-09</b>	75.39	16.17
<b>2010-11</b>	74.10	18.40
<b>2011-12</b>	74.67	18.08
<b>2012-13</b>	73.31	19.91
<b>2013-14</b>	73.21	20.17
<b>2015-16</b>	62.21	24.78
<b>2018-19</b>	56.288	38.794



The above Table-1, 2 and 3 and their respective charts indicate that in case of Kannada, Urdu and Marathi medium of instruction the enrolment of students is rapidly decreasing from year to year. But it is progressively increasing in case of English medium of instruction. This clearly indicates that Indian languages are no longer sought out as medium of instruction by the students in Karnataka. English is most sought out medium of instruction. English as medium of instruction in the primary education is affecting every Indian language as medium of education.

These Comparative tables shows the numbers of students enrolled for different medium of instruction. It paints an alarming picture. It shows that much before the verdict of the Supreme Court on May 6, 2014, more and more students had started to opt for English medium in large numbers and the enrolment in the Indian language medium was depleting at an alarming level. Only in case of Tamil there is a little demand from students, it can be attributed to the language loyalty of the concerned speech community irrespective of the place where they are staying. Now, armed with the Supreme Court judgment, parents and owners of the educational institutions will accelerate the mushrooming of English medium in Karnataka. In the next one decade from now, the educational statistics will show pathetic picture of Indian languages as medium of education in the state.

Gradually, as we saw above, the number of students opting for Kannada medium is fast decreasing. The social and educational system, as already illustrated through various statistics, has covertly designated English medium for the elite and the regional language medium for others. The changing equations in the society are clear for everyone to see. English education bestows an advantage on those who adopt it. Naturally, the poor people also desire to somehow improve their lot by opting for the English medium education for their children. Their preference for the English medium may not really solve their problems. They continue to be

disadvantaged because, more often than not, their children happen to be first generation school-goers, with no help from the family members to improve their study skills. When the elite social groups do not care for their language and culture, why should others bother about the mother tongue, and education through that language? The fear is that if the present trend continues, the market forces will convert the regional and other Indian languages only as subjects of study and eliminate them as medium of instruction. This is an unfortunate and retrograde step for any society. Since independence, Indian languages have come a long way in their development through organized activities. One of the ways these can retain their status they gained in the first fifty years of Indian independence is through absorbing technology and regaining the confidence of their speakers by obtaining market value for them

The Table-4 illustrates the enrolment of students medium and school management wise during 2018-19 from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards. It shows that the private un-aided schools are housing 87.69 % of English medium students and only 13.72 % of Kannada medium students. Whereas the Government schools are housing 66.93% of Kannada medium students and only 3.44 % of English medium students.

**Table-4**  
**Enrolment of Students: Medium and Management wise During 2018-19**  
**from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards**

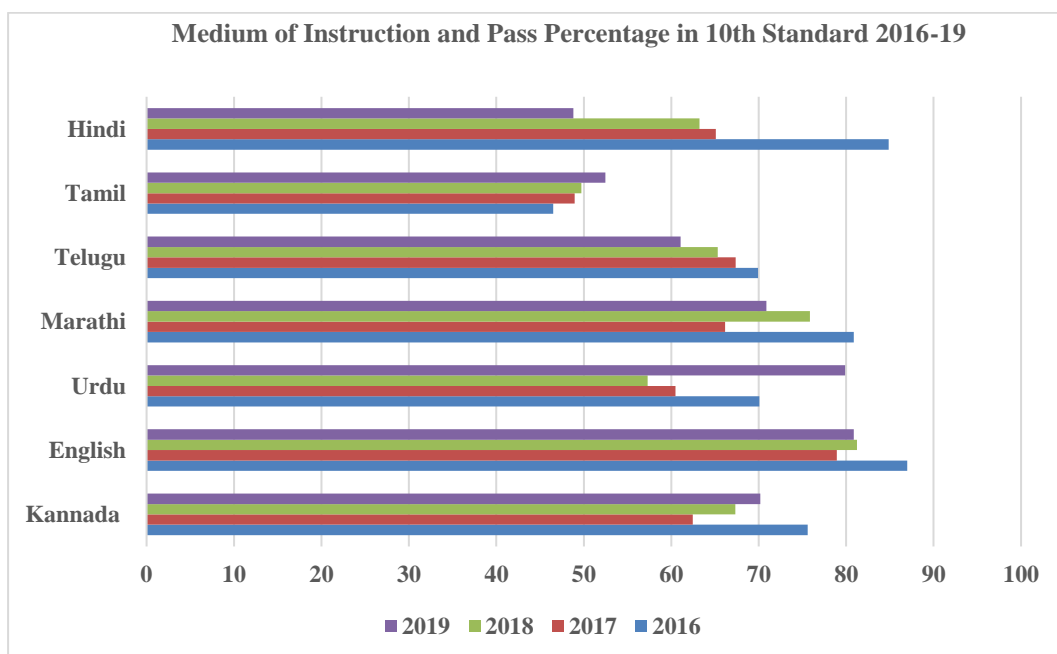
	<b>Kannada</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Urdu</b>	<b>Tamil &amp; Telugu</b>	<b>Marathi</b>
<b>Education Department</b>	39,08,516	1,38,617	2,55,253	4,475	72,131
<b>Social Welfare</b>	19,823	1,58,187	628	0	0
<b>Local Bodies</b>	5,643	3,780	216	0	162
<b>Private Aided</b>	11,02,849	1,26,032	67,929	5,423	32,646
<b>Private Un-Aided</b>	8,01,378	35,29,312	60,956	236	9,209
<b>Others</b>	1,316	7,222	3	0	0
<b>Central government</b>	35	61,329	497	0	353
<b>Un-recognised</b>	49	221	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,39,609</b>	<b>40,24,700</b>	<b>3,85,482</b>	<b>10,134</b>	<b>1,14,501</b>

In this context of demand for English medium of education the Government of Karnataka is opening English medium sections in the government schools. As far as Kannada medium is concerned it is a retrograde step.

The Table-5 and the chart present pass percentage of students in different medium of instruction in 10<sup>th</sup> standard examination in four years. Medium divide in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard pass is very significant. Every year percentage of pass in English medium is higher than the pass percentage of students in all other medium of instruction. The pass percentage is considerably low in other mediums.

**Table-5**  
**Pass Percentage of Students in Different**  
**Medium of Instruction in 10<sup>th</sup> Standard Examination**

Medium	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Kannada</b>	75.61	62.47	67.33	70.19
<b>English</b>	87.00	78.94	81.23	80.88
<b>Urdu</b>	70.06	60.48	57.29	79.87
<b>Marathi</b>	80.86	66.15	75.86	70.87
<b>Telugu</b>	69.91	67.37	65.31	61.06
<b>Tamil</b>	46.51	48.96	49.71	52.46
<b>Hindi</b>	84.85	65.09	63.24	48.81



There are two major things that are always ignored in the discourse on language policy implications. First thing is that the common man who gets affected by the policy is not able to distinguish between learning a language as a subject in the school and learning a subject

through a language, that is medium of instruction. They look alike and understood in the same manner. He perceives both as one and the same and clamours for English medium. Second important thing is language teaching pedagogy whether it is teaching Kannada or English, sans ground realities of the socio-economic factors and actual needs of the students. These languages are taught in the schools not for communication purpose, but for literature and literary sensibilities. They took over the space of communication skills rendering the students poorly educated in both English and Kannada language skills.

Because of the landmark Judgement of the Supreme Court of India on May 6, 2014 where in it was said that "...a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school", we can say that the issue of medium of instruction in the primary schools not only in Karnataka but also in the country has come to stabilise for next few decades until and unless some drastic political, constitutional changes take place in the country

At present Kannada is not endangered since it is having official patronage and is learnt as mother tongue by sizable group of people. Kannada has to survive through learning as a mother tongue by its people. If due to some reason or the other like the one that we are discussing now, if the group switches over to English or some other language, in due course of 3 to 4 generations, the number of speakers may dwindle. In another 8 to 10 hundred years, it may become a museum language. I think bilingualism in a dominant language like English and Hindi is more dangerous for the existence of Kannada.

Let us not be emotional but rational. Supremacy for Kannada is important in Karnataka but not at the cost of other languages spoken in the state. Kannada has a pressure group, but is Kodava or Tulu or Yerava or Lamani or Soliga has a pressure group to fight for the cause of their language in schools? There is a grave need to bring more and more non-school mother tongues into the school as subjects in the primary education. If we agree that our languages/mother tongues are our intangible heritage, it is essential that the policies are directed towards preserving such a heritage rather than making an attempt to document after they are extinct.

In 1956 since India wanted to come out of clutches of English and go to its roots in Indian languages wanted to impart education through the mother tongue of the child. This judgement in 2014 seems to be in tune with the present thinking of the elite and changed global and economic scenario. Impact of this judgement on mother tongue as medium of instruction is disastrous. In Karnataka here is a sample of number of applications received to start classes in 2015-16 in two educational districts as reported in The Hindu on Jan 2, 2015.

**Table-6**  
**Demand for Medium of Instruction**

		Bangalore North	Bangalore South	Total
<b>Pre-Primary</b>	<b>Kannada</b>	189	288	477
	<b>English</b>	168	311	479
<b>Classes 1 to 5</b>	<b>Kannada</b>	59	109	168
	<b>English</b>	442	654	1096
<b>Classes 6 to 8</b>	<b>Kannada</b>	10	0	10
	<b>English</b>	170	295	465
<b>Classes 9 &amp; 10</b>	<b>Kannada</b>	1	0	1
	<b>English</b>	52	74	126

The number of classes in English medium (2166), if permitted to start outnumbers Kannada medium (656) classes. But certainly, this indicates the market demand for English medium. The Hindu on June 24, 2015 reported that “*The High Court on Tuesday cautioned officials of Education Department that it would not hesitate to send them to prison for not adhering to the court’s directions for granting English-medium status to eligible schools in terms of the law declared by it in the Supreme Court.*” (Italics mine). During September 2015 the government of Karnataka is reported to have issued notification ‘...that schools registered in Kannada medium but imparting English medium education should be given retrospective recognition for English medium. Other schools that applied for conversion would get permission for English medium from the current academic year.’ (The Hindu, Sep 15, 2015)

Here is another kind of story of Kannada medium school reported in Prajavani on Aug 20, 2015. Al Kabir Kannada medium High School is an aided government school in Bannimantap area of Mysore. This school has Kannada, English and Urdu medium. There are less than 25 students in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards in the Kannada medium. So, the Education Department has ordered to close the same and asked to transfer the students to other schools.

This trend is going to change the language education scenario in the state and may also change the scenario in the country also. After a decade or so, Kannada will be learnt certainly as a subject since it is supposed to be a compulsory subject in the schools and there may not be any student left in the school interested to study through his mother tongue or Kannada medium. It will have a great impact on society and create rootless people. People may economically prosper but culturally they will be poor and second class citizens of their own country.

This essay will remain incomplete if I do not make observations regarding much repeated Three Language formula which is considered as strategy for the ills of multilingual schooling in India. The *National Policy on Education of 1968* spoke about the regional languages and the Three Language Formula. The 1986 Policy reiterated the earlier stand. The *States Reorganization Commission* had asked the Union Government to elucidate a policy outline for education in mother tongue at the Secondary stage. The *All India Council for Education* recommended the adoption of the Three Language Formula (TLF) in September 1956. The endorsement for this formula came from various directions. It was adopted by the Chief Ministers' conference. The National Policy on Education 1968 recommended the inclusion of the TLF 'which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states' in at the Secondary stage. This was reiterated in the *Education Policy 1986* and was adopted as the Programme of Action by the Parliament in 1992. These are major attempts to arrive at a language policy for education. Since education is in the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the language policy formulation for education and its implementation is left to the State governments under the Constitutional safeguards and broad guidelines cited above. The *National Curriculum Framework for School Education: A Discussion Document released on January 1, 2000*, while reviewing the Three Language Formula, states,

“In a number of states/organizations/ boards, however, the spirit of the formula has not been followed and the mother tongue of the people has been denied the status of the first language ... because of the changed socio-economic scenario, the difference between the second and the third languages has dwindled. Thus, in reality, there may be two-second languages for all purposes and functions. Some states follow only a two-language formula whereas in some others classical languages like Sanskrit and Arabic are being studied in lieu of a modern Indian language. Some boards/institutions permit even European languages like French and German in place of Hindi. In this scenario, the three-language formula exists only in our curriculum documents and other policy statements”.

According to this document the three languages are: (i) the home language/the regional language, (ii) English, and (iii) Hindi in non-Hindi speaking states and any other modern Indian language in Hindi speaking states. I do not find it necessary to say more than this in this regard

The question of language through which education has to be imparted always gets entangled with the issue of language(s) to be taught in the schools. The same thing happened in case of Karnataka too. So, we saw in the case of Karnataka the way the issue started with 'which language to be taught and when' but ended up in getting a judgment about teaching through a language too from the courts of law. The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional languages, gave rise to the fast growth of education in the English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic minorities who could opt for English



due to their perceived threat from the regional language. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing a universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through the English medium.

From the point of history of language policy formulation in multilingual contexts, intervention by individuals, groups of individuals in the form of support/pressure groups with or without common cause/interest, role of institutions like judiciary is an interesting and important issue to note and study. So also social, political, legal, linguistic and economic aspects linked with language play an important role in deciding position of language in education, media, administration and other domains. Here is an academic exercise of who did what during the language debate in the legal domains. The parties involved were: on one side - Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee, English Medium Students Parents Association, Associated Management of (Government Recognised, Unaided, English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools, Daffodils English School etc. They did not argue for the cause of Kannada. All of them argued for protection of their constitutional rights, not for studying through their mother tongue but have the right to choose the medium of instruction. They succeeded. On other side, the State of Karnataka and some other organisations like the Kannada Development Authority argued in terms of pedagogy, cognition, culture etc. and could not persuade the judiciary from their rational thinking.

### **Implications**

After going through the decades of debates on language education in Karnataka, it is essential to see where we stand today. The judgments of the High Court and the Supreme Court on the choice of languages in education and medium of instruction have many implications for language education in multilingual India also. They are,

1. Now, the following is the pattern of language choice for studies in the secondary schools of Karnataka:
  - a. First language- Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, English, Sanskrit. [100 Marks]
  - b. Second Language – English, Kannada. [80 Marks]
  - c. Third Language – Hindi, Kannada, English, Urdu, Konkani, Tulu, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian. [80 Marks]

Attempts to remove Sanskrit have miserably failed. Success is in making Kannada a compulsory subject as one of the three languages. Welcome addition is Tulu, an indigenous language of Karnataka, as third language.

2. The three-language formula, which was so far designated as a strategy, and which had no direct Constitutional status and was totally dependent on the governmental and

institutional support, has now been given a legal sanction and status from the court of the country for its implementation.

3. Teaching a regional language, the Official Language of the concerned state as a compulsory language in the schools, more specifically at the secondary stage, is recognized as legally acceptable. It is even considered as a must.
4. Earlier research had claimed that learning more languages is not a load. The same is reinforced by the judgment that teaching more languages as subjects from primary schools is not a burden imposed on the students.
5. A government need not wait up to 5<sup>th</sup> standard to introduce a second language. It can be introduced from the 3<sup>rd</sup> standard itself. Introduction of English as a subject from the 1<sup>st</sup> standard itself is silently accepted by majority and minority. All the states might have done the same. If not done, may do now.
6. The judgement "... child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school", will result in linguistic re-colonisation of the country and create rootless citizens from the 21<sup>st</sup> century onwards.
7. This will immediately affect the linguistic-eco system of Karnataka and will also affect the linguistic-eco system of the India.
8. One of the good policy initiatives of the Government of India regarding the medium of instruction is that, according to the CBSE circular, the students learning under its scheme have to compulsorily register the name of their mother tongue. Also, they have to make their choice of third language known. (Prajavani, September 16, 2015)

### **Compulsory Kannada Learning (2015)**

We saw earlier (June 19, 1989) that (i) the Government of Karnataka's language policy for school education failed to make Kannada a compulsory subject of instruction in the schools and (ii) the Supreme Court (May 6, 2014) ruled that parents have the right to choose the medium of instruction for their children. In its latest effort to make the Official Language of Karnataka-Kannada a compulsory language in the schools of Karnataka the Government has taken a policy decision and come up with *The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015* (Act No.22 of 2015). This Act aims to make teaching of Kannada compulsory from 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standards either as a first language or as a second language in a phased manner from the academic year 2015-16 in all the schools of the state irrespective of their funding, status and establishment. According to this policy '...student who has not opted his mother tongue (other than Kannada) as First or Second Language may study his mother tongue as Third Language'. This Act has not come into force with which it was intended to be implemented.

## Suggestions

With these implications, can we look at some of the remedial measures to save our re-colonisation? Many of our languages have rich experience in getting rid of mental slavery in their history. Classical example is of Kannada. It came out of the clutches of Sanskrit by devising new modes of expression. Instead of talking about English losing its ground elsewhere, Kannada has to confront the challenges that English is posing, and devise ways to rejuvenate itself for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The social, economic, political and linguistic situations may be different, but ways could be found out to come out of this.

**Concept of Mother tongue:** What actually is mother tongue? The Supreme Court was not clearly apprised of the concept and the precedence of the use of this concept in the official documents of the country. Even today, the same is not clear for the judiciary. It cannot be defined in clear cut way due to multilingualism being practiced in the country where it is not an exception, but a norm. However, the decennial Census of India uses a definition for the concept which is evolved since the British period. In the Census year 1971- ‘The language spoken in the individuals home during his childhood or a near equivalent such as the language which individuals parents spoke or which he first learnt to speak’; in 1991, 2001, 2011 – ‘The language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person’s home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In case of infants and deaf mutes the language usually spoken by the mother should be recorded. In case of doubt, the language mainly spoken in the household...’The UNESCO in 1951, in its typology of language concepts had defined mother tongue as ‘the language one acquires as a child’.

**Language Policy:** The second reason to note is that the makers of the Indian Constitution did not lay down elaborately the policy for the domain of education in independent India as they did for administration or judiciary. Due to its sensitive nature and fluid language situation at that time, with broad guidelines they allowed the language law for education to be evolved in the context of multilingual situation under various rights bestowed in the Constitution through the process of adjudication. Karnataka is the only state in the country which has defined the language policy for the domain of education due to judicial interventions on its actions. As far as I know none of the other states possess such a well-defined policy which is adjudicated by the High Court as well as the Supreme Court. The Constitutional law experts opine the same. “A difficult question arises regarding the medium of education at various levels. The Constitution prescribes no policy or principle, and makes no provision, in this regard. To begin with, the matter was left to the legislative power of the States as ‘Education’ was a State subject. The States enjoyed full right to prescribe the media of instruction at the primary and the High School levels. [M.P. Jain: Indian Constitutional Law, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition]. Lack of policy is one of the reasons for the present conflicts in language education. Now, there is a need for a national policy on language education to be framed by taking into account the experience of post independent India and judicial pronouncements.

**Nationalization of Primary Education:** Many well-meaning educationists have said this, and in the light of the issues discussed here, repeating their opinion is not redundant. We saw the existence of different kinds of schools and their role in decisions relating to language issues. The independent nation should nationalize primary education and impart quality education to all the children through common schools, in their mother tongue. The present multi-variety schools are breeding inequality, they do not have a right to exist.

**Effective Language Education:** In the past 55 to 60 years the teachers and educationists have gained experience in language teaching and teaching through a language medium. All of us know how badly the present borrowed methodologies are failing in our classrooms since they are not indigenous. Indian languages have failed miserably in imbibing technological innovations in the information and communication technologies. In the context of Digital India initiative, language education methodologies have to be revamped. The time has come where in best minds will sit together and evolve indigenous language teaching methodologies to improve and update.

**Lesson from England for Education in Mother Tongue:** Wilson J, Deputy Commissioner of Shahpur while discussing about primary education in Punjab and the teaching of Punjabi... on April 21, 1894 wrote “The history of education in England affords an instructive parallel. In the dark age’s education was given only in Latin and was confined to a very small proportion of the population. Later on, French became the official language and education in that tongue spread among the upper classes. But it was not until the native English tongue was adopted as the means of instruction that education became general among the masses of the people.”

## **Conclusion**

While concluding I would like to say that the language policy of this multilingual state of Karnataka for education, as it stands today, was not framed and implemented in a single stroke, but it has evolved during the period 1956 -2020 through the process of conflict, understanding, adjudication and adjustment of roles for various mother tongues (home languages) as school languages. It has evolved in several stages with the decisions taken by the bureaucracy, recommendations of the committees, legislature and judicial intervention. These decisions were guided at times by the prevalent dominant public opinion, and often were adjudicated by the judiciary by looking into the claims and counterclaims of various mother tongue/language groups. Often social, economic, political, legal, and other issues not related to education have influenced the language choice for education. Still the language policy like many other policies is in a fluid state and may take some more time to get stabilised, but it is certain that it has come around one circle with the Supreme Court judgement in 2014 about the medium of instruction. Right to education in once own mother tongue has become right to choose a language medium of instruction for primary education.

Effective implementation of *The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015* (Act No.22 of 2015) is yet to be evaluated. Only political will and alertness of state administrative machinery could help in its success. We have to watch and see what will be the result of making the issue of medium of instruction in the primary stage: a national issue by involving millions of citizens in signature campaign, or tackle politically by involving the chief ministers of the states of the Union, or international issue by raising it in the SAARC Literary Festival on South Asian Poetry during July 2015 at Bangalore, or a constitutional issue by seeking amendments to the Constitution of India. However, in the context of the New Education Policy, it is reported (The Hindu, Dec 30, 2015) that the Department of Primary and Secondary Education of the Government of Karnataka has recommended to the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India that at the primary level the parents have final word in the selection of medium of instruction of their children. Also, it has recommended that in the higher primary level medium of instruction be bilingual – English as well as mother tongue and at the secondary level schools will have an option to choose the medium of instruction. Regarding number of languages to be taught, it has recommended that at the lower primary level be-2, at the higher primary level-3, at the high school level-2 and at the higher secondary level-1.

However, the Draft National Educational Policy-2019 states that “The three language formula, followed since the adoption of the National Policy on Education 1968, and endorsed in the National Policy on Education 1986/1992 as well as the NCF 2005, will be continued, keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions and aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union.” The NEP-2019 proposes that the “The three-language formula will need to be implemented in its spirit throughout the country, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.” It goes one step ahead and states that “...all students from preschool and Grade I onwards will be exposed to three or more languages with the aim of developing speaking proficiency and interaction, and the ability to recognise scripts and read basic text, in all three languages by Grade3.” Regarding the medium of instruction, the draft NEP-2019 recommends that “When possible, the medium of instruction - at least until Grade 5 but preferably till at least Grade 8 - will be the home language/mother tongue/local language.” The next decisive course is awaited in the final and approved version of the New Education Policy based on the discussion on the draft of 2019 by the Government of India.

---

---

#### Note

This is the revised and updated version of the paper ‘*Language Education in Karnataka: A Journey from 1956 to 2015*’ first published in 2017, in ‘*Indian Languages in School Education System*’. Ed. K V Narayana. Kuvempu Bhasha Bharathi Pradhikara, Bangalore. Paper first written in 2015 published in 2017. Revised and updated in 2020.

---

---

#### References

- a. Census of India 2001. Language: India, States and Union Territories: 2001. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General, India.

- b. Jain, M.P. 1987. Indian Constitutional Law, 4th Edition. Nagpur: Wadhwa and Company Law Publishers.
- c. Mallikarjun, B. 2002. Language Policy for Education in Indian States: Karnataka. Language in India, E-Journal, 2: December.
- d. Mallikarjun, B. 2003. Globalization and Indian Languages. Johann Vielberth and Guido Drexel (eds), Linguistic Cultural Identity and International Communication. Saarbrucken: AQ-Verlag. 23-46.
- e. Mallikarjun, B. 2004. An Exploration into Linguistic Majority-Minority Relations in India. Language in India. E-Journal, 4. August.
- f. Mallikarjun, B. 2012. The Evolution of Language Laws in India. A Monograph. Language in India. E-Journal, 12. September.
- g. Ranjit Singh Rangila, Thirumalai M S and Mallikarjun B.2001. Bringing order to Linguistic Diversity: Language Planning in British Raj. Language in India. E-Journal,6. October.
- h. Thirumalai, M. S. 2003. Lord Macaulay: The Man Who Started It all and His Minute. Language in India. E-Journal, April.
- i. UNESCO.1951. The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education. Paris.
- j. The National Curriculum Document for School Education: A Discussion Document. 2000. National Council for Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.
- k. Sahyadri Education Trust vs State of Karnataka on July 4, 1988. [ILR Vol.38. 1988].
- l. Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka. High Court judgement on April 29, 1989 [ILR 1989 KAR 1595].
- m. English Medium Students Parents Association vs State of Karnataka. Supreme Court Judgement on Dec 8, 1993.
- n. Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka vs The State of Karnataka and others. High Court Judgement on July 2, 2008. [ILR 2008 KAR 2895].
- o. Daffodils English School vs State of Karnataka and others. High Court judgement on Oct 3, 2008. [ ILR 2009 KAR 104]
- p. State of Karnataka and Anrvs Associated Management of (Government Recognised – Unaided – English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others: Supreme Court Judgement of the Supreme Court Bench of Justice P. Sadasivam and Justice Ranjan Gogoi on July 5, 2013
- q. State of Karnataka and Anrvs Associated Management of (Government Recognised – Unaided – English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others: Supreme Court Judgement on May 6, 2014.
- r. The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015 (Act No.22 of 2015).
- s. Draft National Education Policy 2019. Government of India.
- t. Source of Educational Statistics: U-DISE Reports, Government of Karnataka.