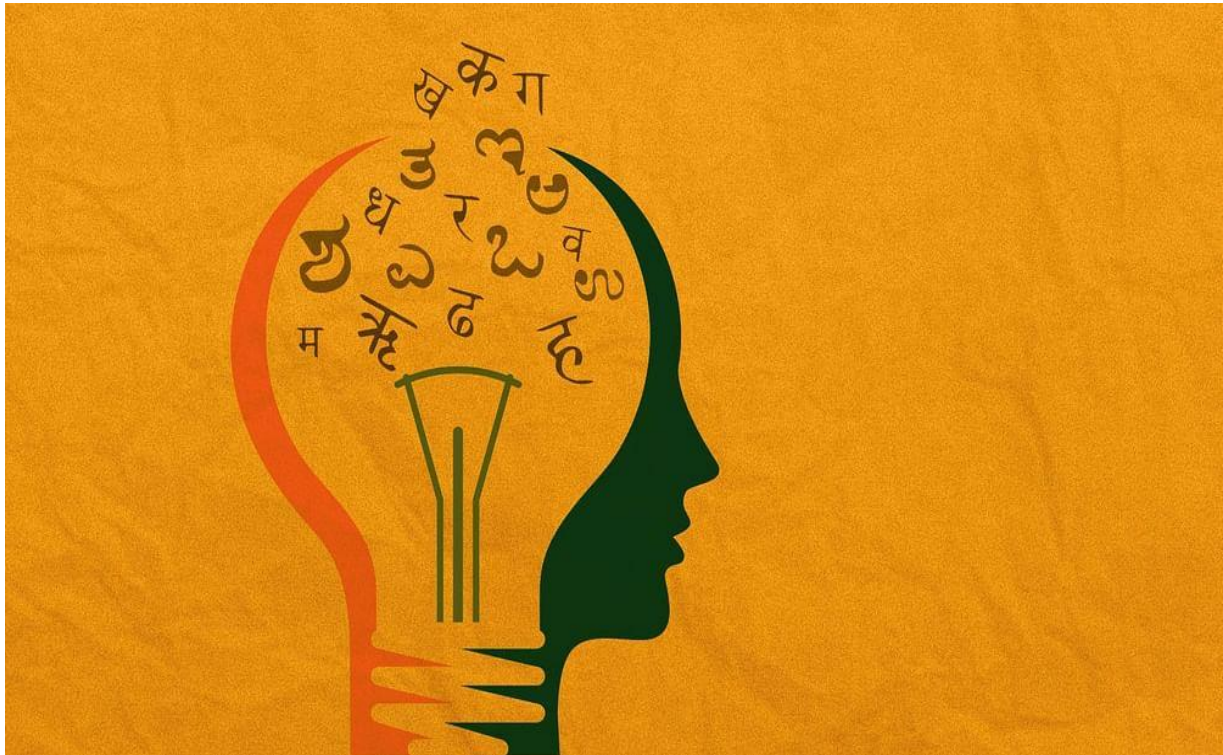


Policy lessons in Tamil Nadu's language formula



Context:

- The **New Education Policy** misses the case of Tamil Nadu following a language formula that is distinctly at variance with that of Delhi for the past 50 years.

What is Tamil Nadu's language policy?

- It follows a two-language policy which is at variance with Centre advocacy of three language policy.
- It was the decision of C.N. Annadurai, who led Dravidian Movement, that beyond Tamil and English (in order of preference) no other language would be taught in the schools of Tamil Nadu either as a language or medium of instruction.

What is the language policy adopted by various developed countries?

- Most countries follow a one-language formula (invariably mother tongue) for teaching children in the primary classes.
- On reaching middle school they are given a chance to learn one more language, mostly English.



- As there is no imposition through schools, voluntary learning of other languages is widely prevalent in these countries.

Language Policy in Singapore:

- Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew (first PM of Singapore from 1959 to 1990).
- In Singapore, **74.2% of the population is Chinese**, 13.2% Malays and 9.2% Indians.
- Singapore had much more justification to adopt Chinese as its sole official language than India insisting on Hindi being the sole official language. Even today the population of Hindi-speaking people has not crossed 50% in India.
- If Lee Kuan Yew(LKY) had wished he could have well declared Chinese to be the sole official language and satisfied the Chinese who were in a majority.
- However, LKY used **language policy as a strategic tool** to achieve socio-economic development.
- Giving **equal status to English and mother tongue** was considered by LKY as a prerequisite not only to work closely with the international community but also to bring in big ticket changes.
- Lee Kuan Yew attributed the international acclaim Singapore received for its success mainly to its **two-language formula**. He mandated that each Singaporean should learn their respective mother tongue along with English.
- He viewed that the **lingua franca of the country should be equidistant to all cultural groups**, thereby creating fair competition and opportunities.
- Only in this background were Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English declared as common languages with the **lingua franca being English**.
- The two-language policy prepared Singaporeans in advance for globalisation
- Many compare this policy with C N Annadurai's view on language.

What was the mainstay of Annadurai's language policy?

- He insisted that all the national languages should be made official languages and English should be the common link language.
- He held that the official language should be equidistant to all the members of a multilingual society. English would fit the bill for both students of Hindi and Tamil.

08.09.2020

Tuesday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

- Making Hindi alone as the official language would create disparity among various linguistic groups other than the Hindi-speaking population which will result in partial treatment, giving unfair advantage to the Hindi-speaking population.
- Annadurai was also particular that English is the language we communicate with a larger world.
- What Annadurai dreamed of as a language policy for 'the Dravidian land' was actually implemented in Singapore by Lee Kuan Yew.

Does that mean that Two Language Policy has worked well in Tamil Nadu?

- Though comparable to Singapore in language policy, Tamil Nadu's education standards are not comparable to Singapore's in terms of outcomes.
- Students in the state suffer a serious handicap while dealing with English and Tamil languages. And they do not have command over either.
- **Counter Argument:** This is not the failure of the two-language formula per se but of its implementation and the present Indian educational ecosystem.

Conclusion:

- If India is really interested in the new education policy capable of creating new generations, Delhi can acquire that vision only by studying the educational ecosystem throughout the world.