CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One’s life and life world is very much shaped and constrained by the language one uses. And access to a language is access to a world, a culture, a community, its values, its outlook, its histories, its traditions in short its evolution from or in an age. Language has a life trajectory of its own. It also dies. Origin of a language, its evolution, its growth and its gradual decline can be foundational to make sense of a culture, a community as it has evolved, grown and finally has declined. And this process of origin and decline of a language is problematic. Language does not exist in isolation; nor do communities. These two are always co-relational. Languages in India were revitalized in a new form from the beginning of nineteenth century. Identity formations on the basis of language and its politics combined with the creation of modern ‘communities’ in the form of nation state, made the study of language one of the most fascinating and informative area of study. However, at the same time language remains an extremely problematic category for any social or scientific enquiry.

With the formation of nation states the role of language becomes far more important as a tool for social and political mobilisation. It also played a critical role in the psychological and emotional assimilation of the heterogeneous people of newly imagined communities. And almost everywhere one language was turned out to be the major and later as the national language of the country by submerging the status of other languages.¹ In India, an enormous amount of literature is available on language politics. But going beyond the prevailing studies on the language politics in India, which tends to focus on the Hindi – Urdu debate, the present study explores the dynamic inter-relationship between Hindi and its ‘dialect’ Maithili.² The present study tries to examine the following questions – how

² Maithili has been now well recognized as an independent language within Hindi Heartland. But for many decades an unsuccessful attempt had been made by the supporters of Hindi to classify Maithili merely as a dialect of Hindi. The case of Maithili allows me to understand the dynamic inter-relationship between Hindi and Maithili. Because of the association of Maithils with Hindi and Hindu nationalism, Hindi had never been completely opposed in Maithili speaking region of Bihar. But, when it tried to appropriate Maithili within its fold as a ‘dialect’, Maithils not just become cautious about their association with Hindi but also opposed such appropriation, and finally a movement has emerged on the basis of Maithili.
does the politics of language play out in the context of nation state, producing one ‘major language’ and relegating other existing languages to the status of ‘dialects’? How did the modernization of languages along with print and colonial rule affect the growth of a particular language? What are the dynamic processes by which people come to identify their interests with their language, to build associations in order to pursue those interests? How do linguistic communities evolve, develop and assert and also destabilize the language - dialects distinction?

According to Paul Brass ‘Language becomes a symbol of group identity’ and it can play both an assimilative as well as divisive role in a society. In India there have been identity formations on the basis of language to an unprecedented scale during the anti colonial struggle and immediately after the first and second decade of independence. Since then, there has been a succession of linguistic movements which have sometimes seemed to be on the point of challenging the unity of the country. However, most of the existing literature on language politics in India is confined to Hindi vs. Urdu or Hindi vs. Hindustani or Hindi vs. English. Hardly any work has taken up the case of other existing languages, particularly those of north India. There is hardly any critical scrutiny of the so called ‘Hindi heartland’ or the process of ‘assimilation’. In the present study an attempt is made to understand this process within Hindi heartland in the context of the dynamic inter-relationships between Hindi and Maithili.

1.1 Language: Some Conceptual Explorations

There are different ways to understand or conceptualize a language. In the general sense of the term language is used for communicative purposes by a group of people who constitute the speech or language community. It is basically understood as a means of communication among the members of a particular community. This is called the communicative function of language. But language is also understood as an emblem of ‘groupness’, as a symbol, a rallying point, which continues to play an important role in

---

4 The process of assimilation can be understood as absorbing the difference into a particular kind of identity and also as re- hierarchising the existing status of different identities, for example see, Dalmiya, Vasudha, The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1997.
ethnic and nationalist sentiments. This is called the *symbolic function* of language. Here the power of the language extends beyond the communicative function. In other words, language is very much related to the concepts like recognition, particularly when language is understood not just in written and spoken form but in association with culture, identity and a whole way of life. So fight for the recognition of a language by a linguistic community can be understood as a fight for recognition of their culture, their identity and their ways of life as well.

Language occupied the attention of great minds in all the ages. In the beginning of modernity or enlightenment era the study of philology was considered to be more conducive to make sense of the human being, their outlook, their origin, their evolutions, their interconnectedness and the impossibility of their reconciliation in near future. It is also used to make sense of the world as it exists, its differences in culture, habits and manners. In the first phase of this debate philosophers and philologist were preoccupied with the idea of the origin of the language. After that, contentious and still unsuccessful classifications of language into different families, followed. Many, perhaps because of the residue of religious thoughts in their minds, continued to believe in the principle of the divine origin of language. In his thesis on *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, Herder rejects the divine origin of the language and has explained in detail the human invention of language. For him, language is not something which is just a medium of expression or communication that is external to us. A human child invents his or her own language first to make sense of the bewildering world that s/he experiences; then depending upon the stages of his/her invention, s/he goes on to develop this language. And this is a progressive movement of language that is internal to the child.

For Herder, language in this sense is an expression of one’s own nature, feelings, values, manners, character and connected to individual soul. Human reason and rationality function within it. So he also refutes the claim that it is human reason and rationality that

---

creates or invents language. In his opinion, it is actually reason and rationality that functions within that language which human invents or creates for himself or herself. He is critical of formal language teaching and the development of a language through its grammars and dictionaries. It obstructs the natural progress of a language and evacuates it of its real expression of feelings and makes it artificial. However, one cannot completely ignore the creative role of grammar and dictionaries either. One may also find in many creative writings the expression of feelings – real or imagined - to which the readers get connected. They can relate to its narratives in some way or the other.

The most striking thing in Herder’s writing is the connection he makes between language and the human soul, instead of with his intellect or reason. And this is perhaps true still in the age of scientific language where this connection has been breached. Language when made too decorative, obstructs the real feelings and emotions or felt experiences and becomes a means of manipulation. It produces an artificial construct. Such linguistic practices result in the loss of a language which we first learnt to understand both objects external to us as well as our own feelings. Perhaps this is the reason why we still believe - and on this there is nearly universal consensus - that the mother tongue is the best medium to educate a child. And connection to other languages that one learns can never be the same as it is with one’s mother-tongue.

In this treatise Herder basically connects language to the human soul. He explains the human origin of the language which they invent for themselves, ‘from the sounds of living nature’. So even a deaf and dumb person must also invent a language for herself to understand her surroundings, even if she lives in a lonely island and her eyes and ears remain forever closed. Her soul cannot remain without a language. Herder went on to argue that the first vocabulary of a language is a collection of ‘the sounds of the whole world’. And human soul through these sounds connects itself to those surrounding sounds and objects. In this way every object of nature seems to interact with the human soul and gives rise to emotions and feelings – love or hate, curse or blessing, softness or opposition - towards that particular object. In this understanding feelings form the basis of any sense or understanding, even of the production and reproduction of meaning as well as the gendering of language. So it is natural that the first human utterance was sound and as a language it is poetic expression in terms of songs that
humans uttered and evolved prior to the development of more regular, monotonous and regimented language. The mere utterance of the sound and its sensation could not have led to the origin of human language. It was possible through ‘naming each creature in accordance with its own language’. So each creature has a language of its own, it uses and speaks it for itself.

He goes on to explain that hearing is indispensible and forms the middle sense for the growth of human language. Vision combined with reason take us away from ourselves; similarly feelings keep sensation to itself and its organs. Feelings are too obscure and incoherent to express and vision is too abstract to comprehend. Hence it is hearing which stands in the middle and communicates with both. In this sense, ‘human being is formed to be a linguistic creature’. 

So everything, starting from becoming aware of our surroundings, to understanding and thinking about it, is done in a language which we invent inwardly and express it outwardly. And throughout our life our existence is oriented towards this understanding, that is, towards the progress of our language. Hence, according to Herder, language teaching in the classroom through grammars actually obstructs the progress of a language. It alienates language from its natural spirit. It shows the finality of a language. According to Herder, a human being is at the root of what is forceful, what is powerful, what is great, what is essential in a language and not grammars or textbooks. One interesting contrast he makes is between a human infant who is fragile, weak and needier in the beginning than the offspring of an animal. Yet it is the human infant, through inventing a language and through constant practice and perfection in it, may become ‘inwardly united whole’. This capacity is not endowed to the other species on the earth. He also refutes the singularity of a language. For Herder there are differences and plurality in language use within a language system between wife and the husband, teachers and the pupils, father and the son, mother and the daughter, between the young and young and the old. Besides climate, air, water, food and drink have an immense influence on the linguistic organs and naturally on language.

---

7 Ibid., p. 12.
Language in this sense has an origin, spread or expansion through human being alone within a community and also outside. But it is very difficult to classify them into different language family. Like any other objects, it has a life, it grows, and it dies depending upon the circumstances and transformations within and outside it. With every new generation there is something new that is added to it; it does not pass through one generation to the other as it exist. ‘The first thought in [the] first human soul is connected with the last soul in the last human soul’.  

Language is also deeply connected with the social and political forces in the society. Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, writes *A word in the mouth of a particular individual is a product of the living interaction of social forces*. Many terms in linguistic analysis, like heteroglossia, intertextuality and the linguistic construction of the self are closely associated with one of the most complex and original, yet obscure thinker of twentieth century Miakhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895 – 1975). He was a late discovery for the modern west in late 1970 and in 80s and 90s. He was taken seriously firstly in literary theories and cultural studies and then in linguistics. It is strange that the world takes him seriously in the age of post-structuralism and postmodernism, for he wrote during the high time of structuralism. Inspired by Kantian philosophy and neo- Kantian thought that focused on the dialectic relationship of mind and matter, Bakhtin’s lifelong concern was to understand the perception that stems from this relationship. He wanted to study language independently, free from the clutches of grammarians and philologists, who tried to impose a system upon the languages through abstraction. He was critical of Saussure who studied language as a system over which he gave little control to speakers. Saussure divides language into *langue* and *parole*, and he focused on *langue* as a systematic and scientific way to understand language. He considered *parole* as unsystematic and unworthy of scientific study. Contrary to this Bakhtin made the parole in his term *utterance* the central part of his study of language. For him “the actual

---

8 Ibid., p. 48.
reality of language – speech – is not the abstract system of linguistic norms… but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance”. 11 His whole work is based upon two premises – first, the role of signs on human thought and second, the role of utterance in language. He considered utterance as the most important part of a language. It is utterance which gives life to a language and also combines the experience or consciousness of the speaker and materiality of the language. This leads to dialogism between the uttered words and meaning. Hence, for him, the word has no meaning in itself and the same word may mean different things in separate contexts. Even the same word may mean different things in the same context depending upon the intonation of the speaker.

In his understanding, an utterance and its meaning are context bound. This puts the listener and speaker into a particular relationship but context itself is boundless and this form what he calls *heteroglossia*. Here an utterance is a step in a chain of communications between individuals - the meaning of which is an effect in an already existing eco-system of language. It ‘is the effect of an interaction between speaker and listener produced via the material of a particular sound complex’.12 So any understanding of an utterance is dialogic, essentially plural and not fixed, singular or static. This is connected to his idea of polyphony.

Considering language as a social phenomenon, Bakhtin disagrees with those who emphasize on individual subjectivity in language use. For him, the right way to understand the self is from the social to the individual rather than from the self to the social. It is in language, not in the nation state, that social force finds its most realized expression. All society and all culture and their degrees of openness and boundedness can be classified on the basis of the way they handle *reported speech* - by which he means speech of the other, speech within speech, utterance within utterance, speech about the speech and also utterance about the utterance.

In this way we find in Bakhtin, the location of language in a wide and complex web of human existence. He was so sure about the heterogeneity of this existence that he refuted strongly any claim of homogeneity. His understanding of language not only

---

11 Ibid., p. 221.
12 Ibid., p. 232.
questions the singularity of language but it also questions those systematic and scientific studies of language which look at it as an independent variable free from the context.

Another extremely insightful analysis on language is provided by the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu. In his *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), he criticizes Chomsky’s work on language where Chomsky gives greater emphasis to the ‘generative capacity’ of competent speakers. Chomsky makes a distinction between ‘competence’, that is, knowledge of a language possessed by an ideal speaker/hearer in a completely homogeneous speech community, and ‘performance’ which is the actual use of language in concrete situations. According to Bourdieu, this distinction leads linguists to take for granted an object domain which is, in fact, the product of a complex set of social, historical and political conditions of formation. Language cannot be understood in isolation from these social economic conditions. For him, the completely homogeneous language and speech community does not exist in reality. So the right approach to study language phenomena would be looking at the ways in which particular languages have emerged historically as dominant ones in particular geographical locales, often in conjunction with the formation of modern nation states.

The key concept that Bourdieu develops in his approach is *habitus*, that is, a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without being consciously coordinated or governed by any ‘rule’. These are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation. According to Bourdieu, religion and politics achieve their most successful ideological effects by exploiting the possibilities inherent in the social inequality of the ‘legitimate’ language. In his words ‘specialized discourses can drive their efficacy from the hidden correspondence between the structure of the social space within which they are produced the political field, the religious field, the artistic field, the philosophical field etc. and the structure of the field of social classes within which the recipients are situated and in relation to which they interpret the message’.

So it is clear that the study of language in isolation from social and economic elements

---

of space and time will not be a fruitful exercise. But he also believes that social science has to take into account the autonomy of the language, its specific logic and its particular rules of operation. In particular, one cannot understand the symbolic effects of language without making allowance for the fact, frequently attested, that language is an exemplary formal mechanism whose generative capacities are without limits. The infinitely generative capacities of language provide it with the power to produce existence itself, by generating the collectively recognized and thus realized representation of existence. This is possibly the principal support of the dream of absolute power.

Regarding the production and reproduction of legitimate language, Bourdieu writes that ‘language form(s) a kind of wealth which all can make use of at once without causing any diminution of the store and which thus admits a complete community of enjoyment; for all, freely participating in the general treasure, unconsciously aid in its preservation’.\textsuperscript{14} For him integration into a single ‘linguistic community, which is a product of the political domination, that is endlessly reproduced by institutions capable of imposing universal recognition of the dominant language, is the condition for the establishment of relations of linguistic domination’.\textsuperscript{15} He also acknowledged the role played by dictionaries, the educational systems and the nation building exercise in the production of \textit{standard} language. What is missing in his analysis is the important role played by \textit{print capitalism} in the standardization and modernization of languages. In the present work I have discussed the role of print while discussing Benedict Anderson’s idea of language, print capitalism and nationalism.\textsuperscript{16}

The use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse depends on the social position of speaker, which governs the access s/he can have to the language of the institution that is to ‘the official, orthodox and legitimate speech’. The power of language, as many believe, does not reside within itself. According to Bourdieu, in reality, it resides in the institutional conditions of their production and reception. The language of authority never governs without the collaboration of those it governs,

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{16} Discussed later in this chapter, pp. 11-13.
without the help of the social mechanisms capable of producing this complicity, which is the basis of all authority.

Languages are also seen as ‘different systems reflecting different varieties of human condition. Although they may be unequal in complexity at given points, this does not imply that some have, overall, greater expressive power. Environment differs and, therefore, the things that must be detailed in language differ’.¹⁷ Discarding the view of language purity he believes that language changes - adapting to new conditions and requirements - but it does not do so in terms of linguistic purity. Different social, geographical and other conditions determine this change. This is an important formulation that Edwards establishes and this has proved to be a critical insight in exploring the contentious relationship between language and ‘dialects’ in the context of Hindi and Maithili in the present study.

1.2 Language and ‘Dialects’

A common distinction that is drawn between ‘language and dialects is that, dialects are considered as mutually intelligible varieties of one language while languages are mutually unintelligible’.¹⁸ Dialects have long been used, of course, to denote a substandard deviation from some prestigious variety or standard form. Dictionary definitions have supported this view, e.g. the Oxford English Dictionary has considered a dialect as ‘one of the subordinate forms or varieties of a language arising from local peculiarities’. Sometimes there have been other criteria for this distinction based on the existence of grammar and written literature. If a language lacked it, then it was relegated to the status of ‘dialects’.

Another complexity in this distinction can be understood by the following examples; Cantonese and Mandarin speakers, despite a lack of mutual intelligibility, are both considered to have dialects of Chinese, not only because they use the same written form but also because they are both members of the Chinese state. Norwegian and Danish speakers, although they can understand one another well, are seen to speak different

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 18.
languages because of different socio-political allegiances.\textsuperscript{19} So, there are no inherent linguistic or aesthetic criteria of division between language and ‘dialects’. It is very often based on the social prestige and the power of their speakers in relationship to the Nation State. This language – ‘dialects’ distinction is contingent and subject to change. In the present study the changing relationship between language and dialects is explored in the context of Hindi and Maithili. Our perception and opinion does not emerge in vacuum. Similar is the case with language and ‘dialects’. What we consider a ‘dialect’ or a ‘language’ is conditioned by the prevailing socio-political conditions. Of course there exists a difference between language and dialects but this very act of differentiation is an exercise of power.

There are over 1,600 mother tongues reducible to about 200 languages in India.\textsuperscript{20} According to Annamalai, socio linguistic research in India has naturally concentrated on language maintenance, functional distribution or communication pattern, convergence and code mixing. The studies show that the multilingual scene in India is changing. The fundamental change is the change in the role of language for political control and social mobility in independent democratic India. Earlier, English played the pervasive role for political control and social mobility and it was the sole, dominant language. Now many Indian languages compete for the dominant position at different levels and the minority languages seek protection from unfavourable domination. This leads to language conflict at the societal level. The reorganization of the provinces into linguistic states based on the principle of one language for one state made it possible for the emergence of the numerically largest language in the state as the dominant language. This changed the sociolinguistic relation between languages and the conflicts inherent in the struggle to attain an acceptable position, and led to linguistic tensions. Further, he claims, that the linguistic variables are manipulated to express social relations such as social distance, social control, social solidarity and social identity. Undoubtedly Annamalai gives an insightful description of linguistic tensions in India.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 20.
Most of the existing research\textsuperscript{21} shows that language politics had its strong manifestation during anti colonial movement especially during the 1920s when Gandhi emerged on the political scenario in India and when large sections of masses participated in the national movement. This was also a time when, along with the English educated elite/leadership, there emerged a bilingual leadership which acquired the role of local/vernacular as well as national leadership by their ability to corresponded between the vernacular masses on the one hand and colonial state and the \textit{limited} ‘public sphere’ created by the English speaking elite on the other. There was the emergence of a new leadership in vernacular languages as well, but they did find enormous difficulty in asserting their voice in the emerging ‘public political sphere’ in India. They mostly remained recipients of the language provided by the English or bilingual leadership. Yet they were never completely assimilated; these vernacular elites were constantly struggling in more subtle ways, though largely marginalized for the time being, to assert their voice and their differences from the given/projected national language of India. India has witnessed these manifestations in the first and second decades after independence and these are still continuing in one form or the other.

During the nationalist phase of the 1920s and even before that, Hindi was being considered the national language in India. Though there were many controversies about ‘Hindi’ that I will discuss later, here it is suffice it to say that while Hindi did exist earlier, it was not the same print modern ‘Hindi’ that we know today. Secondly, it did not have the same power or dominance over other languages or ‘dialects’ in the region that it acquired during this period. It has acquired an unprecedented capacity for social and political mobilization. One of the purposes of the present research is to analyze this process. How was a particular language created as a national language? What was the politics behind it? Did socio-economic conditions and colonial legacy play a role in it? What was the role of \textit{print capitalism} in the modernization and standardisation of language? How did it affect the development of other existing independent language – relegating them to status of ‘dialects’?\textsuperscript{21}

1.3 Politics of Language: Print Capitalism, Nation and Nationalism

One of the essential requisite for the formation of modern communities across the globe was the search for a tool which could connect people and tie them together in different ways than the earlier notions of kinship, caste, clan and religion used to do. The development of *print capitalism*, according to Benedict Anderson, ends that search and makes it possible to link fraternity, power and time meaningfully together. He argued that there were two features of ‘newer nationalisms’ that ‘changed the face of the old world’. First, in almost all of them, ‘national print language’ was of central ideological or political importance. Second, all were able to work from visible models provided by their distant and not so distant predecessors.  

Further, examining the rise of nationalism in modern Europe, he writes that print languages laid the basis for national consciousness in three distinct ways: First, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of the varieties of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via – print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of the thousands or millions who were similarly placed in the same process. These fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed in their secular, particular – visible invisibility, the embryo of a nationally imagined community. Second, print capitalism gave a new fixity of language which, in the long run, helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation. Third, print capitalism created languages-of-power of a kind different from older administrative vernaculars. Certain dialects inevitably were ‘closer’ to each print language and dominated their final forms. Their disadvantaged cousins, still assimilable to the emerging print language, lost caste, above all because they were unsuccessful in insisting on their own print form.  

For Anderson ‘the general growth in literacy, commerce, industry, communication and state machinery that marked the nineteenth century created powerful new impulses for

---

22 Anderson, Benedict, 1991, p. 66; for the critique to this second feature of nationalism see Chatterjee, Partha, *Nation and Its Fragments*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995, here he criticised Anderson by arguing that if the *model* was already available for the newer nationalism then what was left for them to imagine.

23 Ibid., pp. 44 – 45.
vernacular linguistic unification within each dynastic realm’. The role of language in nation building can be also understood from Seton Watson’s description of Finnish nationalism- ‘the leaders of the burgeoning Finnish nationalist movement were persons whose profession largely consisted of the handling of language- writers, teachers, pastors and lawyers. The study of folklore and the rediscovery and piecing together of popular epic poetry went together with the publication of grammars and dictionaries, and led to the appearance of periodicals which served to standardize Finnish literary (print) language, on behalf of which stronger political demand could be advanced’.  

So language, while providing the tool for political mobilisation, itself went through a dramatic change with the publication of grammars, dictionaries and formation of newer states. In the case of India, like Latin, Sanskrit provided a link language to the length and breadth of the country, but unlike in Europe, the standardisation of vernacular languages did not lead to the rise of smaller nationalisms. However, with the rise of print and standardisation of vernacular languages, an exclusive sphere for each language was created that has blocked the circulation of ideas, beliefs, rituals and practices between and among these various linguistic groups. These modern vernacular linguistic communities remained a part of the Indian nation. This created an unresolved tension in India with regard to its national and official language. Here a great many number of languages are used simultaneously for official purpose. And with the growth of print capitalism many new linguistic groups are agitating for the official recognition of their languages. The present work is an attempt to understand such tensions with regard to the expansion of Hindi as the national language and the rise of the Maithili language movement in north Bihar.

Among the existing literature on the issue of language politics in India and the process of nationalisation and nation formation on the basis of that, there are some works which has analysed this whole process very critically. One such work is authored by Vasudha Dalmiya. In her work The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions she examines the construction of modern Hindi, first as the language of all the Hindus and later on as the language of all the nationalists in India and how the personality of Harischandra and his literary works and nineteenth century Banaras played a crucial role in this formulation. She cites the work of A. Kemilainen (1964) according to whom ‘between 1850 – 1870

---

there was consensus amongst comparative philologists in Europe that linguistic criteria were indeed the most reliable in determining the classification of the various races of mankind. Common language implied a common mentality as well, which could be traced back in time through means of language’.  

Dalmiya examines the role of the merchant class in language agitations in nineteenth century India. She writes ‘it was largely from the ranks of the merchant then, that the agitation for the recognition of Hindi as the language of the courts was carried out, making Allahabad and Banaras the joint centres of the Hindi movement’. She further stresses that ‘in the actual substantive development of modern Hindi prose and the standardisation of vocabulary and orthography, the terrain was at first occupied by missionaries and schoolbook writers. After the mid-century, however, the concept of Hindi as the language of the Hindus, with vast territorial and ideological aspirations, was appropriated by nationalists and henceforth developed almost exclusively by them’. So, she asserts that ‘the development of Hindi was, then, not to be separated from its cultural and religious identification with Hindus at a supra regional and later at national level. The evolution of Hindi as the language of the Hindus continued through the nineteenth century. It can be viewed as a threefold process:

(1) It was first and foremost a process of dichotomization, that is, separation from Urdu, coupled with the claim of absolute autonomy for Hindi.

(2) The language thus separated was standardized by means of grammars, dictionaries and school primers, which not only represented autonomy but also cultivated and increased it, by introducing new vocabulary and stressing those phonological and grammatical alternatives that were different from those of Urdu, the contrast language which most threatened its autonomy.

(3) Along with standardization came historicization, that is, the process of establishing historical links with literary works connected with great ideological movements of the past. Speech communities create myths and genealogies concerning the origin and development of standard varieties of language. The archivisation thus constructed, provides for respectable ancestry. The origin of Hindi from Sanskrit as the ancient mother tongue of the Aryans was supported by the nineteenth century discovery of historical regularity. The great ideological

---

26 Ibid., p. 94.
movement which Hindi came to be associated with, was offered by the devotional bhakti movement, which came to be seen as the Hindu response to the threat posed by Islam.  

In this process she does acknowledge the role of British administrators and missionaries in the codification of Hindi as the language of Hindus but its ideological and political projection as the national language in India was largely an indigenous affair.

In another equally brilliant and critical work Christopher R. King in *One Language and Two Scripts* suggests a distinct analysis of language movement(s) and its role in shaping the discourse of communalism and nationalism in India. King differs from the mainstream in that he does not believe that the villain in the act of partition of British India is to be found among the protagonists of the Urdu language. His book proposes instead that the Hindi movement motivated a communal consciousness in pre-independence India. It emphasizes that the movement ‘not only expressed but reinforced’ a communal awareness which can be seen as culminating in the birth of Pakistan in 1947. He asserts that the Hindi movement in the nineteenth century consciously distinguished people in terms of religion and language – and language was determined by its script and vocabulary, not by its actual linguistic configuration.

King has applied Karl Deutsch’s method of social mobilization, assimilation and differentiation in his study, where by social mobilization, he means ‘a process of change occurring in areas undergoing modernization, which brings increasing members of the more isolated portions of population into an ever denser net of social communication.’ He justifies Deutsch’s formulation that the rate of assimilation- ‘a process of change which brings different peoples or ethnic groups within the same political system or into the same network of social communication’- must keep ahead of that of social mobilization, if differentiation is not to result. His study begins with an account of the conscious attempt at the college of Fort William to differentiate language in terms of script and the vocabulary. In his view Hindu ideologue tried to differentiate

---

27 Ibid., pp. 147 – 148.
29 Ibid., p. 2.
30 Ibid.
everyday use of Hindi or Hindustani from Urdu through the process of sanskrativization and standardization of Hindi. He described how this process leads to a change in the equation Hindi or Hindustani = Hindu + Muslim, written in both Nagari and Persian script, into Hindi = Hindu and Urdu = Muslim.\footnote{Ibid., p. 15.} He has also discusses the internal tension in the process of assimilation within Hindi movement – especially among the supporter of the Braj and Khar boli Hindi. He assesses the role of ‘multiple symbol congruence’ in this process, that is the process by which political elites choose one symbol as the primary and strive to bring other symbol into line. I think this require much more exploration, to know the processes and politics behind it. How much the leaders of the movement were free to do that? Were they guided by nationalist imagination or were they capable of thinking beyond its boundaries?

Taking the Hindi vs. Urdu as a model he also explores the role of organizations like Nagari Pracharin Sabha and Anjuman-e-Urdu. To make their separate languages pure from alien words these organizations played a very crucial role in the process of differentiation. King also explains the economic factor – employment; especially in government sector, behind the language politics. He considered government’s language and education policy responsible for the differentiation of languages in India. He observes that Sanskritized Khar boli Hindi went through a process of assimilation and differentiation to establish its supremacy among the languages of India. It particularly distinguished and distanced itself from Urdu and gradually arrived at the point where it could set itself up as the national language of India. This form of Hindi not only undermined the position of Braj bhasha as the literary medium, but also proceeded to claim other languages then in circulation in the north India as its ‘dialects’. In this work he finds that how Hindi managed to create ‘a loosely unified nation’ and failed to create ‘a coherent nation’. However, this theoretically and empirically rich analysis of King has some limitations. First, it is essentially reductionist as it approaches the subject of language politics through a particular method – set by Karl Deutsch to study nationalism. Second, it gives maximum emphasis on Hindi – Urdu confrontations, as if it was the only one monolithic confrontation in language politics in India. Third, the process of assimilation within the Hindi and Urdu movement needs much more
exploration. The why and how of ‘multiple symbol congruence’, which played an important role in language politics in India, demands much more attention. Yet, his is one of the most insightful studies on the language politics and on the basis of that formation of nationalism and communalism in India.

Alok Rai in his *Hindi Nationalism* tries to explore how the politics of language seek to retrospectively and in all finality distinguish Hindi from Urdu on the basis of script and religious-cultural allegiance? For Rai, modern print Hindi as we know it today, came into existence in the course of nineteenth century. He talks about different categories of mainstream languages. Hindi and Urdu, without inverted commas are used to indicate the largely oral language also known as - Hindi/ Hindui /Hindavi, which was not excessively Sanskritzed or Perso-Arabianised. ‘Hindi’ and ‘Urdu’ within inverted commas refer to two identifiable style or registers which, in the service of ulterior agendas, have been ‘sought to hived off and infected with, on the one hand sanskritic, and on the other Perso - Arabic borrowings’. ³² According to Rai, the Hindi that we know today and the awareness of its Hinduness could be said to have been almost imposed upon the populace by colonial intervention a good few decades before the Hindu elites themselves took up the cause of Hindu – Hindi. To present the status of Hindi in the middle of nineteenth century Rai cites one example of 1846, when James Ballantyle, the newly appointed principal of the Benares Sanskrit College, asked the students of the college to use Hindi in their written exercise. Their somewhat bewildered response shows clearly that the term ‘Hindi’ had little or no currency at least in this part of the north India. We don’t clearly understand what you Europeans mean by the term Hindi, for there are hundreds of dialects all in our opinion equally entitled to the name…”³³

According to Rai, Hindi at the end of nineteenth century had many battles to fight before it could claim fully fledged literary, social and official status and finally distinguish itself from Urdu. ‘The MacDonnell Moment’ concentrates more on the colonial – the official, missionary and local. ‘The Heroic Agenda’ focuses on the indigenous elite enterprise of creating the national language via the standardization of

---

³³ Ibid., pp. 65 – 66.
the print/literary language and the formulation of the political agenda which went hand in hand with it. For Rai, when MacDonnell on 18 April 1900 declared, ‘permissive but not exclusive use of Hindi in courts’, it was explicitly a political move. As MacDonnell in his letter to Curzon then the governor of Bengal, writes, that by this act he tried to curb the Muslim threat; posed by their greater presence in administration. Rai also believes that language question was one of power struggle among the elites rather than a matter of wide public concern. Standard Hindi was yet to become the language of widespread domestic use in the cities; it had little rural presence. But in the first decade of the twentieth century there had come to be widespread agreements amongst the propagators of ‘Hindi’ that it was indeed being spoken (almost) everywhere in north India. Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi and Saraswati literary magazine played an important role to standardize Hindi from Sanskritic terms and concepts using print. Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya ‘Harioundh’ favoured sanskritised Hindi to common Hindi to reclaim the respect and prestige. Rai believes that Hindi’s assimilation of Sanskrit words pose more threat than a promise of national glory. In the Constituent Assembly, the fanatics of Hindiwallahs destroyed the prospect of Hindi as the sole national language of India. It resulted in the Munshi – Ayangar formula that recommended Hindi to be the official language of republic along with Urdu. Certainly Rai persuades us to rethink the question of national language and to engage more closely with the interconnections between language, identity and politics.

In the first section of her book *The Hindi Public Sphere*, entitled ‘Language and Literary Sphere’, Francesca Orsini documents the role of print in the production of new literary journals and how it created a new literate and limited public sphere? She also discusses the role of school curricula and teaching methods, *Kavi Sammelans* in the expansion of this public sphere. In the second section ‘Language Literature and Publicity’ Orsini demonstrates that ‘Hindi’s claim to be the national language of India was an ideological construct’. She shows how this construct was developed and its claims forcefully urged at the expense of *Braj*, of Urdu, of local languages and oral traditions, and of the clear historical facts of linguistic diversity and pluralism. ‘The issue of national language is thus embedded in rhetoric of an all inclusive religious

---

34 Orsini, Francesca, 2002, p. 126.
community along devotional lines. Just as the path of devotion is open to all and are both a means and an end. So the national language is presented as the means to create a national community open to all and conferring a sense of unity.\textsuperscript{35} Besides popularizing Hindi, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi helped in producing an ideological construct which linked the issue of \textit{nij bhasha} with that of \textit{rashtra bhasha}. He writes ‘without a common language there can never arise the national pride, there can never be national unity. Only Hindi can attain the status of countrywide language’. Others who fostered the cause of Hindi were Madan Mohan Malviya, Purusottam Das Tandon, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Acharya Narendra Dev, Babu Sampurnanda and others. In the rest of the sections she describes how ‘the hindi establishment’ played itself out in different domains. ‘The use of history’ looks at Hindi nationalists reading of history which results in the creation of ‘general and homogeneous categories, ‘we’ Hindu – Indians, ‘they’ Muslim Foreigners.\textsuperscript{36}

In ‘Women and Hindi Public Sphere’ we learn how, over this period, women found ideological loopholes wherever they could. As nationalist feeling grew, the idea of service to ‘mother’ India could be framed as a virtuous alternative to the service of a husband. She also describes how women through education and publication of journals like \textit{chamd} gained ‘more than just a voice and a discursive space. Greater mobility and acceptance of women in public spaces, unthinkable in north India only a generation earlier, were undeniably a fruit of these decades’.\textsuperscript{37} But these were not without tensions. In ‘The Hindi Political Sphere’ she examines the behaviour of the ‘Hindi Politicians’ and the nature of the authority they sought to claim. In this chapter she also takes up the case of peasants and peasant’s activism to examine both their critique of north Indian society and of the Hindi political sphere, and the structural difficulties they faced in making their voice heard. She asked whether nationalist ‘we’ represent ‘them’ - the peasants.\textsuperscript{38} She concludes by expressing that the ‘Hindi establishments’ had acquired the institutional stranglehold over the transmission of officially recognized knowledge that it largely retains today. Its narrowness, provinciability and moral and normative

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Ibid., pp. 241 – 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 306.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 130.
\end{itemize}
biasness have had sad effects. Not only Persian and Urdu perspectives but also “oral traditions and morally ‘suspect literary genres’ have been eliminated from the canon”. ‘All these threads needs to be retrieved from the mesh of ignorance and moral bias, and need to be woven together afresh if we want not only a truer picture of north Indian literary culture, but a non communal understanding of it as well, finding institutional spaces for this knowledge will, of course, be crucial’. Undoubtedly, Orsini’s is perhaps the most critical work on the subject of language politics in north India that gives minute details on the expansion of Hindi in the different spheres of life and the assimilation process and how a Hindi public sphere had been created between 1920 and 1940. But there are certain limitations to this work as well. First, it does not take into accounts the happenings in language movement and mobilisations after 1940. Second, in its exploration of the Hindi heartland, she does not take into account the processes through which the dominance of Hindi was achieved, and how it affected the other existing languages. Nor does her work explore the processes that were going on within these other existing languages.

For Hindi to be accepted as the national language of India, Congress support was crucial during the anti colonial struggle which seemed assured when Gandhi sat on the presidential seat of the eighth Hindi Sahitya Sammelan meeting in Indore in 1918. He said, ‘until all public activities take place in Hindi the country can’t progress. Until Congress conducts all its activities in the rashtra bhasha we shall not attain swaraj’. The Congress session at Nagpur (1920) decided to set up its units in the provinces on the basis of linguistic region. In 1928, the all parties’ conference, presided over by Motilal Nehru, appointed a committee to draft a constitution for a full and responsible government in India. The committee recommended that the principle governing the redistribution of princes should be partly geographical, and partly economic and financial, but the main considerations must necessarily be the linguistic unity of the area concerned. The Calcutta Congress Session in 1937 reaffirmed its policy of forming linguistic states, and recommended the formation of Andhra and Karnataka. Thus it

39 Ibid., pp. 381 – 382.
was Hindi which was mostly used in the mainstream politics of nationalist mobilisation. How was Hindi used in the nation building and binding exercise can be understood thus—some youths were sent from the south to Allahabad for training and from Gandhi’s ashram Harihar Sharma was sent to Madras to set up Hindi courses. Gandhi also sent his younger son Devdas (who did not know Hindi at the time) and the experienced preacher Swami Satyadev ‘Parivrajak’. In eighteen years 600,000 south Indians were taught Hindi, 42,000 sat for the special examinations, and 600 teachers were trained who worked in 450 centres…

Language is often connected to the issue of culture and national-political imagination of the people. And they are intertwined in various complex ways. Language as a means of communication, sharing bonds or mother tongue of the people and when it becomes the basis for political mobilisation, it makes the whole issue of language more complex and fascinating at the same time. It allows the possibility of delving deeper into the symbolic use of language as a marker of cultural identity and the actual politics of related processes. A case to look at is the Anti-Heroes of Language Movement in Bangladesh. There was a movement for the inclusion of Bengali as the state language in Pakistan along with Urdu in 1952 and finally in 1956 Bengali was recognised as a state language of the Pakistan. But it was not the only objective of the language movement. To be recognised as a state language, Bengali had to be made the medium of instruction, a language of education from primary to university level, a language of science and culture. But according to Badrudin Umar, this larger objective of the language movement became ‘a matter of no concern for the Bengali bourgeoisie, even under Pakistan’. When Bangladesh became an independent nation-state, Bengali was made the state language in the constitution and as a medium of instruction from minor schools to university level. And this was considered as the realisation of the language movement of 1952 by the local bourgeoisie of Bangladesh. This, according to Umar, made them the Anti-heroes of the language movement. Bengali was introduced in the schools and teaching of English was withdrawn from the schools, no arrangements were made to provide the minimum number of books in Bengali. Now, there were no

---

42 Orsini, Francesca, 2002, p. 359, see footnotes no. 130.
effective ways to teach English for the ordinary students, it remains inaccessible to them. Bengali books were not sufficiently available. This leads to continuous lowering of standard of education in Bangladesh. And it produces a dichotomy in the society where English is not totally boycotted but made inaccessible to ordinary students at the same time ruling class and their children have access to English education. Now most of their children get better opportunities after education and prefer to settle in ‘fairy land’ US. This deprives the growth of indigenous Bengali language and the culture. Its parallel can be seen in the Hindi heartland in India as well, where the staunch supporters of Hindi against the English politically; as they consider it colonial hangover and foreign to India, which deprive the Hindi speaking masses from better opportunity and make policies to the effect that ordinary students get deprived of English education but the leaders of the Hindi movement send their children for English education. This makes the Hindi heartland in India a fascinating linguistic scene to investigate the political economy of the languages, to investigate the politics of language through the contours of culture, mother tongue, political identity and social mobilisation. In this linguistic scene of Hindi heartland we have national, English educated, middle class, bilingual elite (English and Hindi; few of them trilingual also with tacit support to Hindi), Local or Provincial bilingual elite (Hindi and their particular vernacular alone and not just Hindi) and then the large masses with little or no knowledge of Hindi let alone English. So when nationalist consciousness and awakening was taking place side by side, Hindi nationalism combined with Hindu nationalism was also expanding its social base in the region. But below these, there existed and still exist many vernacular spheres which challenges the claims of Hindi nationalism in a way by asserting their own independent identity. During the nationalist struggle there was an expansion of Hindi which relegated many other independent languages to the position of either minor language or ‘dialects’. This kind of linguistic politics created a unique condition in which at least three layers of linguistic interaction or assertion – English, Hindi and local vernacular – was/is taking place simultaneously and quite often independently of each other. In the present study an attempt is made to explore one such condition with special reference to Hindi and Maithili. In the Maithili linguistic sphere there had been simultaneous presence of Hindi and English. Hindi enjoys a privilege position in public spaces – Schools, Markets, Universities, Offices, Public Transports, etc. But this status
of Hindi has been questioned by the Maithili protagonists since the expansion of Hindi in the Maithili speaking region. Though, Hindi still enjoys somewhat higher status as the *rashtra bhasha* (national language) in the region, its opposition is stiffer when the legitimate status and space of Maithili is being diminished by the supporters of Hindi.

### 1.4 Outline of the Present Work

The present work is undertaken with an objective to explore the new aspects of the language politics within Hindi heartland in north India. During the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century various kinds of identity formations were taking place. One such important formation was on the basis of language. And these identities were hierarchised and rehierarchised since then. At times many identities were put together to give it more acceptable and meaningful existence. One such important combination was of language, religion and nation. Within the Hindi heartland this combination of ‘Hindi, Hindu and Hindustan’ gave rise to a new discourse on the linguistic identity and political mobilisation on the basis of language. And throughout the twentieth century there have been political polarisations on the basis of language. It led to a new kind of debates on language issue. This remained one of the challenging and the most complex and emotionally and politically charged issue since then. There have been a number of studies on the formation of such discourse and its correlation with Muslim and Urdu debate particularly within Hindi heartland. Recent studies of Dalmiya and Orsini put a historical perspective on such formation more critically. But these works do not take into account how this kind of formulation was also taking place in other languages within Hindi heartland as well. When Hindi was increasingly promoted in these other linguistic domains, what were their responses? Why and under what conditions these other linguistic communities adopted and also challenged the expansion of Hindi? Surprisingly most of the studies on linguistic identity formulation in north India are conspicuously silent about it. The present work seeks to answer some of these questions in the light of Maithili movement in north Bihar. Paul Brass, *The Maithili Movement in North Bihar*, remains the most brilliant analysis of the Maithili movement. It begins with pointing out the lack in existing social science theories on nationalism particularly in India, a serious approach towards the study of integration.

---

44 Brass, Paul R., 1974, Ch. 2.
and appropriation of many languages and dialects of the north by the Hindi movement. There is still reluctance to engage with these issues seriously. There are plethora of literature available within Hindi heartland on the issue of Hindi and Urdu but there are almost complete silence among the social scientists when it comes to the issue of Hindi and its ‘regional variants’ like Khari boli, Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Bagheli, Bundelkhandi, Rajasthani, Magahi, Maithili, etc. All these languages are clubbed together as ‘dialects’ of Hindi. Appropriation of all these languages within Hindi were considered as inevitable, even necessary to develop nationalism among these different linguistic and cultural groups not only by the Hindi zealots but also by the state institutions in modern India. Despite all these, the general approach towards these excesses continues to remain unnoticed and unexplored, as if these linguistic groups are insignificant. In South India there has been various attempts to study the languages and language based movement but in North India, the language debate is confined to, nay dominated by Hindi- Urdu controversy alone, and also at times by Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani as well. Even towards the issue of Maithili, which remains slightly older and little louder in its approach when it comes to asserting its independence from Hindi, there is an attitude to dub the whole movement by reducing it to its caste character- that is Maithili movement is dominated by Brahmans and Karna Kayastha. But this is only one aspect of the movement. This attitude does not allow us to understand how nationalist feeling was emerging and expanding within these not so separate, albeit porous linguistic and cultural boundaries of Hindi heartland? How these societies did came to terms with nationalist ideas? How and on what point did they challenge or oppose nationalist claim, if any? What was happening within these societies? Was there or is there still an assertion of the distinctiveness of their language against or along with the national language Hindi? And finally, I believe, through this issue of language and the movement based on language, we may be able to map out how these societies came to terms with our colonial modernity. In other words, how did traditional communities and societies in India encounter modernity? What is the lingering life of this encounter? How have these elements asserted themselves and put forward their demands in a postcolonial context? What if they reassert their demands as a separate and independent language in comparison to Hindi? What would be the repercussions of those politics and mobilisations?
Though the present work periodically covers more than a century of the Maithili movement, I do not intend to provide the detailed historical account and description of all the events and aspects of the Maithili movement chronologically. Rather I have tried to explore its emergence, growth and expansion in the context of larger linguistic movements in India, particularly in the Hindi heartland, where excessive focus has been given to Hindi – Urdu debate. In the context of the Maithili movement, this study attempts to open up new aspects in the existing research on the subject. In that connection it sought to revisit the dynamic hierarchy that was produced during the expansion of national language in the region, i.e. between Hindi and other languages of the region like Maithili, Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Magahi, etc. In the present study this hierarchisation and various contestations to it, is studied in the context of Hindi and Maithili. My other important attempt has been to understand how Maithili speakers evolved as a distinct modern community — within, moving away from its own traditional modes and externally, distancing itself from other emerging linguistic communities. In this way I have also tried to explore how a community engaged with ‘our modernity’ and in the process recreated itself and how that process is fraught with the various challenges of religion, nation and nationalism – provincial or parochial. In other words, Maithili language movement could also be studied from the point view of a community which, at the height of national movement, when Hindi was expanding its social and political base in India, accepted Hindi as the national language but at the same time, fought relentlessly for its own recognition as an independent language of modern India. And the movement have been quite successful in getting such recognition but Hindi’s expansion in the region is still unabated.

1.5 Research Methodology

I have explored this area of research not as a linguist. Instead I have made an attempt to look at the issue of politics of language as a social and political phenomena, as it had been played out in the context of nation state in India and how it continues to raise the consciousness among the masses about their linguistic, cultural and community identity. Essentially it is a *diachronic research*; looking at the issue of language politics and how
the inter-relationship between language and ‘dialects’ is contingent, over a period of
time. Study of the Maithili language and the movement is not confined to a specific
period, but includes its evolution and development in both pre and post independence
India. I have applied historical approach to study the formation, growth and
development of the Maithili movement over a century comparing it with the emergence
and expansion of national language Hindi, using extensive archival sources. It includes
both primary and secondary materials - historical books and narratives, autobiographies,
monographs, memoirs, essays, commentaries, Census reports, project reports,
felicitation volumes, magazines, journals, newspapers, official documents, pamphlets,
memorandums and personal files and letters regarding Maithili language and the
movement. Besides I have also made use of available research works and literatures on
the issue of language politics and language based movement.

The study of language politics is also concerned with the other issues like power,
intersection of leaderships and socio-political structure of the society and finally politics.
How a particular speech categorized as ‘language’ or ‘dialects’ is not based on the sole
criteria of linguistics per se, but it depends mostly on other factors, like the level of
consciousness within that speech community, mobilization skills of its leaders/elite, wider
national politics and development of other languages. It is a comparative study as well in
a sense I have tried to analyse how development of one speech community affects the
growth or marginalization of other linguistic communities and groups? Secondly, I have
also tried to explore major shifts and changes in the development of Maithili – ‘dialects’
or ‘language’ in pre and post independence era.

To understand the personal experience of the Maithili protagonists I have conducted
more than forty seven interviews. Care was taken to make these interviews
representative of the different part of Maithili speaking region. These open ended
largely informal interviews were based on pre-prepared questionnaire but some
additional questions and issues relating to Maithili movement have been raised during
the course of interviews.
Table 1: Personal Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Interviews</th>
<th>No. of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darbhanga</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saharsa</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US and others</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[These places are where I conducted interviews but the people whom I interviewed were related to different caste and the regions of Mithila.]

The selection of the respondents was based on random sampling, keeping in mind respondent’s personal participation and association with Maithili and Mithila movement. These interviews include all major and different voices within Maithili movement. The most important interviews include three former representative of Maithili in Sahitya Akademi (Sureshwar Jha, Ramdeo Jha, Chandranath Mishra ‘Amar’), Rajnandadan Lal Das (single handedly looking after the publication of bi-monthly Karnamrit, since 1980), Tarakant Jha (Editor of the only Maithili Daily, Mithila Samad, Published from Kolkata), Kishori Kant Mishra, (President, Mithila Sanskritik Parishad, Kolkata, an organisation credited for its publications in Maithili since 1959), Dhanakar Thakur (Spokesperson, Antarshtriya Mithila Parishad), Ashok Jha, (Mithila Vikash Parishad, Kolkata) and Baidyanath Chaudhary ‘Baiju’, Vidyapati Seva Sansthan, Darbhanga, Pt. Tarakant Jha, former Chairman, Bihar Legislative Council, Prof. Basukinath Jha, Chetna Samiti, Prof. Amresh Pathak, Prof. Raja Ram Prasad, Lal Pari Devi, etc. The age group of these respondents can be divided into two groups - > 65, and those who are > 45. They are mostly University Professors, Doctors, Lawyers, Journalists, Writers, Politicians, and Activists etc.

My field experience gave me an opportunity to observe the mass base of the Maithili movement. The answer to it is somewhat complicated as over the years of working on the topic I have to work out whether it can be considered as a movement or not. May be it can be classified as cultural and literary movement, although political demands have
been always featured in the Maithili movement. But if one look at its organisational set up, mass support, leaderships and demands that has been so weak, loose and inconsistent that it can be hardly classified as a movement in the conventional sense of the term. However there has been persistent mobilisation and politicisation of the Maithili issue since its inception. In the contemporary phase when the demand for separate statehood is increasingly being asserted and a large number of people are associating with the movement, there are also a number of people who detach themselves from it claiming that they are activists of literary movement and the statehood vis-a-vis political movement in Mithila is separate from the literary movement. It is interesting though to note that although they do not actively participate in movement for separate statehood for Mithila, but they do not oppose such demand.

Masses in Mithila are certainly indifferent towards Maithili movement, politically they are still less conscious about these demands – though things has been changing now; even the Hindi Daily in the Maithili speaking region report about Maithili and Mithila demands, than the Maithils leaving outside Mithila, especially in Kolkata and Delhi. Within Maithili speaking region in the public places like market, railway stations, universities, schools and colleges, it is Hindi which has upper hand in comparison to Maithili with some degree of prestige attached to it. However, in informal talks and discussions it is Maithili which is mostly used. In the villages and in the households even in the cities it is Maithili which is spoken. These include all the castes, classes and religious groups, even the Muslims in the Maithili speaking region. However, the younger generation in the urban household are increasingly switching over to use Hindi even in their households and informal talks.

1.6 Scope and Limits

The present work is an attempt to extend the works which has critically looked at the emergence of Hindi as the national language in India, like Vasudha Dalmia’s *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, followed by Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* besides other. However, the present work is different from these in various ways as it takes a step deeper into the language debate in the Hindi heartland where it tries to explore the dynamics at work
when Hindi was expanding its social and political base as a national language of India. In the present work, intricacies of this dynamic are explored in the context of Hindi and Maithili. Similar studies could be done with other languages within the Hindi heartland as well, like Bhojpuri, Magadhi, Awadhi, Bundelkhandi etcetera but present study is limited to the study of dynamic relationship between Hindi and Maithili alone. In the present work it has been demonstrated that how language had been used for the mobilization purposes in nation building projects? And in the process how a particular language acquires the status of dominance to the extent that relegating other existing languages to the status of ‘dialects’? What kind of role print, colonial language policies, nationalist organizations and leadership played in this exercise?

In the context of present study it has been found that the ‘language’ and ‘dialects’ relationship is complicated and problematic. And this division is not based on linguistic criteria per se; a lot of power politics, political-historical context, and strength of the speakers are involved in it. The scope of the present research lies in the fact that it tries to revisit the language debate in the Hindi heartland in a new perspective, which is to look at what happened with the other independent languages within Hindi heartland when Hindi was ascending to the throne of national language.

In the second chapter British Rule and the Classifications of Indian Languages, an attempt has been made to analyse how languages were studied, classified during the colonial times and what kind of challenges did they face while producing these categories and classifications? How the publication of grammars and dictionaries led to a new kind of competition among different linguistic communities? Each community now began to standardize its language through the publications of new grammars and dictionaries. Even the speaker of a language now needs to consult the grammar to speak and write ‘correctly’ in their own language. Each new grammar and dictionary use to stirs political mobilisation. Through coming of print and the growth of literary texts linguistic domain for each language were clearly built independently of others linguistic domains. It also led to the oral versus written and classical versus vernacular debates in the country. Gradually linguistic boundaries were drawn geographically and language became a new source of identity and belonging for the people. And through it political demands were also being made.
In the third chapter *Language, History and the Imaginary of Maithili Identity*, the formation and consolidation of the imaginary of Mithila and Maithili identity has been analysed. It began with the search of history and many historical works on the region were published. Initially these works were written in Persian, Urdu and Hindi and in Maithili such attempts were made in 1920s. Many Maithili magazines especially *Maithil Hit Sadhana, Mithila Moda* and later on *Mithila Mihir* also contributed in growing awareness about the language and also regarding the need for social reforms in Mithila. These magazines championed the cause of Maithili. However, they were not anti Hindi in the beginning. Instead, Hindi was adopted and in these magazines initially space were provided for Hindi as well. But gradually when the independence of Maithili as a language was denied by the Hindi supporters, Hindi’s space was removed. However, throughout Maithil’s relationship with Hindi can be categorised as one of ambivalence. There were many who adopted it but there were also many who opposed it. Formation of *Maithil Mahasabha* (1910) and many other modern organisations and associations also contributed in the consolidation of Maithili and Maithil identity. But the term used for the language and the region was not unanimous. There were several term used for this purpose – *Mithila Bhasha* mostly, *Tirhuta, Tirhutiya, Tirbhukti, Tirhut*. However, there was a sense of distinctiveness in their imagination of the region. It was considered very often, though mostly in cultural sense, *Desha*. So there was a disjuncture in their imagination of *Desha*. In political sense they used it as part of *Bhartvarsha* but in cultural sense they considered Mithila as their *Desha*. This period was foundational for the growth of Maithili language and the movement in later years.

In the fourth chapter *Maithili Language and the Movement Part I*, an attempt has been made to study the growth of the Maithili language movement during the period of 1920s to 1950s. In this period Maithili movement was led by a new emerging modern educated middle class of Maithil society, who perceived the threat of imperialist Hindi. Hindi and Maithili contestation was more dynamic in this period. Although the claim of Hindi as a national language was not challenged, infect many renowned Maithili speakers actively supported this claim but when supporters of Hindi started to claim Maithili as part of Hindi it was fiercely opposed by the Maithili supporters. They were quite assertive about the difference between Maithili and Hindi and the independent and
rich literary history of the former. They made various attempts to assert the independence of their language and richness in an extremely adverse and discouraging situation – when Maithili lacked the patronage from the state, from its own rich landlords, and from the indifferent attitude of the large illiterate Maithili speakers themselves. In the earlier phase while there were accommodative approach towards Hindi within Maithili movement. Now there were various attempts to assert the exclusionary identity on the basis on Maithili. Another challenge came to Maithili in this period was from the Bengalis. Some of the Maithili literary figures like Vidyapati and Govindadas were claimed as Bengali. Though, it was to the credit of Bengali intellectuals that it was established that Vidyapati and Chandidas were Maithils.

Publications of more and more Magazines and Journals in Maithili despite the less number of subscribers were the main mechanism through which the leaders of Maithili movement asserted the independence and richness of Maithili. Later on the establishment of Maithili Sahitya Parishad (1931), celebrations of Vidyapati Parva and Janaki Navmi, Struggle for the institutional recognition of Maithili in Patna University, struggle for the recognition of Maithili as the medium of primary education in Maithili speaking region, and publication of text books in Maithili led to a new consciousness among the Maithili speakers. These finally culminated into the demand of separate Statehood for Mithila.

In the fifth chapter Maithili Language and the Movement Part II attempt has been made to understand the shifts and trends in the Maithili movement in post-independence periods until the constitutional recognition of Maithili (2003). There have been various shifts in the movement in this period. Starting with the political demand of separate statehood for Mithila and then shifting again to institutional recognition by correct enumeration in Census, recognition by the Sahitya Akademi, establishment of separate University in Mithila, inclusion of Maithili in Bihar State Public Service Commission, and then demand for inclusion in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution and finally again mobilising the support base for the separate statehood for Mithila. But in the present context demand for separate statehood of Mithila is not based exclusively on Maithili language but low level of development of the region.
In this period of the movement role played by the Maithils living outside Mithila was very critical. Kolkata considered as ‘Maithili Teerthstali’ became the centre of Maithili activities. And from here many mass agitations and protests were launched in the support of Maithili movement. Kolkata played an important role in bringing the cultural and linguistic oriented people on the one hand and political leaders and parties from the Maithili speaking region on the other. This was one of the greatest achievements of Maithili movement that the political leaders of the region increasingly raised the issue of Maithili in the state assembly and in the Indian parliament. Communist Party of India and its leader Bhogendra Jha and then Bharatiya Janta Party and its leader Tarakant Jha actively supported the various demands of the Maithili movement. Although it could be argued that they used the issue of Maithili for their personal political gratification and not for the development of Maithili per se. The point that needs to be stressed is not why they supported the movement, but to understand that Maithili movement through its gradual growth had achieved the status that no longer a political party or its leaders can completely ignore the issue of Maithili and Mithila anymore. Many non Brahmins and non Kayasthas caste groups have also joined in the movement in the contemporary phase.

While concluding the present work I have revisited the issue of language and the issue of identity and political mobilisation and its inherent limitations and challenges with specific reference to Maithili movement within Hindi heartland. Language as a tool for social and political mobilisation connected with nationalism and religion proved to be a powerful tool, precisely because of its emotional and cultural roots among the communities that binds the other divisions within the community together. The challenges to Maithili movement have been its failure to diminish the social divisions based on castes and combined with emerging nationalism and expansion of Hindi as the national language its assertion and development as an independent Indian language had not only been discouraged but also ‘suspected’.