CHAPTER V

BHOJPURI CULTURAL NATIONALISM: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

The notion of 'language' to a speaker is not the same thing as it is to a linguist. Languages are generally classified according to their grammars. To a linguist the formal characteristics of a particular speech have a priority in determining whether it can be grouped with language 'A' or 'B'. But to a speaker language is more significant symbolically in terms of identifying himself with a group than in terms of its purely formal criteria. In a plural society, as pointed out by Khubchandani, a speaker's declaration about his or her mother-tongue is based mostly on considerations of social identification and group loyalty rather than on the speech he or she uses for primary communication.

In the first chapter we have discussed three contours of speech behaviour: (i) what people do with speech, i.e., language usage; (ii) what people think they do with speech, i.e., language image; (iii) what people claim they do with speech, i.e., language posture.

In Bhojpuri region one finds contradictions in the language scene concerning different aspects of speech behaviour, namely patterns of language use, unconscious attitudes (images) and conscious assertions (postures) about speech-activity. In the fourth chapter we have analyzed Bhojpuri cultural nationalism as articulated by Bhojpuri cultural entrepreneurs. We have seen how a small group of Bhojpuri litterateurs and scholars has made efforts to idealize Bhojpuri
culture. They maintain that Bhojpuri is a language distinct from Khari Boli Hindi and have been raising demand for official recognition for Bhojpuri. How is it that Bhojpuri language, region and culture have not become effective symbols of groups identity among people? This question requires us to have an idea of peoples' views about Bhojpuri language, culture and region. Do Bhojpuri people view themselves as a distinct lingistic group or as a part of Hindi speech community? Where do they place Maithili, Magahi or Awadhi speakers? Do people nourish a sense of pride for their mother-tongue and culture or they are indifferent? A group of Bhojpuri writers and scholars has been raising a number of demands for the better treatment of their mother-tongue. Are the people aware of such 'spokesmen' and their efforts? What do they think about the demands raised by Bhojpuri cultural entrepreneurs? In most of the studies on nationalism scholars have restricted themselves to elites' perception of language, culture, history and region. Peoples' views on these issues have been ignored and thus largely remain unexplored. This chapter concerns with Bhojpuri cultural nationalism as perceived by Bhojpuri people. We will elaborate upon their views along following dimensions-

1. Bhojpuri Language
   (i) The status of Bhojpuri : A language or dialect?
   (ii) Regional variations in Bhojpuri.
   (iii) Bhojpuri literature.
   (iv) Hindi and Bhojpuri.
(v) Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri
(vi) Census and Bhojpuri
(vii) International dimension of Bhojpuri.

2. Territorial and regional identity.
4. Demands of Bhojpuri movements.
5. Bhojpuri leaders and organisations.

(i) The Status of Bhojpuri: a language or dialect?

We received a range of responses regarding the status of Bhojpuri as a language. We find three categories of respondents among Bhojpuri speech community.

(i) Those who speak only Bhojpuri.

(ii) Those who speak Bhojpuri and Hindi.

(iii) Those who speak Bhojpuri, Hindi and English.

These three categories of respondents are hierarchically located in the society. The variables of education, occupation, place of residence and age have a bearing on different aspects of speech behaviour, i.e., language use, attitudes towards language and postures towards language.

The first category of Bhojpuri speakers are those who have had no formal education, mostly coming from rural areas though not necessarily, and can not speak Khari boli Hindi. The only language through which they interact with the outside world is Bhojpuri. These speakers give different names to their mothertongue, 'Bhasha', 'Bihari', 'Purbi', 'Benarasi', 'Chapariah'
etc. It is a fact that a number of the speakers in this category are not aware of the term 'Bhojpuri'. They insist that they speak 'Hindi'. The following conversation with the gate-keeper of an Institute will make the point somewhat clear:

- What is your mother-tongue?
- Bhasha.
- O.K., but which bhasha?
- (emphasizes and repeats) Bhasha.
- Can you name it?
- Hindi.
- O.K. Do you find any difference between yours speech and mine?
- Yes, very little. It is the difference in the way of speaking. You are educated. I understand everything you speak.
- Is not Bhojpuri your mother-tongue?
- (smiles) See, Bhojpuri and Hindi are one and the same thing. In rural areas in Bihar people use a slightly different mode of speech. There I address our elders as 'rauan', here I address them as 'Aap'.

This person could not speak Khari Boli Hindi; throughout he conversed in Bhojpuri but insisted that he was speaking in Hindi. For him Hindi and Bhojpuri are not two distinct languages. Similar views were expressed by peasants in rural areas of Bhojpur region, rickshawpullers in town, small shop-keepers, maid servants, labourers etc. One peasant insisted that his mother-tongue was Hindi. He emphasized that he speaks 'pure' yet unsophisticated 'Hindi'. This category of respondents, who is absolutely unilingual, perceives Hindi and Bhojpuri as one language.

The second category of Bhojpuri speakers who speak both Bhojpuri and Khari Boli Hindi are those who have had some formal education, are residing in urban setting and have interaction with non-Bhojpuri speakers (for example Magahi, Maithili, Bengali etc.) This category
uses Bhojpuri in the close interaction network (i.e., in the family, in friendship networks with those who hail from Bhojpuri region) and employ Hindi for purposes like office work, reading and writing and for a number of other instrumental functions. This category includes clerks, school teachers, police inspectors, nurses, office-goers etc. This group is aware of the distinctiveness between Bhojpuri and Hindi. They maintain that Bhojpuri is their mother-tongue and language of close interaction. They say that Bhojpuri and Hindi are not same yet they are not unanimous regarding the status of Bhojpuri as a language. Some of them maintained that Bhojpuri is a dialect of Hindi while others thought it to be a language. Those who expressed the view that Bhojpuri is not a language but a dialect, pointed out that Bhojpuri does not have a script of its own. They also point to the lack of any literature in Bhojpuri.

One translation officer in Patna Secretariat made the following observation:

It is rather unfortunate for us that even after forty years of Independence this confusion persists whether Bhojpuri is a language or a dialect. I think this is because our Government has not recognised it. If it had not been so, you would not put this question to me. You see, Bhojpuri is much older a language than Khari Boli. Khari Boli Hindi is hardly 150 years old.

In case of this category of Bhojpuri speakers urbanization has been a powerful factor in sensitizing them of their distinct linguistic identity. The polyglot urban centre like Patna throws cultural groupings in interaction with each other, which has
made them aware of their distinctness from speakers of Maithili, Magahi etc. Further, the workplace employs substantial numbers of persons of culturally heterogeneous background which is usually not the case in countryside. The spread of literacy has also affected the process of awareness about one's linguistic identity. Students' perception of status of Bhojpuri language varies significantly with their age. Students in the age group of 5-15 years perceived Bhojpuri as a 'dehati bhasha', i.e., speech of rustics. A student of 8 years studying in class I at St. Joseph, Patna, viewed Bhojpuri as a language of illiterate people. He did not like Bhojpuri at all. His impressions were shared by most of the school going children in this age-group. Students in the age-group of 16-25 express different view. Most of them thought Bhojpuri to be a language like Maithili. Some of them pointed out that Bhojpuri is used only for verbal communication and hence is a dialect or boli. Students in the age-group of 25 and above said that Bhojpuri is a language, though an underdeveloped one. They expressed the confidence that if proper care is taken to develop it Bhojpuri has vast potential to be developed as a competent language.

The third category of respondents, having command over Bhojpuri, Hindi and English, is divided in its opinion regarding the status of Bhojpuri. A few of them strongly argued that Bhojpuri is a language distinct from Hindi. They expressed the view that their mother-tongue has been given step-motherly treatment by
the Government. It is significant to note that these persons use Hindi or English even in close interaction network, i.e., in the family or with friends. They speak Bhojpuri while talking to the older generation, i.e., grand father or grand mother. One post-graduate from Indian Institute of Technology, made the following statement:

Of course Bhojpuri is a language. No body ever cared for Bhojpuri, that's why such questions are put today. Does any body raise such question about Tamil or Bengali today?

A section from this category was of the opinion that Bhojpuri as it stands today, is a dialect. They expressed the view that once upon a time Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Braj were languages, but now these have been reduced to the status of dialects.

The foregoing discussion of responses from a cross section of Bhojpuri speech community brings forth some interesting points. The responses of Bhojpuri speakers with regard to its status as a language does not necessarily correspond with the actual use of Bhojpuri language. As we have seen the speakers of Bhojpuri who can express themselves only through Bhojpuri identify it as Hindi, and regard themselves as part of the 'Hindi tradition'. One peasant told us with a sense of pride that Ramcharitmanas by Tulsidas is written in Bhojpuri. Thus, the speech of such persons (mostly rural) will be classified as a distinct language different from Khari Boli Hindi as understood by structuralists and linguists. But for them they belong to Hindi and works of Tulsidas, Soordas and Meera are written in their own 'bhasha'. Those persons who have
equal command over Bhojpuri and Hindi and use them depending on situational contexts are aware of distinctiveness of Bhojpuri, as their mother-tongue, from Hindi, which is used for performing instrumental functions and as a link language to communicate with speakers of non-Bhojpuri speeches.

The persons who have command over Bhojpuri, Hindi and English are aware of undeveloped stage of Bhojpuri and its colloquial nature. These persons hardly employ Bhojpuri in various domains of use. But, quite a few from amongst them advocated strongly that Bhojpuri is a very rich language with great potential.

(ii) Regional variations in Bhojpuri

We have noticed in the chapter three that Bhojpuri is spoken in a very large area and it is also known by some other names given to it after the names of different places where it is spoken. Bhojpuri writers have underlined the need to bring a certain level of uniformity in writings in Bhojpuri. What do people think about these variations? How do they perceive these variations in Bhojpuri?

The first category of speakers say that boli of Arrah and Chapra show some variations. According to them the speech changes after every 40 miles or so. They are not aware of the fact that their mother-tongue is spoken in a large portion of U.P. and Bihar both. The second category of speakers are aware that Bhojpuri is spoken in a very large area and regional variations do
exist in Bhojpuri as spoken at Banaras, Arrah or Champaran. For them it is but natural to have some variations in a language spoken in such a vast region. To the third category of speakers regional variations pose a problem and they underline the need to bring uniformity in its usage in written form; though few of them are of the opinion that in the initial stage of its development everyone should be allowed to write as it is spoken in his area. In due course of time, gradually, a certain uniformity will come to Bhojpuri writings.

(iii) Bhojpuri Literature

It is often alleged by a few scholars that Bhojpuri lacks a literary tradition. Bhojpuri writers have vehemently countered this allegation. On the one hand they have traced the tradition of Bhojpuri writings to Vedic Age, on the other they draw the attention towards sizeable quantity of literature produced by Bhojpuri writers over a decade. Let us see what people have to say about literary heritage of Bhojpuri.

The first category of respondents invariably referred to "Ramayan" as a Bhojpuri work. People in the rural areas of Bhojpuri region are very fond of quoting a few couplets from Tulsi's Ramcharitmanas. Those who are illiterate, residing in rural areas, are the ones who sing "Hori Geet" at Holi. They also sing Chaita, Alha, Birha etc. Females in countryside of Bhojpuri region sing Bhojpuri songs at the occasion of child birth, marriage etc. These people are not aware of the fact
that these songs, tales, kathas form part of Bhojpuri folk literature.

A number of speakers residing in urban areas, employing Hindi and English for formal purposes point out the rich tradition of Bhojpuri folk-literature. Quite a few also expressed concern that if not collected and printed these songs and tales soon will become a thing of the past. Most of these respondents had no knowledge about the books and magazines which have been published by Bhojpuri Academy and Akhil Bhartiya Bhojpuri Sahitya Sammelan in last few years. A very few of them who are familiar with Bhojpuri magazines, poems and stories published therein complained of substandard and out dated themes of these writings. A bureaucrat who is a symphasizer with the efforts of Bhojpuri writers has a point when he said:

I have gone through quite a few of Bhojpuri magazines; Bhojpuri writers are writing on very limited themes-they are romanticising village society, which is far from reality.

(iv) Hindi and Bhojpuri

We have seen in the last chapter how hard Bhojpuri letterateurs have tried to establish the distinct status of Bhojpuri from Hindi. They have maintained that Bhojpuri has a separate grammar from Hindi and hence an independent language. As we pointed out earlier that notion of language to a speaker is different from that of a linguist, in this section we will see how various categories of Bhojpuri speakers view the relationship between Hindi and Bhojpuri.
The first category of respondents normally is not able to make a distinction between Hindi and Bhojpuri. They are not aware of grammatical distinctiveness between the two. They identify themselves as Hindi speakers and Hindi for them is a symbol of national integration. It is deeply ingrained in their psyche that whosoever talk about Bhojpuri as a distinct language from Hindi are politically motivated. These advocates of Bhojpuri, in their perception, are enemies of country who further want to divide the 'desh'. An illiterate female from a village of Varanasi district said,

I know the people who are talking of Bhojpuri language as distinct from Hindi are not interested in country's unity. I tell you they have nothing to do with language - they are interested in power politics. Hindi is the language understood throughout the country.

Similarly a peasant from a village in Ghazipur district said:

Bhojpuri and Hindi are not two. I speak Hindi. Everybody here speaks Hindi. We are rural people our style of speaking is slightly different from city - dwellers. Why this controversy?

For this category the question of relationship between Hindi and Bhojpuri does not make any sense. However, this is not the case with those who are educated through Khari Boli and are employed in cities. These respondents view Bhojpuri and Hindi as quite close to each other. They point out to the similar vocabulary in Hindi and Bhojpuri. All of them want Hindi to be retained, as the rashtra bhasha, of India. They also want Bhojpuri to be developed as a language though a few express their fear that efforts in such direction might be harmful to Hindi. A section from this
category was of the opinion that Bhojpuri is a language to be used within family and with friends, i.e., for informal purposes only. Whereas Hindi is to be used for a number of formal instrumental purposes in workplace, banks, railway stations, market etc. They saw no problem between two languages as domains of their use are different. These speakers point out that Hindi is made of various dialects, for example, Awadhi, Braj, Gharwali, Magahi, Bhojpuri, Bangru, Chattisgarhi, etc. They point out that Hindi as 'rashtra bhasha' enriches itself by taking words from these various dialects.

The third category of respondents is again divided in its opinion regarding the relationship between Bhojpuri and Hindi. Broadly there are two views within this category:

(1) the development of Bhojpuri will enrich Hindi;
(2) it will put Hindi and Bhojpuri in a competitive situation.

This category also expressed the view that today Hindi has a much wider scope and a variety of functions to perform compared to Bhojpuri. If properly handled even Bhojpuri can be developed to perform all those function.

(v) Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri

The speakers of Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri show somewhat different attitudes towards their mother tongues. It will be interesting to know how do Bhojpuri speakers relate themselves to Magahi and
Bhojpuri speakers. The first category of Bhojpuri speakers treat Magahi, Maithili and Bhojpuri as variants of Hindi. The second category of respondents perceive Bhojpuri in a somewhat disadvantageous position compared to Maithili. Mostly, teachers and students (in the age group of 18-25, and above) expressed their discontent for step-motherly treatment to Bhojpuri by the government. They also complained of "narrow mentality" of Maithils. Magahi group has adopted Khari Boli Hindi even for use in family, kin group etc. Bhojpuri speakers point out that a Bhojpuria, even if he is abroad and meets another Bhojpuri, will address him in Bhojpuri. The third category of respondents while comparing the speech-behaviour of Maithilis, Magahis and Bhojpurias lament the fact that attachment of Bhojpurias to their mother-tongue, unlike Maithilis, is purely verbal. Most of the speakers of Bhojpuri are ignorant of the fact that grave injustice is being done to their language. A Judge of Patna High Court made the following observation:

When a Bhojpuri student comes to city for higher studies he feels shy in speaking Bhojpuri. He generally switches over to Khariboli Hindi. As far as writing is concerned right from the beginning a Bhojpuria adopts Hindi. We get our Wedding Cards printed in Hindi. Maithils use their mother-tongue for printing invitation cards or for writing letters to their family members. You see, I can speak Bhojpuri fluently but when it comes to writing I will be comfortable in Hindi. I can not write a letter in Bhojpuri. I think the same problem exists with Magahi.

Few of Bhojpuri speakers also pointed out that the Maharajas of Darbhanga played a leading role in the
development of interest in the language and culture of Mithila. In case of Magahi and Bhojpuri region all India symbols were given priority over regional symbols and interests.

(vi) Census and Bhojpuri

We noticed in the fourth chapter that Bhojpuri leaders admitted the fact that people in villages do not know that name of their mother-tongue is Bhojpuri. The bulk of the population prefer to give Hindi as their mother tongue, especially the rural natives. Those Bhojpuri as who are educated, reside in urban areas are also not unanimous as far as the return of Bhojpuri as their mother-tongue is concerned. Some give 'Bihari', 'Bhojpuri Hindi', 'Banarasi' as their mother-tongue. A Bank-Manager told us that he gave 'Bhojpuri-Hindi' as his mother-tongue in the census. Even many students, teachers and professionals also gave 'Bhojpuri -Hindi' as their mother-tongue. A doctor at Patna Medical College said:

I give Hindi as my mother-tongue. See, Bhojpuri people, unlike Maithili speakers, are not narrow minded. In this region there was never a demand for a separate province. We have witnessed Punjab problem. Remember, it all started in the name of Punjabi language and see what is happening today. We do not want this to be repeated in Bihar.

A significant number of Bhojpuri speakers with whom we talked to were never approached by census officials.

International Dimension of Bhojpuri Language

Bhojpuri scholars point out with pride that Bhojpuri is the only Indian language which is spoken by a significant portion of populations outside India in
nearly half a dozen countries. The first category of
respondents is not aware of the international status
which their mother-tongue enjoys. Second and third
categories know that Britishers, some one hundred and
fifty years ago, took labourers from Bhojpuri region to
British Guyana, French Guyana, Trinidad, Surinam and
Fiji. Many a students pointed out that generations of
labourers in these countries have preserved Bhojpuri
language and culture.

Territorial And Regional Identity

Quite a significant number of Bhojpuri speakers could
name only three or four districts where they thought
Bhojpuri was spoken. Most of these were uneducated
rural folks. Those who are educated have an idea of
the region where Bhojpuri is spoken. Most of the
housewives were ignorant about the area where Bhojpuri
is spoken. As speakers of Bhojpuri are divided
between Bihar and U.P., the territorial unit with which
people identify themselves relate to Bihar and U.P.
rather than to the territory where their mother-tongue
is spoken. In most of the speakers' identification
with the whole territory where Bhojpuri is spoken was
found weak, and in some cases it was virtually absent.

We have seen in the last chapter that Bhojpuri
litterateurs have selected, out of the past, a few
symbols (for example, Raja Bhojraj, Kunwar Singh etc.)
to establish the distinctiveness and grandeur of the
historical and cultural traditions of the Bhojpuri
region. After talking to a number of speakers from a
cross-section of Bhojpuri speech community, it was noticed that people both educated and uneducated, urban and rural, lack a sense of regional identity based on Bhojpuri language and historical traditions of the region. The identities based on religion, caste and province are more meaningful and relevant for them. From amongst the educated persons very few had the idea that name Bhojpuri was given to their mother-tongue after king Bhojraj. It is also significant to note that rural people do show a sense of attachment to their land, village and surroundings which are more a result of many intimate personal experiences rather than being implied in their mind by education, by means of national songs, literature or monuments.

On the basis of Kunwar Singh, Bhojpuri elites have tried to instil a sense of regional identity in the people and a sense of pride in their heritage. People are, by and large, familiar with Kunwar Singh's name but his name does not provide sufficient string to pull the vast Bhojpuri region into one. Further, the symbol of Kunwar Singh presents a curious irony. People in the rural areas, (even in urban areas) who could not get much education, associate Kunwar Singh with Rani Janshi and Tatya Tope who fought against 'Firangis'. He is remembered as a great patriot and a nationalist who fought for 'desh' (and 'desh' here is equivalent to present day Indian state). His being a 'Bhojpuria' is not supermost in the psyche of most of the people. Thus, here again, Bhojpuri litterateurs have run into difficulty. Regional identities in terms of Uttar
Pradesh and Bihar have come to stay in the psyche of people of all the categories of Bhojpuri speakers. The history of the region as articulated by Bhojpuri litterateurs and scholars does not make much sense to people of the region.

**Bhojpuri Culture And National Character of Bhojpuri People**

Bhojpuri scholars have claimed that region has certain cultural traits, rituals, festivals etc. and community has a peculiar 'national character'. Let us see what do people have to say about their culture and national character.

According to first category of respondents the rituals, ceremonies etc. performed at the time of occasions like child-birth or marriage, show some variations from district to district. Female respondents in countryside especially pointed out 'Bahula Paru', 'Harihar Ki Puja', as two festivals celebrated in the region apart from all Indian festivals like Holi, Diwali, Rakshabandhan and Dashera. They also mentioned that 'chaita', and 'jogira' are sung at Holi by groups of men. Women play 'Domkutch' at marriages of son. One old woman while narrating various rituals to be performed at the time of marriage, pointed out that these differ according to castes also. She said:

At marriage in Rajput families mother and sisters of groom go for 'Kuan-poojan', this ritual is not observed amongst Brahmins. Similarly at 'Govardhan' amongst Brahmins the married daughter makes 'Pindia'; amongst Rajputs it is daughter-in-law who makes. Lower caste females do not go for 'Kuan Poojan' ceremony.
A very old women described the important cultural items like this -

In this region birth, churakaran, upnayan and marriage - are four occasions when special rituals are performed. 'Churakaran' and 'Upnayan' are performed among twice born castes only. At these occasions songs are sung by females. Each and every function in this starts with prayers offered to 'Mata'. Every village in this region has a 'chaura' of Mata. We all worship Sheetla'Mata.

Many a female respondents said that 'Sohar' songs are sung at the birth of son. When a son is born, females from neighbourhood are invited. They all collect and sing together. At churakaran ceremony songs are sung. This community ceremony takes place at some holy place. It was also pointed out that gradually the importance of these ceremonies is going down. The educated girls do not know the songs and rituals etc. These ceremonies cost quite a sum of expenditure which a number of families can not afford. Marriage is the one ceremony which is performed with enthusiasm in all castes. 'Baithki' and 'Ghumar' are sung at marriage.

A surgeon lamented the fact that now-a-days 'cinema culture' has become fashionable. Cassettes are available in the market; these cassettes are played at marriage or child birth. An eminent eye specialist also expressed the same view:

You see, Bhojpuri culture has not been able to retain its traits, customs, folk -songs etc. My grand-daughters hardly know anything about various cultural items to be observed at various occasions.

An epigrapher made the following observation:

I remember, the dress my grand - mother used to wear. It used to be all embroidered with mirrors.
Now, if you go to a village, hardly you will see one or two females wearing that dress. This is all due to onslaught of technology and modernization.

Many respondents pointed out this process of erosion of old culture is not peculiar to Bhojpurias only; this has happened to Maithils and Magahis too. A student of M.A. (History) when asked about the ‘uniqueness’ of Bhojpuri culture, replied with a deep sense of anguish:

If you ask for my honest view, I will say that all this talk about ‘uniqueness’ of Bhojpuri or Maithili culture is a myth created by a small group of writers and scholars for their own vested interests. Like any other region in India in this region also you will find vast differences in food habits, dressing patterns, residential units etc. between poor and rich. So, to me this phrase, Bhojpuri culture does not make much sense.

It was pointed out by students, folk-artists, housewives, businessmen etc. that almost the same festivals are celebrated throughout Bihar and culture all over Bihar demonstrates a basic similarity. Some even suggested that instead of saying ‘Bhojpuri culture’ or ‘Magahi culture’ it would be more appropriate if one says, ‘Bihari culture’.

We noticed in the first chapter that the concept of ‘national character’ forms a powerful element in every national ideology and commonly implies the glorification of one’s own national character. Bhojpuri leaders maintain that Bhojpuri people have a distinct ‘national character’ (see chapter 3). What is peoples’ perception about the national character of their speech community? The first category of respondents thought Bhojpurias to be religious, god fearing beings who are
very adventurous. A village-Pradhan said:

People in this region are very hard working. They do not hesitate in going to far off places to earn livelihood. In every nook and corner of the country you will find Bhojpuri speaking people.

A number of Bhojpuri speakers pointed out that Bhojpuri people are very brave and sturdy. They are straightforward and even rude. They can not tolerate domination for a long time. A Judge of Patna High Court made following observation about the national character of Bhojpuri people:

This region has history of revolting against any kind of hegemony or domination. During the revolt of 1857 Shahabad, Ballia, Chapra were the strong centres of revolt against British. Britishers while crushing the revolt could never go beyond Karamnasha river. Again during Quit India movement in 1942 this region responded unlike any other region in the country, to the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The movement was very widespread. 'Nationalist Sentiment' is rooted deep in the psyche of people. Even today the region has a reputation of being the Naxalite belt.

Almost all the respondents mentioned the patriotism of Bhojpuri people as the most important feature of their personality. They invariably compared themselves with Maithils to whom they characterized as 'narrow minded' and 'parochial'.

Demands

We have noticed in the fourth chapter that leaders of Bhojpuri movement have been making a number of demands on behalf of vast Bhojpuri population. These demands included recognition of Bhojpuri by Sahitya Academy, inclusion of Bhojpuri in the VIIIth Schedule of the constitution; to include Bhojpuri as a subject in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh Civil Services examination, to
impotent primary education to children in Bhojpuri, to start teaching of Bhojpuri in the entire region, to open Bhojpuri Academy at Patna and in U.P., to allot more time to Bhojpuri programmes in Radio etc. A few Bhojpuri organisations have raised the demand for a separate province for Bhojpuri Speaking population. We will see in this section how far people are aware of these demands. What are their attitudes towards such demands?

It is interesting to note that a large number of people have not even heard of any of these demands. The people in countryside as well in cities are ignorant about these demands. To many of them the demands of opening academies in U.P. and Bihar, the inclusion of Bhojpuri in VIII schedule of the constitution do not make any sense at all. The peasants, labourers, potters and petty shop-keepers in villages did not approve of the idea of imparting primary education through Bhojpuri. A school teacher whose children go to the government school of the village rejected the idea on following grounds:

I will not support the demand of teaching children through Bhojpuri medium even at primary level because of two reasons; children have to switch over to Hindi after primary classes, so it is better if they learn Hindi right from the beginning. Moreover, most of the time we explain to students in the class in Bhojpuri only. So I do not think it is going to make much difference. Secondly, keeping in mind the education system of our country one can not go beyond a stage in his career without English. Our students find it difficult to compete with students who have studied through English medium. If every language has the same instrumental value for being successful at later stage then I will withdraw my objection to teaching in Bhojpuri. But Bhojpuri, Hindi and English enjoy differential prestige at present.
This view was shared by most of the rural inhabitants in the region. One rickshaw puller at Jagdishpur town asked:

Tell me how many of the sahibs will send their kids in Bhojpuri medium schools? None of them.

The Postmaster at Arrah when asked about the desirability of teaching Bhojpuri in universities at B.A. and M.A. classes said:

You see, people here look down upon those who offer Hindi in M.A. You can very well imagine the fate of those who opt for Bhojpuri at graduation and post-graduation level. If my son wants to opt Bhojpuri or even Hindi for his graduation, I, honestly speaking, will not like it.

Students' responses to the teaching through Bhojpuri medium at primary level and as a subject in universities differ significantly depending on their age-groups. A student of eight years studying at St. Joseph's School, Patna did not like the idea of being taught through Bhojpuri. Students in the age-group of 8-18 years in the countryside did not prefer to be taught through Bhojpuri. They argued that if they have to go for higher classes knowledge of Hindi and English is must. They also did not agree that if taught through Bhojpuri their understanding will be facilitated.

University students in the urban areas of Bihar supported the demand for teaching of Bhojpuri at B.A. level only if the subject is also recognised by Bihar Provincial Civil Services examination. A number of them pointed out that Maithili has been included as a
subject in Bihar Provincial Civil Services examination and students opting Maithili score very high marks. They thought if Bhojpuri is also included they can also secure high marks in the competition. A few of them expressed the fear that inclusion of Maithili and Bhojpuri will lower down the standards. An engineer when asked about his opinion to include Bhojpuri as a subject at university level remarked:

You say that Maithili has been recognised as a subject in Bihar Provincial services examination and students offering it as an optional subject score high marks. If Maithili can be included then why not Bhojpuri too? This will certainly help Bhojpuri students. Given the choice I will delete Maithili from Bihar P.C.S. examination instead of including Bhojpuri also. There is no end to this process. More than hundred dialects and languages are spoken in India, how are you going to tackle this language issue. I personally feel that decision of Bihar Government to recognise Maithili as a subject in Bihar Provincial Civil Services exams is a step in the wrong direction.

Educated section of Bhojpuri speakers suggested that government should provide incentives like cash awards, fellowships etc. to Bhojpuri artists, folk singers who are the real "carriers" of Bhojpuri language and culture. These people nurture a feeling that spokesmen of Bhojpuri movement have some vested interests in raising such demands.

We noticed in the last chapter that Bihar Government has opened a Bhojpuri Academy at Patna. The leaders of Bhojpuri movement are now demanding to open a Bhojpuri Academy in Uttar Pradesh also. Most of the respondents had no knowledge that any such Academy exists. When they were told about the Academy they appreciated the idea.
As far as the demands to include Bhojpuri in the VIII Schedule of the constitution and its recognition by Sahitya Academy is concerned the opinion is again not unanimous within the educated stratum of Bhojpuri people. Most of these approved the demand of recognition to Bhojpuri by Sahitya Academy provided if Bhojpuri claims a sizeable literature of a certain standard. Here again Maithili has established an example. Maithili was recognised by Sahitya Academy long back. An advocate at Patna High Court observed:

Maithili had a political clout, they pressurised the office-bearers of Sahitya Academy and got the recognition for Maithili. We Bhojpurias are lagging behind in this respect. If MLAs and MPs from this region acted in a powerful manner Bhojpuri would have got the recognition one decade back.

One MLA of Congress(I) supported the demand of recognition of Bhojpuri from Sahitya Academy but did not approve the demand for inclusion of Bhojpuri in the VIII Schedule of the constitution. He said:

If Government includes Bhojpuri in the VIII Schedule, the next demand from Bhojpuri organisations will be to make a separate province for Bhojpuri people. You see, it is a political demand with serious implications.

His view was shared by most of the respondents. A few expressed the opinion that government should include Bhojpuri in the VIII schedule because languages included therein enjoy a lot of privileges.

The demand to allot more time to Bhojpuri programmes at All India Radio does not appeal much to people. Even female members of the community (both rural and
urban) were not much interested. 'Aarti', a programme in Bhojpuri relayed from Patna, for half an hour twice a week, is not much awaited. A housewife remarked.

A number of cassettes of Bhojpuri songs are available in the market. One can always listen to them.

A demand which was rejected almost vehemently by all categories of Bhojpuri speakers (illiterate/literate, rural/urban, belonging to any age or profession, female members, office goers, students and so forth) was to carve out a separate province for Bhojpuri people. The first category of respondents who could speak only Bhojpuri (mostly illiterate, rural and least articulate) did not support the demand. An old peasant from Bhojpur district got agitated and disturbed at the very mention of the demand:

Whosoever are raising such demand are enemies of our 'desh'. They can never be successful. Why do you think that if there are smaller and more homogeneous provinces, it will be easier to administer them? I am convinced that distribution of provinces on the basis of language is fundamentally wrong: what is the guarantee that if smaller provinces are there, we will be in a better position? This is all power game.

Educated, urbanite and articulate sections of Bhojpuri community also did not favour the demand. An housewife from a town in Varanasi district argued:

We read in the newspaper that a few corrupt persons are politicising language issue. Look at what Subhas Gheesing is doing? What is the result? Hundreds of people died. What purpose it served? If you start an agitation for separate Bhojpuri state same situation will prevail here.

A doctor pointed out that Bhojpuri is spoken in a very large area. There are regional variations of the language. If today you make a Bhojpuri province after ten or twenty years there is bound to be demands
for smaller provinces based on those regional varieties.

Many of these pointed out that this demand is highly unreasonable as this will have a chain reaction. Magahi, Braj, Awadhi, Tharoo, Vajjika, Angika, Chattisgarhi etc. will raise demands for their separate province in the whole of Hindi region.

Bhojpuri Leaders And Organisations

A number of Bhojpuri writers, poets, linguists have been making attempts to draw the attention of Government towards their mother-tongue. A number of Bhojpuri organisations have come up in Bihar and U.P. These organisations publish a number of books and magazines in Bhojpuri. These spokesmen of Bhojpuri movement claim to defend and revive Bhojpuri language and culture.

The respondents in the first category are not aware of such organisations and spokesmen. The respondents in the second category also showed their ignorance about these organisations. A few respondents, however, were familiar with these associations. But the linkages through which they came to know about them are interesting. A Bank Officer knew of Bhojpuri Academy because the office of Academy is run in the building being let out by his uncle. Another respondent came to know about Bhojpuri Academy as he saw the signboard on the road-side on his way to office. A few of these respondents were familiar with Academy or ABBSS because office-bearers of these associations happen to be
their relatives. The impression in the minds of these respondents is that spokesmen of Bhojpuri carry no political weight. They have not handled the issue of Bhojpuri in an effective manner. A Judge of Patna High Court, who initially was sympathetic to the efforts of Bhojpuri leaders, commented:

Initially I thought these people had some good ideas and something needs to be done for Bhojpuri. I attended eight or ten meetings of Bhojpuri Academy. Everybody in the Academy is interested that his relative should get a job there; or the books of his near or dear ones should be published from Academy. I got disgusted. Frankly speaking nobody is interested in Bhojpuri. In the name of Bhojpuri they receive some grant from government; even this they do not use properly.

Similarly, a professor at Patna University expressed his unhappiness over the way Academy is being run. Almost all of the respondents who knew about Bhojpuri Academy were of the view that the organisation is in a very bad shape. One objection which students and research scholars raise relate to the genuineness of spokesmen of Bhojpuri movement. They point out that all of them are writers/poets of Hindi. They are using Bhojpuri to supplement their income. A research-officer at State-Archives, Patna said:

Whosoever retires from Official Language Cell of Patna Secretariat or Bihar Rashtra Bhasha Parishad becomes a potential candidate for a post in Bhojpuri Academy. This should be stopped.

The general impression is that the right kind of persons are not appointed in the Bhojpuri Academy. The clerk in the Academy observed with sarcasm that present director of the Academy (an I.A.S. Officer) could not speak even a sentence in Bhojpuri and hardly had any
time for the Academy. Almost all of the functionaries in the Academy conceded that lots of politics is involved in the selection of books for publication, in the matter of appointments etc. As far as other smaller associations of Bhojpuri are concerned people have no idea about them.

**Strategy And Tactics:**

To anchor support for their demands Bhojpuri litterateurs and scholars have opened a number of literary societies, published a number of magazines and have made efforts to diversify Bhojpuri literature. It is obvious that nature of their pursuits is such which limits their 'movement' to the group of litterateurs, poets, writers and linguists. The vast mass of Bhojpuri speech community remains ignorant about such efforts made by such spokesmen.

Details of the various activities of Bhojpuri organizations get published in Bhojpuri magazines to which people have no access. As these activities do not get coverage in important news-papers of Hindi and English, common man in the region does not get to know about these efforts of Bhojpuri associations. A few of students who had a chance to go through Bhojpuri magazines expressed their discontent over the quality of articles and poems published. They also thought if Bhojpuri has to get its due place it is almost inevitable that common people have to be brought in the scene. People at large are to be convinced about the urgency of this issue. Moreover, sympathisers of
Bhojpuri pointed out the lack of support from politicians of this region. They thought if MLAs and M.P.s extend their support to Bhojpuri, half of the work is done. A research scholar at Patna University observed:

I have met most of the spokesmen of Bhojpuri movement. They have complained to me that common man in the region is apathetic to his mother-tongue. People in this region are not proud of their language. This, I think, is a very wrong impression. Language issue as such is not of any instrumental value to rural people who form the bulk of Bhojpuri population. The vital question for him is his bread, his livelihood. The issue of language could appeal to those who were not privileged enough to study through English medium; to this section Bhojpuri could act as resource to be used for career prospects. Bhojpuri leaders have failed to mobilize this group.

Bhojpuri Films:

All of the respondents had seen Bhojpuri movies. Surprisingly a few liked them. Most of them found the films vulgar. Riskshaw pullers, labourers, coolies, shop-keepers, housewives, students, professionals all preferred Hindi cinema to Bhojpuri movies. They named a few movies like Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadiabe as a very good movie. The illiterate rural folks were not attracted to Bhojpuri movies as no big stars worked in them. They also pointed out that stories of all Bhojpuri movies revolve around countryside and therefore they got bored. Hindi movies presented a variety of subjects with much more glamour. These respondents also mentioned that whenever they were outside Bhojpuri region, for example in Bombay or Calcutta, they used to see Bhojpuri films regularly. Educated, urban and sophisticated people in Bhojpuri
region find Bhojpuri movies vulgar and substandard; though they occasionally see them for a change.
Notes and References

1. L. M. Khubchandani, Plural Languages, Plural Cultures: Communication Identity and Sociopolitical change in Contemporary India (Hawaii: East-West Centre, 1983).

2. ibid.

3. Information for this chapter was gathered through informal discussions with a cross section of Bhojpuri speech community. These discussions were held in the rural and urban areas of Rohtas, Bhojpur, Ghazipur, Varanasi and Patna districts during March 1986, June-July 1986, March 1987 and June-July 1987. The sample was designed in terms of the categories of age, education, occupation, sex and place of residence, i.e., urban/ rural, for studying variation in language use, language attitudes and language identity. Our attempt was to maximise the context and minimise the number of respondents. Our respondents included students, teachers, businessmen, office-goers, peasants, agricultural labourers, folk-artists, epigraphers, shop-keepers, housewives, servants or IVth class employees, politicians, doctors, lawyers, judges, professors, bureaucrats and journalists.
RETROSPECT

This work was an attempt to investigate why it is that an objective distinct group of Bhojpuri people has not acquired subjective self-consciousness and political significance on the basis of Bhojpuri. We have seen in the foregoing discussion that verbal repertoire in Bhojpuri community is hierarchically arranged, with many speech varieties which enjoy different status privileges. Bhojpuri speech community is not a homogeneous entity. There exist many layers of speakers within `Bhojpuri community', the gaps and contradictions regarding different contours of speech behaviour (i.e. Language usage, Language image and Language posture) within each layer and between different layers explain partly the non-take-off of Bhojpuri cultural nationalism.

We have seen that it is difficult to define what it is to be a `Bhojpuria', using the attribute of language. Different categories of Bhojpuri speakers show differing degrees of subjective awareness about their mother-tongue, not necessarily related to language usage. The discussion in foregoing chapters brings forth the point that Bhojpuri identity lacks ideological content. We noted in the first chapter that ideologization of identity depends upon the emergence of cultural entrepreneurs, associated with the rise of a professional middle class and intelligentsia, although the basis for historical
mystique may exist in rich measure in the reservoir of folk-tradition and in the myths of origin. The move from the oral repository of the traditional elders to the written page, multiplies the potential mobilization of the identity. This cultural educated class has many tasks to absorb its energies: the language must be standardized and a literature of verse and prose accumulated; history must be recorded and a vision of the future defined. We have seen in the third chapter that a small scale coterie of linguists, litterateurs, scholars and artists concerned to revitalise Bhojpuri community, have tried to ideologize Bhojpuri language and culture. They have attempted to invoke the memories of Bhojpuri nation as an ancient and unique civilization. Bhojpuri spokesmen emphasize the grammatical distinctiveness of Bhojpuri from Hindi. They have also selected the symbols of Raja Bhojraj to establish the old glory of the region. The symbol of Kunwar Singh has also been articulated to develop a sense of regional identity. Symbols of language, history and cultural traits are brought together to develop a coherent myth. However, their attempts at ideologization of language and culture have failed to expand into a major ideological movement among Bhojpuri people. The ideology of Bhojpuri cultural nationalism as articulated by ‘Bhojpuri cultural entrepreneurs’ has not been instrumental to act as an integrative force and to unite Bhojpuri community thereby, ‘reviving’ within them a love and knowledge of their common history and culture.
Chapter four shows that vast gap exists in the perception of language and culture between culture entrepreneurs and people. To the people in the countryside, whose sole medium of expression is only Bhojpuri, the question: whether they love their language and culture: does not make much sense. They take them for granted, like the air they breathe. But, when they migrate to urban centres for employment, the interaction with non-Bhojpuri people makes them aware of their language and culture. Urbanization has played an important part in the activation of linguistic identity.

Those speakers of Bhojpuri who reside in urban areas, are educated and have command over more than one speech-code (Bhojpuri), are aware of distinctiveness of Bhojpuri from Khari Boli Hindi. A stratum of this section of population (who are doctors, civil servants, teachers, engineers etc.) has been educated through educational systems established by government. This group owes its rise to the growing hegemony of scientific rationalism in social life. It derives its identity from its technical training and professions, and is less concerned with abstract question of identity. They show more interest in the practical reconstruction of the community. This group perceives Bhojpuri as a language fit for the limited purpose of fulfilling expressive need in the closed interaction network. There also exists a stratum within Bhojpuri speech community which is confronted
with unemployment and low status posts. As there exists the provision of languages as examinable subjects, it is to this group of Bhojpuri speech community, that Bhojpuri might become a 'resource' to be used for instrumental purposes also. The recognition of Maithili for Bihar P.C.S. examination has bred a sense of relative deprivation amongst this section of Bhojpuri speakers. The spokesmen of Bhojpuri movement, however, so far have failed to develop adequate means of communicating even with this segment and in mobilizing them.

In case of the 'Bhojpuri movement' contradictions have been so great that they have contributed to the failure of the movement. We can say that ideology of Bhojpuri cultural nationalism as articulated by Bhojpuri cultural entrepreneurs suffers from pervasive false consciousness. Its myths invert reality. It claims to defend folk culture while in fact it is forging a high culture (by standardizing Bhojpuri and codifying its grammar). The spokesmen of Bhojpuri cultural nationalism preach and defend continuity and cultural diversity when in fact the very process imposes homogeneity.

Moreover, the absence of a clearly defined 'enemy' against whom the efforts to mobilize Bhojpuri cultural nationalism could have been launched also explains the non-take-off of Bhojpuri movement. The historical circumstances in which Hindi was popularised as the
As during the freedom struggle Hindi was projected as a symbol of our 'national identity' against the imperialism of English, various 'dialects', spoken in north-central India receded into background. In this region demand for the promotion of Hindi grew. The Nagari Pracharini Sabha was established in Benares in 1893. The Sabha pursued a conscious policy of 'purifying' Hindi by borrowing heavily from Sanskrit and Persian words. Later years witnessed fierce competition between Hindi and Urdu. This factor brought the native speakers of various dialects in the 'Hindi region' under the banner of Hindi or Urdu. In the process the possibility of flowering of Bhojpuri nationalism started with the attainment of Independence. However, the move of government, a number of languages spoken by large numbers of people were pushed into the background.
in the background. Bhojpuri speech community got divided between U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. This policy of government implies a certain perception of language and culture. It is possible that 'official' perception of language and culture may not co-incide with peoples' perception of language and culture. However, the 'official' perception of language and culture on the basis of which a particular kind of language policy was designed and implemented, had important implications for the process of identity formation in Hindi heartland.

The discussion in foregoing chapters shows that Bhojpuri does not act as a meaningful symbol to the bulk of Bhojpuri population. It seems that a process of erosion/diffusion of Bhojpuri identity has taken place over the years. And this diffusion of Bhojpuri identity can partly be attributed to official language policy. Imagine for moment if Bhojpuri was recognised officially as a language, would'nt be the situation different from what exists today! Can we say that possibility of flowering a cultural nationalism was throttled by the exercise of the official language policy? It was assumed by the national level of leadership that Hindi, if popularised as 'rashtra bhasha', will strengthen 'national unity'. This kind of thinking equates homogeneity with political unity and we dare say that such an assumption in a country like India is rather unfortunate. We have seen the erosion of linguistic cultural identity of Bhojpuri
speech community; there are 'n' number of such cases. This reality is but a mockery of any task undertaken in the name of building a unified nation. The problem of the different nationalities and the consolidation of numerous nationalities into a 'comprehensive nation' stares at us. The failure in the nation building endeavour can be attributed to the failure to grasp two realities:

(i) many of India's linguistic groups are 'nations' or possess the potential of growing into nation; and
(ii) nation building in India is essentially a problem of political and cultural integration of a multi-ethnic and multi national state.

In our task of building a composite nation, we can not wish away the existence of nationalities of distinct languages and cultures. The Union of India is composed of several nationalities, major and minor, united into a single state. The rights of marginalized collectivities / nationalities to cultural autonomy, and to reassert their identities must be acknowledged.
Notes and References

1. We are not denying the importance of technology or the effects of the process of modernization on the development of language. Nor are we undermining the significance of studying language in the specific context of nationalism, seen as emerging under specific socio-economic conditions, i.e., decline of feudalism and role of language in the formation of national market. For this point see "On the Formation of the Hindustani Nation and the Problem of its National Language", Indian Literature, No. 1 (1953); Ram Vilas Sharma, Bhasha Aur Samaj (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 1980) (in Hindi).