

Lecture

Idea of the Hindi Heartland

29th G B Pant Memorial Lecture

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IDEA OF THE HINDI HEARTLAND

Ideating the lecture

One sultry afternoon in Patna, couple of weeks back, when Professor Pradeep Bhargava, Director of the GB Pant Social Science Institute, rang me inviting to deliver this year's GB Pant Memorial Lecture, I thought he must have dialed a wrong number. With trepidations, I had to dial a common friend who had introduced me to Professor Bhargava, to confirm the authenticity of the invitation. It is indeed an immense honour for me to have been given the opportunity to deliver a lecture in memory of one of the foremost freedom fighters and builders of modern India – Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. Pandit Pant, besides being a freedom fighter, also choreographed the development of the post-independent India – first as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and later as a Union Home Minister. Apart from the honour of delivering a memorial lecture in the name of an outstanding Indian icon, a visit to the GB Pant Social Science Institute is a must on the academic pilgrimage to the historic city of Allahabad. Allahabad is situated at the confluence of three rivers – Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati – two real and one possibly mythical; in contrast, the GB Pant Social Science Institute has been the convergence point of ideas, idealism, and ideals – all of them real, representing the best of traditions of human civilization. This could be possible because the Institute is nestled in a city that was the epicenter of the cosmopolitan culture of India and home to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Not being a professional teacher, deciding on the topic of a lecture in memory of a formidable historical personality was a challenging experience for me. I was even more exuberant after Professor Bhargava gave me a freehand on the choice of topic. He was also generous enough to suggest that I could limit my delivery to Bihar or speak on any topic of my choice. The first option would entail that I would not venture into an unknown territory. On the other hand, his munificence in allowing me an unfettered option gave me an opportunity to transcend beyond my benighted province and my immediate cognitive world. But, while transcending beyond the immediate cognitive world one is often conditioned by some cataclysmic factors that decisively invade your cognitive world. One such cataclysm was an innocuous report in the Patna edition of the Times of India of August 10, 2014 that the Government of India has ordered “5 Bharat Ratna medallions from the RBI mint”.¹ This has fuelled “speculation in political circles that Bharat Ratna beneficiaries this year will be more than one”.² Apart from two highly expected recipients, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the report further indicates that “the feeling in the Sangh Parivar is that the charismatic nationalist never got his due, with successive governments keen to ensure that the spotlight remained on the Nehru-Gandhi family. Many in Sangh Parivar also feel that it was high time

Madan Mohan Malviya, founder of Benaras Hindu University (BHU), got it. Their list of suggestions also includes Hanuman Prasad Poddar (founder of Geeta Press, who popularized Hindu epics) along with the legendary painter, Raja Ravi Varma. The former is considered to have done for Hinduism what Gutenberg Press did for Bible.”³ Another news report of the Patna edition of the Times of India of August 28 was a reassuring one, which reported that “President Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday gave awards to 28 persons, including three journalists and an ISRO scientist, for their outstanding contribution towards development and spread of Hindi”.⁴ The most redeeming feature of the ceremony was that the first award was given in the name of Dr. George Grierson for spread of Hindi in foreign lands; second, Atmaram Award for writings in Hindi on scientific and technical subjects; third, Rahul Sankrityayan Award for research in Hindi and travelogues; and fourth, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Award for contribution to Hindi journalism. Incidentally, these awards were constituted several decades ago by the then Government of India. While the speculations on the possible Bharat Ratna recipient were furiously debated in the electronic and print media, the Union government conceded that the minimum requirement of English proficiency is no longer required for prelims of CSAT examination. This was another cataclysm for me. This was in response to the prolonged agitation by Hindi-speaking students of the country, against the norm of the UPSC for the civil services examination. This decision of the present Union government was not liked by the intelligentsia in south India. In a signed article, SL Rao, a pro-market columnist and fairly well disposed towards the possible demise of the Congress party in the 2014 parliamentary election, wrote in The Telegraph that “this government's Hindi-centric attitudes led to a bad compromise with the agitating 'students' against the UPSC examination system. It devalues the test for admission to India's 'steel frame'. The agitation really targets the tests in English and basic analytical skills. It opens the door to a revival of the anti-Hindi agitation that almost tore the country apart a few decades ago. This government is overwhelmingly Hindi-speaking. It strikes no chords, specially in south India.”⁵ He went on to add that “with the Hindi dominance, we can expect agitations to increase in the pro-Hindi states. Reactions will follow in non-Hindi states. Three months of the Modi government signal capture by the RSS, bureaucracy and the Hindi heartland.”⁶ This decision of the Union government was also not liked by Professor Alok Rai, the grandson of Munshi Premchand, an eminent littérateur himself who always wanted value addition in the language endowment. Rai regretted that “predictably, politicians have won.”⁷ He opined that “educationally the most appropriate response... would be not to lower the bar but to raise it higher... by adding another compulsory 'vernacular' language component to the CSAT. The urban Anglophone would be required to demonstrate competence in any one Indian language of her choice, other than English. This would, at one stroke, eliminate the advantage of the urban English-monolingual. Indeed, the vernacular component – Hindi or Bengali or Tamil – can also be so devised as to eliminate

those whose vernacular competence goes little beyond ordering their servants.”⁸ After capturing the Hindi heartland, there is a concerted strategy to “expand its footprint in the rest of the country,”⁹ opined Kalyani Shankar, an avidly pro-Congress columnist. The concern about the domination of Hindi and its capacity to forestall the growth of other languages are not of recent origin. Paul Brass, who followed Hindi heartland very closely, wrote several decades ago that the “wolf of Hindi has not been entirely unsuccessful in north Bihar”.¹⁰ The majority of people living there are not aware that Maithili is their mother tongue, even though it independently had a vibrant cultural, geographical, ethnic and language construct. Incidentally, contempt for the 'vernacular language', on the other hand, has got internalized in the psyche of the Indian elite. Otherwise, a senior academic would not have confided to Professor Yogendra Yadav, ideologue of the youngest political party of India: “languages like Hindi and Tamil are good for street conversation. But, surely, you cannot do conceptual thinking in these languages the way you can in English and French.”¹¹

The import of both the cataclysms has unsettled me from the narrow confines of my cognitive world and led me to my 'tryst' with the wider 'Idea of the Hindi heartland'. Had Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant been alive I wonder how he would have grappled with the current agenda, as Hindi was not only an integral part of his cognitive world, he had indeed established its authority in the country. Not only he gave shape to the movement for Hindi as a Union Home Minister, he also promoted its increased use as the official language. It was he who ensured that the merit list in UPSC examination got prepared on the basis of the marks obtained jointly in the written examination and the interview. Earlier, one had to compete separately. This decision of the Union Home Ministry ensured that a large number of candidates with 'vernacular' proficiency could succeed in the UPSC examination. They were generally disadvantaged earlier in the interview, in the absence of their proficiency in English.

Making of the Hindi Heartland's Society

In this backdrop, I want to calibrate on the 'Idea of the Hindi heartland'. Is it a tangible concept or is it in the realm of speculation only? Is it a geographical expression alone or also a coherent cultural construct? In either case, is it a 'contemptuous' specification or otherwise? Why the tectonic shift in the national ruling political configuration is being considered as a capture by the Hindi heartland? Why Hindi heartland has suddenly come on the centre stage?

To answer all these questions, one may first note that since the independence, the contour and complexion of the Union Government has generally been decided in the electoral field of the Hindi Heartland. Independence movement against the colonial rule was also won in the 'playing fields' of the Hindi Heartland. Even the diabolic roots of the vivisection of the country in 1947 were worked out in this region. Most of the Prime Ministers of India, after independence, were from the Hindi Heartland. Amplification of the Hindi Heartland is so

preponderant that even the leaders from the region with limited electoral capital are often considered to be the shadow Prime Ministers. In this backdrop, one wonders why Hindi Heartland is being suddenly singled out as a distinctive, geographical, cultural and ideological construct. The idea of Southern states indicates certain brand. Bengal was once considered to be the ultimate brand. Remember Gopal Krishna Gokhale who had once said 'What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow and rest of the world day after';¹² but Gokhale will be turning in his grave now in the backdrop of the present pathetic condition of the state. Ironically, at present, neither the Prime Minister nor the President of the national ruling party is from the Hindi Heartland; both were born after independence and thus do not carry the institutional memory of the freedom movement. Yet there is a larger- than-life hegemony being established about the Hindi Heartland.

The Idea of the Hindi Heartland is wider now than its geographical expanse. Earlier, the idea was ephemeral and its geography was uncharted in India. Unlike most of the countries in Europe, India is too large a country to be a homogeneous one with respect to either physical or economic or social characteristics. That the country is still a single political unit is indeed creditworthy; but this also sometimes misleads people to be oblivious of the wide social divergences within the country. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand — these seven states form one region where both social and economic progress have been the least. Surprisingly, the linguistic base of all these seven states is Hindi, which is the official language of the country. With the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950, Hindi (in Devnagri script) was accepted as the official language of the country. Contrary to the general misconception, Hindi is not the national language of the country.¹³ As per the Census data, Hindi is the mother tongue of 22 percent of the population of the country, but spoken as a language by 42 percent of its population. Once the Constitution of India came into force on January 26, 1950, the "status of Hindi was greatly enhanced".¹⁴ The documentation of Linguistic Survey of India by George Abraham Grierson "played very important role in the life of Hindi and in the life of India".¹⁵ Grierson opined that Hindi "popularly applied to all the various Aryan languages spoken between the Punjab on the west and the river Mahananda on the east; and between the Himalayas on the north and the river Narmada on the south".¹⁶ The Hindi language includes 49 mother tongues, "creating a statistical majority. If this kind of clustering is not done, the linguistic demography of Hindi will be different".¹⁷ The 1911 Census of India considers Hindi as a "comprehensive word which includes at least three distinct languages, Western Hindi, Eastern Hindi and Bihari".¹⁸ 'Hindustani' was major component of Hindi, popularly known as 'Bazaar Hindi', "more akin to Mahatma Gandhi's notion".¹⁹ When Hindi was deconstructed, Eastern Hindi consisted of Awadhi, Maithili, Magahi and Bhojpuri; Western Hindi consisted of Urdu, Braj Bhasa; and Bihari and Rajasthani were stand alone languages. Incidentally, Uttar Pradesh declared Hindi in Devanagari script as its official language on October 8, 1947 and, in the same

month, notified that Hindi be used in the civil and criminal courts. Similarly, Bihar adopted Hindi as the official language on June 4, 1948 and on June 26, declared it as the language of the court.²⁰ In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Hindi had to compete with the 'justified' claims of Awadhi, Braj Bhasa, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Magahi and Maithili to occupy the linguistic space of the state. My 'Idea' of the Hindi Heartland will be mainly around Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

The essential brand or idea about the Hindi Heartland has generally been considered as conservative in India, although it has been the home of some of the foremost progressive litterateurs and journalists like Premchand²¹, Phanishwar Nath Renu²², Surya Kant Tripathi 'Nirala'²³, Firaq Gorakhpuri²⁴, Baba Nagarjun²⁵, Mahadevi Verma²⁶, Hazari Prasad Diwedi²⁷, Ramvriksha Benipuri²⁸, Ramvilas Sharma²⁹, Harishankar Parsai³⁰, Sharad Joshi³¹, Krishna Chander³², Yashpal³³, Rahul Sankrityayan³⁴, Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi³⁵ and others. Simultaneously, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were also the bastion of powerful socialist, communist and radical movements. Even Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had pockets of socialist and communist influence. The peasant movement in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh was the response to the 'Permanent Settlement' that was introduced by Lord Cornwallis way back in 1793 in these areas. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati's concern, initially for the Bhumihar tenant in Bihar led to the concern for the general tenant later, which contributed to the scripting of the socialist and communist formations. He was also a fierce critique of the ante-diluvian Brahminical social order, and prepared a foundation for several progressive leaders of the Hindi Heartland. He had also substantial influence in Uttar Pradesh, specially in its eastern part. Apart from the contribution of the libertarian littérateur and radical movement, Jawarharlal Nehru from the mainstream politics and P.C. Joshi from the communist movement tried to construct the 'identity' and the 'idea' of the Hindi Heartland, breaking its traditional conservative image. Over and above, the powerful foundations of the dedicated socialist movement were laid in the Hindi Heartland by Acharya Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia, Jay Prakash Narayan, Karpoori Thakur and others. They had also contributed to the brand building of the Hindi Heartland. In spite of such a powerful cosmopolitan and left tradition, the baggage of history has been a serious impediment towards a democratic construct of the region. This was partly because the first major resistance to the colonial rule was made in this region (during the First War of Independence in 1857) and, ever since then, the British exploitation has been the most severe here. As a result, while regions like Bengal and Maharashtra had taken to English-education and certain social reforms much earlier, people in Hindi Heartland have persistently resisted such attempts, viewing them as colonial strategies to destroy their own culture and tradition. "The pre-mutiny liberalism had given way to a paternalism which had little use for either the conservative – romantic attachment to the peasantry, or the liberal desire to educate the

middle class, with which it had formerly been prepared to share power to some extent".³⁶ This has led to the "reformist spirit of the thirties that had acquired a strong and undisguisedly racist tone after 1857".³⁷ The Arya Samaj also played an important role against English education. Its founder Dayanand Saravati felt, that "English education is vehicle for conversion to Christianity".³⁸ He has been "sensitive to the use and potential as a community language of Hindi, which he called the *arya bhasa*, the language of the Aryans".³⁹ In the absence of the liberal space, a reverse ideological anchor was weaved around 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan'. This slogan first appeared in the journal 'Brahman', edited by Pratapnarayan Mishra, in the later part of the nineteenth century, after the First War of Independence in 1857. In the closing issue of the Journal, in the absence of resources to continue its printing, he wrote : "If you truly desire your own welfare, then keep chanting the mantra with one tongue — Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan, whether it attracts or repels the world, brings respect or affront, don't leave of chanting with one voice — Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan; those who don't know their own identity are like the living dead, so sing loud this mantra — Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan; wise are those who don't discard their own language, food and clothing in all its proof of good fortune — Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan".⁴⁰

Bharatendu Harischandra, the father of modern Hindi literature, essentially co-opted the ideological construct of his contemporary and friend Pratapnarayan Mishra and created an "informed public opinion and the constituents of Hindu/Indian national identity. Language, literature, religion, territorial allegiance was all aspects of being Hindu".⁴¹

Mystique Triad of Brahmins, Benaras and Banias

Just as the ideological epicenter of the 'Young Bengal' movement was 'Calcutta', 'Banaras' emerged as the academic and ideological, alternative centre of gravity of the Hindi Heartland. In addition to the effect of the British Raj, the Arya Samaj Movement too reinforced the 'varna' system. Subsequently, Bharatendu Harishchandra added to the appeal and credibility of caste orthodoxy. He was backed by the authority of the holy city of Benaras, the citadel of a new merchant aristocracy led by the Maharaja of Benaras, the traditional base of Sanskrit learning and Brahmin 'punditry'. Bharatendu coined an apparently paradoxical 'new traditionalist idiom' and effectively heralded the use of modern print media to initiate and direct change. The intellectual catchment area of the Hindu orthodoxy of Benaras was the entire Hindi Heartland.⁴² The triad of Brahmin Pandits, merchants of Benaras and the King of Benaras created the ideological foundation of the Hindi Heartland. Benaras was self-consciously Hindu city; it had a Hindu Maharaja, a Hindu merchant class, and a Hindu priestly order, although it was administered by the British. Consequently, the region had failed to give rise to an enlightened middle class, who in most other parts of the country had spearheaded the social reforms and the incentive

consciousness for production and productivity.

The citadel of Benaras, the main trigger of ideological conservatism, was considered to be the foremost seat of ritualistic and traditional learning. This was in itself a part of the Puranic tradition coined by the Brahmans who, in turn, coined their own self perception. “In spite of the repeated destruction of the major temples, Kashi remained a vital religious meeting point under the Delhi sultans and the Mughal emperors. The Brahmans and their institutions had enjoyed the patronage of the Rajputs and merchants throughout the period of the Delhi sultanate and the Mughals. In the late Mughal period, the Marathas had practically replaced the patronage by the Rajputs”.⁴³ During the British period, colonial administration in the process of patronage “wanted in turn to profit from the Brahmin authority”.⁴⁴ Way back in 1791, Benaras Sanskrit College was founded by them for “endearing to... the native Hindus”.⁴⁵ Thus, the cognitive world of the Brahmin was not only the Hindi Heartland but the entire constituency of Hindustan. This could become possible because of the varying constituency of Brahmans from different states and, in the process, the authority of the pan-Indian Hindu ritualistic constituency could be established. According to Asiatic Researches in 1832, Brahmans constituted 12 percent of the city's population, with Maharashtrian Brahmans outnumbering the rest; the latter constituted 30 per cent of the total Brahmin population. Earlier, with the fall of the Vijayanagar in the sixteenth century, “Brahmans from the south began to pour into the city”.⁴⁶

Next to the Brahmans, the second most important constituent of the triad was the King of Benaras. Even though he was the titular head of the holy city, he came to hold great symbolic power. With the ascendancy of the British over the years, “the political control of the region was soon to pass from their hands”.⁴⁷ Once they were marginalized politically and administratively, they actively intervened in the religious affairs. In the process, they ensured “immense public presence and it was their religious and cultural authority that created the representational public arena in festivities such as the river festival of Burhva Mangal and the month-long Ramlila”.⁴⁸ It was in the framework provided by these public occasions that they most effectively registered their kingly presence. In the Ramlila, they presented “themselves as representative of this deity, thus, deliberately setting forth the Puranic tradition of the city”.⁴⁹ The patronage of the kings, “reinforced by merchant money, of Sanskrit learning, Bhasa poetry and music, which made for specifically the Hindu culture of Benaras as it evolved in the nineteenth century”.⁵⁰

The third element in the triad — the merchants of Benaras — also played a decisive role in the super structural construction of the Hindi Heartland. Unlike in other parts of the Heartland, the Banias, the main social base of the merchants of Benaras, were almost on par with the 'Pandits' or 'Kings' in terms of authority and social status. This could become possible because “Benaras itself became one of the fastest growing cities in the years during

1750-90, the virtual inland commercial capital of the subcontinent after the decline of Murshidabad and the collapse of the Jagat Seths in Bengal in 1734".⁵¹ The creation of the Mint in 1734, relatively stable agriculture around the city, and the presence of large sums of bullion or credit in the city, made it attractive for the East India Company to make full use of its commercial facilities. By the 1780s, the Benaras region had become the commercial and financial cross-roads for the whole subcontinent. "There were strong links and continuities between the pre-colonial formation of business communities and the communities that exercised financial control through the earlier colonial period. As far as the pattern of merchant intervention and mediation was concerned... most of them Hindu, occupied the vital intermediary position as financial and diplomatic guarantees to the various local chiefs and zamindars".⁵² Like Brahmins, the professional merchants in Benaras were also not a homogeneous community. They were from all over the country, including some from Gujarat. The heterogeneous group of local traders, dominated by the Vaishyas, also consisted of the rising families of lower castes such as *Telis* (oil pressers) or *Kalvars* (liquor distillers). The category of merchant might have accounted for about 20 per cent of the population of the city, if small-time traders were also included. It was largely from the ranks of the merchants then that the agitation for the recognition of Hindi as the language of the courts was carried out, making Allahabad and Benaras the joint centres of the Hindi movement. "The most prominent merchants participated actively in the Maharaja's Dharma Sabha, the activities of which were recorded from the late sixties of the nineteenth century, and it was the Vaishnava sampradayas of the merchants, foremost the Vallabha sampradaya, which formed the core of the traditionalist rearticulating of Hinduism".⁵³ Contrary to the general character of the social movement in south and western India and Bengal proper, which normally emerged as a critique of the Brahminical system, Banaras experienced a different social dynamics. The Brahmin hegemony "strongly dominated the cultural scene in Benaras in the early nineteenth century, being generously supported both by the raja and the merchants. It was indeed established in the late Mughal period by the rapidly expanding Marathas. The catchment area of the Hindu orthodoxy was not limited to the Hindi Heartland, but had extended to southern and western India as well. In fact, Benaras was the 'celestial home' of the orthodox Brahmins from south and western India as well. It was, therefore, not a political accident that Narendra Modi decided to contest from Benaras; he was trying to send a religious message across the Hindu constituency of India, in general, and the Hindi Heartland, in particular. The agenda of Narendra Modi did not end with getting elected from the city; he is now in the process of building an enviable brand of 'Benaras' globally, which will cater to the Hindu diaspora, too. Thus, one of the key elements of the recent visit of the Prime Minister to Japan is to forge a 'partner city affiliation between Kyoto and Varanasi'.⁵⁴ Kyoto was not only imperial capital of Japan and home to Buddhist shrines, but the best example of heritage conservation and city modernization, cooperating on culture, art and academics. Narendra Modi wants to make Benaras the 'spiritual capital of

India.⁵⁵ The city, known for its temples, colourful river *aartis* and cremation *ghats*, is crying for modernization, but without losing its character.

While they have convincingly co-opted the upper and lower backwards in the Hindi Heartland, the Telegraph of September 7, 2014 reports that there is now an “RSS bid to woo Dalits”.⁵⁶ It further reports that “RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat will launch a three-volume work in Hindi on the 'Hindu' identity of India's Dalits. Union Minister Smriti Irani and Prakash Javadekar will be the special guests, signifying the Sangh parivar's agenda to 'reclaim' the 'Hindu roots' of Schedule castes”.⁵⁷ The works, authored by Bijay Sonkar Shastri, are about three major Dalit castes — Jatavs, Valmikis and Khatiks. Interestingly, the titles of the sub-castes have been pre-fixed with the word 'Hindu'. For example, Jatavs are referred in the book as 'Hindu Charmakar Jati'. Along with high valued pre-fixing, their past is also being reinvented. In the book on the Valmikis, Shastri writes that “they were born as Brahmins and Kshatriyas who were turned into scavengers when outsiders invaded India. The infidels saw (them) as their main threats”.⁵⁸ In some sense, therefore, the RSS has possibly a better sense of history and would not like the replication of the mistake committed by Joginder Nath Mandal, the first Chairman of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and also its first Law Minister. He was the leader of the Dalit of Bengal, and the social trauma that Dalits had to face in Bengal had led him to opt for Pakistan. Incidentally, he vacated his seat for the Constituent Assembly for Dr BR Ambedkar who later became its Chairman and drafted the Indian Constitution. In spite of the so called 'renaissance' in Bengal prior to independence, the cooption of the Dalits by the 'Bhadrolok' was far from a reality there. The tyranny had been so preponderant that the Dalit leader, even with deep roots, opted for Pakistan. In the post-independence India again, the 'public policy' on mainstreaming Dalits has not been very successful. Karl Marx had rightly said that “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce”.

Identity Issue in the Hindi Heartland

In the backdrop of the Brahmin-centric religious and social construction, the process of multi-caste social movement could not usher-in in this part of the country. In those parts of the country, which experienced any social reform, it was either the caste or the national identity that acted as the immediate impetus for 'self identity'. Thanks to the enormous socio-cultural divergence across the country, each state in India has multiple identities. Language is probably the most dominant or visible dimension of that identity and literacy plays a major role in promoting a language-based identity. But unlike in Bengal proper and many other states of the Indian Union, even the radical and progressive intelligentsia of the Hindi Heartland was not generally associated with the literacy movement. In Bengal proper, it was personalities like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar or Rabindra Nath Tagore who were pioneers in promoting the Bengali language and thereby strengthening the Bengali identity. Both

scripted primers for the Bengali language.

The concept of a social region rests not only on certain common social practices that its inhabitants may share, but on the acquisition of a regional identity as well. Since India is too large a country, inhabited by people of various religions and languages in diverse geographical areas, the emergence of a national identity here has often been accompanied by a simultaneous emergence of regional identity. The process of the emergence of nationalism in India had started during the British period, basically as a reaction to the colonial presence. But, because of the socio-cultural diversity of its people, nationalism has been developing here at two levels — one at an all-India on the basis of pan-Indian cultural homogeneity and anti-imperialism, and another at a regional level, generally around a linguistic identity. One could afford to be a Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati or Bengali as well as a very nationalist Indian. It is no accident that the two songs of Rabindra Nath Tagore, one meant for Indian nationalism (Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jaya he) and the other for the Bengali sub-nationalism (Amar Sonar Bangle, Ami Tomay Bhalobasi)⁵⁹ became the national anthem of two countries. In the Hindi Heartland, not only the process of regional identity formation was absent, the concurrent process of capitalist transformation and concomitant edifice of incentive structure got stunted. Thus, in the Hindi Heartland, the emergence of sub-nationalism had been a much weaker process. The emergence of a sub-national identity in the Hindi Heartland was further obstructed by the fact that Hindi, as a language, was far from being standardised. Between Bihar in the east and Rajasthan on the west, linguists have identified at least a dozen variants of the language, each one of these spoken by at least 20 million people. Consequently, the possibility of the linguistic identity which could lay the seeds for a regional social identity was also not there. In the context of literacy programmes, these two related phenomena — the absence of a strong regional identity and a middle class which spearheaded the social movements in most other parts of the country — meant that much of the Hindi Heartland is still guided by a value system which does not accord adequate recognition to education as a critical individual endowment. Thus, literacy is a far less 'felt' need of the illiterate here. In many other parts of India, this element of modernisation (which made people conscious of the fact that education is a universal necessity and it should not to be confined to a small elite only) was the outcome of the social movements that had taken place in late nineteenth or the early twentieth century. These areas have responded more positively to the development programmes that were started in the post-independence era, including the literacy programmes.

Development Experience in the Hindi Heartland

The states of the Hindi Heartland pose the toughest developmental challenge for India. These states are considered laggard and a blot on the overall profile of India which has experienced at least some progress in recent decades and considerably integrated itself with

the international economic grid. The developmental bottlenecks in the Hindi Heartland are considered by many as a drain on the national exchequer, leading to counter divisive force, for 'cessation of the successful'. The successful states in south, west and north India feel disadvantaged that in spite of their good track record in the developmental front, the successive Finance Commissions have penalized them in the matter of awarding the non-plan grant in the name of equalization. The feeling is not altogether unjustified. The talisman of 'underdevelopment', they argue, seems to be a 'boon' rather than 'bane' for those poor states which are mainly located in the Hindi Heartland.

The success for a state, in the wake of liberalization, critically depends on its ability to attract investment. On this parameter two categories of 'states' have emerged in India since liberalization. The first category consists of states that are reform-driven, with an eye for the national and international market. A social class, not necessarily dependent on any individual charismatic leader, scripts this provincial agenda; they often have several in-house developmental icons. The agenda of this social class is further reinforced by a strong sub-national consolidation which inculcates a sense of provincial ownership. This instills not only a focused approach, but a very broad social consensus regarding the development strategy. In spite of their intense political differences, hardly any acrimony exists between the political parties in these states over the accepted provincial developmental agenda. The second category of states, mainly located in the Hindi Heartland, on the other hand, are still carrying the historical baggage of oppression by the British which included the extermination of their indigenous artisans, traders and entrepreneurs, and the archaic land tenure system that meant the absence of an incentive structure which could contribute to production and productivity, leading to accumulation. The draconian feudal legacy still stands in the way for the emergence of a development-oriented middle class in these states. This had a far reaching consequence in the matter of quality of their governance. In most of these states, there were non-functioning governments, leading to domination of either the 'mafia' or the 'radical forces' which operate outside the constitutional structure of the country. To a great extent, the mafia or the radical outfits do social mediation, apart from pursuing their own agenda. Now, several districts of the Hindi Heartland are operationally outside the formal governmental authority.

In this overall scenario of near-social stagnation in the Hindi Heartland states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, however, had unfolded a new brand of social leadership leading to the establishment of their electoral hegemony. This was not the case in most of the developed states where, whatever maybe the political complexion of different ruling parties; their social base remained essentially the same. They, thus, had a long experience of running the governmental apparatus with élan, confidence and efficiency. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, however, there emerged new ruling elites because of democratization. The transition took places first from 'traditional' to 'vernacular' elites; later, thanks to further democratization,

from 'vernacular' to 'cockney' elites. The social base of cockney elites is such that they are either outside or on the fringe of the 'market'. Their discourse is not routed around the Euro-centric model which guided the traditional elite and, to a lesser extent, even the 'vernacular' elite. So when the market-centric strategy was ushered-in in India after liberalisation, they had no clue about the possible development agenda other than the state's role as a 'provider'. Such an understanding of the state has obvious limitations *vis-à-vis* its developmental role. A state cannot go far in the realm of development and social justice without a functioning and well-oiled state structure. The strengthening of the state structure, in turn, depends on the availability of public finance. With the plummeting of national growth, there is a possibility of substantial decline in the collection of revenue. This will affect the Hindi Heartland states far more than the other ones. However, since 2004, with the increase in the Tax-GDP ratio, the devolution of the Finance Commission to the states has increased manifold, which in turn displayed higher growth rate for the Hindi Heartland states, particularly Bihar.

In the last sixty years, the process of building of the state structure was nearly complete in most regions of the country and at the centre. The first task in this process was value addition to the inherited colonial administration, apart from reinventing the chain of command for the development administration, parallel to the general administration. Over and above, it also entailed administrative reform and creation of new institutions to serve the development agenda. Such strengthening of the state and consequent economic development led to a growing market. Later, this growing market takes care of the development needs, even when the 'state' opts to retreat. In this context, one should understand that the shifting of Tata's NANO plant from West Bengal to Gujarat indicated the generic strength of the former 'ryotwari-settled' state along with its vibrant market. In the process, Gujarat could attract a large investment with better incentive. This is not so much because of the negotiation skills of Narendra Modi, the then Chief Minister, but the triumph of the financially powerful provincial state structure of Gujarat, which was assiduously built by its successive Chief Ministers.

Nevertheless, all components of state building were not uniformly achieved even in the successful provinces. Nehru became the national icon of state-building effort, because he did not script it on basis of techno-managerial thrust alone, but added to it the politics of inclusion and ideology. This model of state building was followed by several provinces — in the south by K. Kamaraj, in the north by Pratap Singh Kairon, in the west by YB Chavan, and in the east by Biju Patnaik. The provinces which built new state structures in the early years after independence are now in the forefront of development. Unfortunately, in the Hindi Heartland states, the agenda of state-building was never taken up. Bihar, a 'permanent settlement' region, was ruled by intermediaries under the nomenclature of Zamindars and the state-building effort was stunted here by the limited revenue generation by successive governments. The absence of a development vision of various post-independence regimes

further stunted the evolution of the state structure here.⁶⁰

It is extremely ironic that in spite of being a failed state, the process of electoral democratization in Bihar continued unabated, under the spell of socialist, communist, radical and social justice movements. This resulted into a complete change in political power structure. But, unfortunately, with wider democratization in the polity, there was also a commensurate process of collapse of the state structure. Indeed, the elites of all complexions, from 'traditional' to 'cockney', were never preoccupied with the important agenda of building of an efficient state structure. The traditional elite felt that an enabled state structure would continue the institutional reform beyond the Zamindari abolition, threatening not only their feudal interest but also ultimately their political hegemony. In contrast, the cockney elite who dethroned the traditional elite could not understand the importance of the instruments of state for an inclusive development process. The social base of the cockney elite, being outside the market structure and their production being generally wedded to self-consumption, they could not realise the importance of a facilitating state to provide critical agricultural inputs like seed, fertiliser and irrigation. In the process, not only economic development continued to lag behind, but even the power structure in the lower levels could not be broken. Under such circumstance, whatever limited authority the state structure had in Bihar had become even more limited. Fortunately, after 2005, the Bihar brand of the 'coalition of extremes' had not only restored the authority of the state and ensured dramatic growth, but had also broken the lower centres of power (PRIs) by positive discrimination in favour of the marginals, women and Dalit. The above 'coalition' was broken in 2013, with the counter 'coalition of poor and inarticulate'. This coalition has been further expanded after the parliamentary election of 2014.⁶¹

In two other Hindi Heartland states – Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan – even though the state structure was not very powerful, it had to compete with a relatively better track record of the 'Princely' estates in those states in terms of governance. The continued hold of the scions of the Princely estates in the post-independence politics of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan can only be understood in terms of the developmental role they have played historically in their respective regions. Historically speaking, they were fulcrums of some moderate industrialization in some parts of the region. The incentive structure there was embedded in the ownership of the respective domains. Unlike the landlords of the 'Permanent Settlement' areas, who were only interested in collection of rents, they (the Princes) had full sense of ownership of their respective principalities. This, in turn, had implied an inbuilt incentive structure for development. Parallel to the efforts of industrialization by Mysore, Travancore-Cochin and Gaekwad states, the Scindias of Gwalior or Holkars of Indore, two mega principalities of Madhya Pradesh, also set up state enterprises and helped Indian capitalists to establish factories within their territories. The political separateness of the native states from British India was more important for industrial growth, largely compensating for the

semi-feudal structure of administration of those states, given the discrimination practiced against Indian businessmen under the imperial system. Even the Princely estate of Bhopal played a decisive role in modernization and urbanization of the area. Bhopal was not only known as 'Baghdad of India' because of its rich Muslim culture, its tradition of tolerance and the progressive nature of its institutions had also ensured its distinguished place in the country's overall social scenario. Thus, after independence, Bhopal was chosen the capital of the sprawling state of Madhya Pradesh. Incidentally, most of the economically developed and better-governed regions of Madhya Pradesh were earlier Princely estates, not from the areas under the tutelage of British India. Thus, in spite of the feudal structure and the absence of even a modicum of democracy, the Princes were generally not an object of derision or revulsion in Madhya Pradesh, as were Zamindars in Bihar. It was not surprising that after the introduction of the parliamentary democracy, Princes in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan could win many elections; in contrast, most of the Zamindars in the Bihar plain were routed in the elections whenever they opted for it.⁶² Similarly, even though Wazid Ali Shah was dethroned, immediately after the First War of Independence, he continued to have a powerful impact on the urban culture of Uttar Pradesh.⁶³ In the post-independence period, when most of the Princely estates got unilaterally annexed to India, they were generally ruled by the Congress party. But later, because of several policies of the Congress-government, including the abolition of Privy Purses, the Princes got gradually alienated from the Congress party. Initially, they trekked to the Swatantra Party, led by C Rajagopalachari, and later to Jan Sangh, now the Bhartiya Janata Party.

Conclusion

The 'Idea of the Hindi Heartland' in some sense is self-explanatory. But Hindi, the language lubricant, which had constructed the cultural identity of the region, was “ill-positioned to be sympathetic to the anti-Brahminical critique that was gathering strength elsewhere”.⁶⁴ “This was particularly related to the “emergent Brahmin of the post-1857 Hindi Heartland”.⁶⁵ This got further reinforced with the artificial divide between Hindi and Urdu, even though both the languages had common ancestry. Over the years, 'Urdu' got associated with 'Muslims' and 'Hindi' with 'Hindus'. “The shared history of Hindi-Urdu's evolution (and subsequent division) is sought to be denied by the competing purist on the either side, who seek to blame each other for the process of linguistic division that both admit, at least implicitly, is culturally damaging”.⁶⁶ Incidentally, on September 4, 2014, the Supreme Court approved “Uttar Pradesh's 1989 legislation, adopting Urdu as the second official language of the state. The ruling by a five-judge bench said laws of the country were not rigid but accommodative to secure the linguistic secularism”. The judgment came in response to “UP Hindi Sahitya Sammelan's appeal challenging the Uttar Pradesh Official Language (Amendment) Act. The SC referred to several states which have adopted other officially recognized languages in addition to Hindi”.⁶⁷ Linguistic and cultural construct of the judgment of the Supreme Court was absolutely valid. Urdu is one of the pulsating cultural legacies of the Hindi Heartland, along with the “huge reservoir of Bhakti poetry which, in Braj and in Awadhi, in music... swept across practically the whole of India”.⁶⁸ The Hindustani classical music is also part of this heritage. Interestingly, Union Minority Affairs Minister Najma Heptullah's statement that “anybody living in this country is a Hindu”⁶⁹ (later, however, she retracted from her statement and said that she used the word 'Hindi', not 'Hindu') will obviously be interpreted in two ways since she is a politician. But, the best idea would be to do away with the language-religion link. Hindi has never been a Hindu-only language, just as Urdu has never been an all-Muslim legacy.

Even though the social base of the sanskritised Hindi was limited, the hegemony of Benaras and the massive state patronage later ensured the authority of Hindi. The Devanagari script was promoted by “the Hindi literary scholars of Benaras and used by those educated people of Bihar who had been influenced by the Benaras school”.⁷⁰ Similarly, 'Gurumukhi', a symbol of Sikh religious scriptures, which was not tied to a particular class or caste, became a reinforcing symbol of distinctiveness of Punjabi from the Hindi language. In contrast, the Maithili script, usually limited within the 'Maithil' Brahmin and the 'Karna' Kayastha of Bihar, could not be associated with the mass culture of the region. In the process, Maithili could not be the mass language. Incidentally, Hindi is not the mother tongue of any of the major population group of Bihar. “Magahi and Bhojpuri – two major ethnic groups – in the absence of a standard literary language of their own chose to adopt Hindi as the medium of

education”.⁷¹

Early Hindi ideologues were not the only ones who detested any anti-Brahmin voice of the past centuries; even figures “like Kabir, and a tradition like Bhakti, had to wait for recognition by a later generation of 'progressive' thinkers, before it could be assimilated into, and then become, the glorious past of modern Hindi”. Premchand, unlike many of his contemporaries, wrote fearlessly and trenchantly against the Brahminical order. Unfortunately, his writings were not backed by something parallel like the anti-Brahmin Dravidian movement of the south or the movement by Phule or Sahuji Maharaj of Kolhapuri in old Bombay Presidency. Indeed, his writings invited venomous wrath of the Brahmins, because it tended to 'generate loathing for Brahmins'.⁷² One Jyoti Prasad Nirmal called him 'ghrina ke pracharak'⁷³, the preacher of disgust. In one of his writings, Premchand further reinforces his 'brand': “in three-fourths of my stories, I have shown my prejudice by painting Brahmins in dark colours... if I had enough strength, I would devote my whole life to freeing the Hindu community from the priests, the parasites who feed of religion. The greatest disgrace, the leprous scab of the Hindu community is precisely such petty groups, who are like gigantic leech, sucking away the life-blood of the community.”⁷⁴ The liberation of the Hindi language from the Brahminical stranglehold and insularity was not only voiced by a litterateur, but by another resident of the great city of Allahabad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In his autobiography, nearly a century ago, he wrote “I criticized the intricate and ornate language that was customary in Hindi writing, full of difficult Sanskrit words, artificial, and clinging to ancient forms. I ventured to suggest that this courtly style addressed to a select audience should be given up and Hindi writers should deliberately write for the masses and in language understood by them. Mass contacts would give new life and sincerity to the language, and the writers themselves would catch emotional energy of the masses.”⁷⁵ He further suggested that the cognitive world of the Hindi constituency should be enlarged; its authors should pay more attention to “Western thought and literature... it would be desirable to have translations from the classics of the European languages as well as books dealing with modern ideas”.⁷⁶ He concluded that “modern Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi were little more advanced in these matters than the modern Hindi, and certainly more creative work has been done in Bengali in recent years than in Hindi”.⁷⁷ Like Premchand, Nehru was also severely criticized and he was called "ignoramus".⁷⁸ Thus, there was a parallel concerted effort in the Hindi Heartland to change its archaic 'brand'.

One may note here that the recent demise of UR Anantamurthy, the spirited upholder of the cosmopolitan heritage of India, was hailed by the Bajrang Dal. His cosmopolitan construction was based on the cause of Kannada, the critique of the Brahminical social order, and the world view on which “he has been raised”.⁷⁹ He was possibly the best example of self-loathing. So it is not a historical accident that not only the idea of Kannada sub-

nationalism has been robust and strong, but Karnataka has been the bastion of one of the strongest knowledge industries in present India. Incidentally, the largest number of the recipients of the Jnan Peeth Awards in the post-independence period is from Karnataka. If the Hindi Heartland's society has to have a robust social anchor, it has to emulate the trajectory of Karnataka.

The suggested names for Bharat Ratna in the Times of India of August 10 mentioned in the introductory part of my lecture may not be negotiable. However, the benchmark achieved by the Gutenberg Press of Germany and the Gita Press of Gorakhpur in printing and distribution of religious texts are unmatched. In some sense, Johannes Gutenberg⁸⁰ and Hanuman Prasad Poddar,⁸¹ the founder of the Gita Press, had similarities and convergence point in their career, even though separated by five centuries. Incidentally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted a copy of the Gita to the Emperor of Japan in his current visit there.⁸²

In the twentieth century in India, 'Shivkasi' Calendar Art in the print media earlier, and Ramanand Sagar in the electronic media later completely changed the fundamental aesthetics sensibilities. The 'Ramayan' and the 'Mahabharat' serials reinvented the psyche of the Indian in the most unprecedented manner. At the time of the relay or broadcast of the serials, the streets will be deserted and most of the people huddled before the television sets. The reach of the 'Shivkasi' Calendar Art or the 'Ramanand Sagar'-centric television serials had far more influence in dissemination and reach of the 'Hindu' and 'Celestial' identity than what the Gutenberg Press or the Gita Press could have. The Government of India should order two more medallions from the RBI mint, to be given to either Pratapnarayan Mishra or Ramanand Sagar, or to Rahul Sankrityayan and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi.

Hypothetically, the idea and the contour of the Hindi Heartland will be determined on the basis of which of the two twins will get the Bharat Ratna. While the former extols the past, the latter is quintessentially self-loather. Let me end my contention with a quote from celebrated author Mike Marqusee's work on the therapeutic power of self-loathing. He opines that “anyone who entirely lacks this trait is not to be trusted. And it is generally acknowledged as an ethical principle that with the corrections of the self comes the chastisement of others. For the privileged self, a form of self-rejection – not personal, but political — may be necessary to reach out to others, to know oneself, and become fully human.” The Hindi Heartland has to co-opt and internalize the foundation of Mike Marqusee's concept of self loathing for placing itself on a path of comprehensive development — economic, social, political and cultural. As an optimist, I hope this challenge will soon be taken up by the intelligentsia of the Hindi Heartland.

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21. Premchand, one of the most celebrated writers of the Indian subcontinent, is regarded as one of the foremost Hindustani writers of the early twentieth century.
22. Renu' is placed amongst the pioneering Hindi writers, who brought peripheral voices into the mainstream of Hindi literature.
23. Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala' pioneered *Chhayavad*. Parimal and Anamika are considered as original *Chhayavaadi* Hindi literature.
24. Firaq was writer, critic, and according to one commentator, one of the most noted Urdu poets of India. His original name was Raghupati Sahay.
25. Nagarjun was major Hindi & Maithili poet. He penned a number of novels, short stories, literacy biographies and travelogues. He was known as *Janakavi* – the people's poet.
26. Mahadevi Verma was best known as an outstanding Hindi poet and was a freedom fighter, women's activist and educationist from India.
27. Hazari Prasad Dwivedi was a Hindi novelist, literary historian and scholar. He did research on medieval religious movement of India, specially Kabir and '*Nath Sampradaya*'.
28. Ramavriksha 'Benipuri' was a reputed writer in Hindi. He was also a journalist of repute. He was associated with the socialist movement.
29. Ram Vilas Sharma was an eminent progressive literary critic, linguist, poet and thinker. He was wedded to Marxism.
30. Harishankar 'Parsai' was a noted satirist and humorist of modern 'Hindi' literature. He is known for his simple and direct style.
31. Sharad Joshi was Hindi poet, writer, satirist and a dialogue & script writer in Hindi films and television.
32. Krishna Chander was a prolific writer. He wrote mainly in 'Urdu', but was well-versed in Hindi and English.
33. Yashpal was a Hindi-language author who was often considered to be the most-gifted since Premchand. A political commentator and a socialist, who had a particular concern for the welfare of the poor and the disadvantaged.
34. Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan was called the Father of Hindi Travel literature. He was a multilingual linguist, and well-versed in several languages and their dialects.

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The Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) Society was established and registered by a group of social scientists in 1991. The motivation for starting yet another Institute in Patna was not merely to expand social science research, but to lend it a distinct development orientation and deliver all research output to its potential users in a demystified form. In this research perspective, the broad objectives of ADRI Society are:

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- ✎ to restore man to his central position in social research in totality and with full dignity.