



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Should Hindi be Lingua franca for India? Comment in the light of linguistic diversity and cultural significance of languages in India. (250 words)

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### Approach

- Mention about India's rich linguistic diversity in the introduction.
- Give arguments both in favour and against Hindi as a lingua franca of India.
- Conclude by suggesting steps to promote multilingualism in India.

### Introduction

#### ***Linguistic diversity and cultural significance of languages in India:***

UNESCO has recognized India as one of the most linguistically diverse countries, having 22 scheduled languages, hundreds of local languages and dialects. Languages are not just a means of communication, rather they are a symbol of India's rich culture, heritage and traditions.

### Body

#### ***Hindi as a lingua franca of India:***

##### **Arguments in favour:**

- **Unity and integrity of India:** Hindi can serve as a link language to enhance people-to-people contact in such a geographically diverse country.
- **Maximum outreach:** Hindi is spoken by maximum number of people in India and thus it is sensible to choose it as a lingua franca of India.
- **Boosting India's soft power:** Hindi can serve as a symbol of national identity and would help showcase India's rich civilizational values of multiculturalism, tolerance and pluralism at global platforms.
- **Availability of historic and traditional texts:** Majority of ancient mythological texts like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, etc are available in Hindi or Sanskrit which are necessary for preserving India's rich history and culture.

##### **Arguments against:**

- **Threat of cultural oppression:** There is a **north-south divide** mainly due to attempts of imposition of Hindi as the link-language of India. This has roots in anti-Brahmanism Dravidian movements in South India which sees Hindi as a language that perpetuates a 'backward' culture of caste and gender oppression.
- **Discrimination against regional languages:** Masses speaking regional languages often face discrimination in terms of sharing of political power, employment, economic status, etc.
- **Ethnic clashes and violence** emerge out of complexities of linguistic and ethnic politics, thereby **promoting regionalism**. For ex: riots in Assam in the early 1980s, Anti-Hindi riots in southern

India by ethnic Dravidians in 1965, etc.

- **Against constitutional principles:** Imposition of Hindi is against the basic idea of federalism in India. Since India does not have any national language, States are free to decide their own official languages. Also, the idea of 'one nation, one language' is against the philosophy of 'unity in diversity'.

## Way Forward

- Government should be sensitive towards the people's aspirations. Any attempt of forceful imposition of any one language on masses should be refrained.
- Rather efforts should be made to preserve and protect the languages under threat of extinction. For ex: Advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence can be used to translate and digitize ancient regional texts.
- Programmes like 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' are a step in the right direction to promote unity in diversity.
- The three-language formula envisaged by **Kothari Commission** should be implemented in such a way that the choice of language(s) must be left with the citizens and not the Government.

## Conclusion

The need today is to respect, protect and nurture the diversity of our nation so that unity is ensured. Multilingualism should be acknowledged in education, administrative systems, cultural expression and even cyber space.

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