

### International Literacy Day 2019

[From the webdesk of NDTV]

## International Literacy Day 2019 Today; Figures On Language And Literacy In India

- Anisha Singh

NEW DELHI:

The world celebrates International Literacy Day today. September 8 was declared as the International Literacy Day by UNESCO in its 14th General Conference which was held on October 26, 1966. For 2019, the theme of International Literacy Day is 'Literacy and Multilingualism'. On this occasion an event will be held at the Paris headquarter of UNESCO where UNESCO International Literacy Prizes will also be conferred.

### Languages In India

In Indian context, multilingualism is all the more important. According to the 2011 census data, India is home to about 121 languages out of which 22 are Scheduled languages. The number of 121 was arrived after scrutiny and classification of data received which initially totalled the number of mother tongue in India at 19,569.

Here are some facts and figures on languages spoken in India:

1. As per the 2011 census data, 43.63 per cent population in India speaks Hindi.
2. After Hindi, Bengali is the second most spoken language and Marathi is the third most spoken language. 8.03 per cent population speaks Bengali and 6.86 per cent population speaks Marathi in India.
3. The top 5 is round up by Telugu and Tamil. 6.70 per cent population speaks Telugu and 5.70 per cent population speaks Tamil.
4. Of the total population of India,

96.71 per cent have one of the Scheduled languages as their mother tongue, the remaining 3.29 per cent is accounted for by other languages.

5. Of the 22 Scheduled Languages, 15 fall in the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family, 1 in Austro-Asiatic family, 4 in the Dravidian family and 2 in the Tibeto-Burmese family.

### Literacy In India

Literacy, by its simple definition, is the ability to read and write for individuals, communities and societies. Here are some facts on the literacy rate in India according to the Educational Statistics report released by MHRD in 2018:

1. The overall literacy rate in India is 69.1 per cent. The number includes the literacy rate in both rural and urban India. The number pertains to 2014.
2. The overall literacy rate in Rural India is 64.7 per cent. In rural India, the literacy rate among females is 56.8 per cent and among males is 72.3 per cent.
3. The overall literacy rate in Urban India is 79.5 per cent. In Urban India, 74.8 per cent females are literate and 83.7 per cent males are literate.
4. There is wider disparity in literacy rates of males and females in rural India than in urban India. In Urban India, the difference in literacy rate between the two genders is 8.9 per cent whereas for rural India, it is 15.5 per cent.
5. As per the government data, in

### Bihar Bangla Sahitya Sammelan 2019

Newsdesk – First Bihar Bangla Sahitya Sammelan was held on 11th November 2017 at Ram Mohan

Roy Seminary, Patna. Second was held at Debi Babu's Dharmshala, Bhagalpur on 31st August 2019 in the evening. The programme was finely coordinated by Anjan Bhattacharya, a poet and Secretary of Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Bhagalpur.

The poets, story writers and others who participated in the Sahitya Sammelan and shared their poems, stories, articles etc. were Goutam Sarkar, Dr. Sharmila Bagchi, Rajeeb Banerjee (read the writings by Late Haimabati Banerjee), Snigdha Jha, Dr. Binay Kumar Mahata, Nirupamkanti Pal (read the writing of Sabita Banerjee), Nitish Biswas (guest from Kolkata), Tanmay Beer (guest from Kolkata), Shampa Debnath, Paresh Mukherjee, Shoubhik Mukherjee, Anjan Bhattacharya and Dr. (Capt.) Dilip Kumar Sinha. There were inaugural songs sung by a group of singers. The guests were welcomed and honoured by the convenor Anjan Bhattacharya.

the year 2016-17, 19,283,075 persons (both male and female included) were enrolled in 'Sakshar Bharat Abhiyaan', which is a centrally sponsored scheme to improve literacy rates among adults in India. More women are enrolled in the programme than men.

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## Literacy and Multilingualism

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of International Literacy Day 2019, 8 September 2019

Our world is rich and diverse with about 7,000 living languages. These languages are instruments for communication, engagement in lifelong learning, and participation in society and the world of work. They are also closely linked with distinctive identities, cultures, worldviews, and knowledge systems. Embracing linguistic diversity in education and literacy development is therefore a key part of developing inclusive societies that respect "diversity" and "difference", upholding human dignity.

Today, multilingualism – the use of more than one language in daily life – has become much more common

with greater human mobility

and the growing ubiquity of multimodal and instantaneous communication. Its shape has also evolved with globalization and digitalization. While the use of certain languages has expanded for cross-country and community dialogue, numerous minority and indigenous languages have been endangered. These trends have implications for literacy development.

While different aspects of policies and practice interact for the promotion of literacy, building a solid literacy base in a mother language, before moving to a second or foreign language, has

multiple benefits. However, about 40% of the world's population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand. We need to change this by making policies and practice more linguistically and culturally relevant, enriching multilingual literate environments and exploring the potential of digital technology. For more than seven decades, UNESCO has supported mother language-based, multilingual approaches to education as a means to enhance education quality and intercultural understandings. Nelson Mandela once said: "if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language that goes to his heart."

Engaging with both head and mind is a key for effective learning.

This year is the International Year of Indigenous Languages; it also marks the 25th anniversary of the World Conference on Special Needs Education, where the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education was adopted. In solidarity with these special occasions, and, on the occasion of International Literacy Day 2019, UNESCO invites you to rethink literacy in our contemporary multilingual world as part of the right to education and a means to create more inclusive and linguistically and culturally diverse societies.

[September 8 was declared as the International Literacy Day by UNESCO in its 14th General Conference which was held on October 26, 1966.]

## 52nd GB of Bengalee Association, Bihar at Bhagalpur

Newsdesk – 52nd General Body Meeting of Bengalee Association, Bihar was held on 1st September 2019 at Town Hall, Bhagalpur. True to the spirit of remaining the best branch of Bengalee Association, all the members and leaders of Bhagalpur branch rigorously labored for last two months for a grand success of the event. They made teams and visited around 500 Bengalee families of Bhagalpur to invite them to attend the Prabhat Pheri in the morning, inaugural session of the GB and also to come and enjoy the cultural programme scheduled for the evening. They also asked for donations. The families donated liberally, according to their economic status and thus the momentum for

preparations accelerated day by day.

On 1st, it was a sultry day. By 8.00 AM in the morning the heat of the sunlight was unbearable. In spite of that, people – women, children and old alike – started pouring in the campus of Durgacharan Primary School from where the Prabhat Pheri was to begin. Tiny tots, dressed and with make-ups as Ishwarchandra Bidyasagar, Rabindranath Thakur, Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose were the centre of attraction for all.

Before Prabhat Pheri, two saplings were planted in the campus by the President of Bengalee Association and other senior leaders. Then the statue (bust) of Saratchandra



Chattopadhyay in front of the school building was garlanded. It was an open call. After the leaders, all assembled were asked to pay tribute with flowers. Dr. Sharmila Bagchi delivered a brief speech, standing near the pedestal of the statue, focusing on the importance of the city of Bhagalpur in the history of Bengali literature and culture.

Thereafter, a group of children danced with the song 'Anandaloke, mangalaloke'. 'We shall overcome' was sang by all in three languages, Bengali, Hindi and English. With slogans like 'long live Bengalee Association' the Prabhat Pheri started.

Winding through the streets, first it reached Bangiya Sahitya Parishat campus. There also, the statue of Saratchandra was garlanded. Children danced with one another

song by Rabindranath – 'Mamo chitte, niti nriyte...'. Then the procession went towards the home of the maternal uncle of Saratchandra, where the great writer lived in his childhood (the memories of those days form the first part of his celebrated novel 'Srikanta' and its characters, Indranath, Annadadi and others, much loved in the Bengali milieu). The picture of the writer kept there was garlanded, the present generation of the family was introduced to the leaders and guests.

Finally, the Prabhat Pheri reached the Town Hall.

At Town Hall grounds, flag of Bengalee Association, Bihar was hoisted and unfurled by the President Dr. (Capt.) Dilip Kumar Sinha. Then all assembled sang in chorus, 'Dhana dhanye pushpe

bhara', a known song by D. L. Roy. In the hall, the Inaugural session began with eminent guests, Tapan Sengupta, President of All India Bengali Association, Nitish Biswas, Secretary of Sarva Bharatiya Bangla Bhasha Mancha and others coming on the dai; they were welcomed with flower bouquet. The President delivered his inaugural speech. Some eminent personalities of Bhagalpur were honoured by the President on behalf of this 52 General Body Meeting of the Association. Late Dr. Anil Kumar Biswas, a doctor and angel for the suffering poor was honoured posthumously. Late Mukut Dhari Agarwal, erstwhile President

Continued on Page-4



## Shutdowns, anxieties

Economy is facing a hard slowdown. It is glaring in motor vehicles industry. But the signs are there in every sector. You cannot refuse to see it because somewhere or other your brothers and sisters, your sons and daughters are coming home with the bag pack to stay for some day. Because the factories have announced block closures. Or, tired with giving interviews with the HRs, they do not want to get depressed and need some homely care.

You know, Indians are most depressed lot in this world?

Without blaming this or that policy failures, one thing can be safely said, 'trickle down' has not worked. Nothing has trickled down. Size of the pots of affluence have elasticized themselves to grow bigger and bigger, concentration of wealth in the hands of few have taken astronomical proportions whereas impoverishment and destitution of people have grown. Wages were forcibly made to remain low, rather were lowered down in relative terms to make the economy 'business friendly'. Growth in consumption of each and every article have shrunk day by day. Any one is having a data for unsold and unoccupied flats in the cities of India?

And what to talk of agriculture! After years of motivating farmers from conservative, sustenance farming to aggressive cash-cropping for alluring markets in India and beyond, and after years of success stories of such farming particularly in Western India, we are facing a situation where maximum farmer-suicides are happening in those areas who opted for the latter, whatever be the reason – vagaries of market, rising costs of inputs or sneaky pressures by the privately-owned micro-finance agencies owned by the next generation of erstwhile indigenous creditors, 'Mahajans' and 'Annas'. Suicide rate is much less in those areas or in those homes who did remain in the ambit of sustenance agriculture and, to say, never saw a moment of happiness in their lives!

Government is taking away the reserves of RBI because it cannot do deficit financing like the pre-liberalisation regimes due to FRBM Act! Government is selling away even 'navaratnas', 'mini-ratnas' large scale, not even to capitalize any of its new endeavors, but just cope with the revenue expenditure!

Perhaps even now it is not a crisis. But it is fast moving towards crisis. You shall have to shift from your paradigm, sirs! Neo-liberal thinktanks hate to think about demand-creation but you will have to do it. The question has been rightly asked, if to bring Kashmiri people on your side you can announce 50,000 jobs immediately, you can make it possible then why not in make it possible in all the other states?

Generate employment, increase existing wages and ensure payment, guarantee real 150% MSP for farmers at the ground. This is for the least.

Continued from Page-1

## 52nd GB of Bengalee Association...



of Bhagalpur Chamber of Commerce and a father-figure for Bengalee Association, Bhagalpur branch was also honoured posthumously. Dr. Shantanu Kumar Ghosh and Dr. Soumen Kumar Chatterjee, both physicians and health activists, were honoured for their social service. Dr. Bahadur Mishra, Professor & HoD of History and Dr. Raman Sinha, Professor & HoD of Hindi were honoured for their helpfulness for the Bengalee community of Bhagalpur. Dr. Binay Kumar Mahata is a known litterateur and Sahitya Academy awardee for translation; he was honoured. Sanjay Sarbadhikary, a senior leader and advisor of Bengalee Association and a person who single-handedly worked for revival and smooth operation of both Durgacharan Primary and Secondary Schools were honoured by the Association.

In the delegate session report placed by the General Secretary and the audited accounts placed by Financial Adviser cum Treasurer were passed unanimously. Some proposals to ensure smooth running of Sanchita and Behar Herald were placed by the General Secretary. There were some proposals to pre-allocate the distribution of annual interests available on the fixed deposits of the Association

under various heads of routine expenses. All these were passed. There was a renewal of call to ensure contribution by members in the branches, as was fixed and decided in the last General Body Meeting held at Patna. Some reporting on the preparations for the celebration of 200th Birth Anniversary of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar at Nandan Kanan, Karmatar was placed in the meeting and all were invited to be at Karmatar on 26-27th September 2019 and participate in the programmes. Elections of Office Bearers and Committee members were held for the coming term in complete unanimity. But results were kept in abeyance till 15th of September 2019 for the Executive Committee meeting to be held where President will declare his three nominations, as is mentioned in the bye-laws of the Association. Session ended with a vote of thanks.

In the evening the Town Hall was full with people. There was an excellently choreographed series of songs, sung by various singers with music from pre-recorded tracks – in which the dancers moved around the singers in well-coordinated steps & composition. The musical programme was coordinated by Somnath Sarkar, himself a singer and musician and also vice-president of Bhagalpur branch. It was a feast to the eyes. Jayjit Ghosh, Secretary of Bhagalpur branch thanked all for the evening and invited for dinner. Day ended with everyone standing

### Rest in Peace

## Ashok Kumar Bhattacharya



Newsdesk – Munger branch of Bengalee Association has informed that their Joint Secretary, Ashok Kumar Bhattacharya died on 2nd September 2019. He was a laborious and popular activist of the Association. He played a key role to organize the people of Rarhi Kayastha community of Kharagpur, Dhouni, Mohanpur, Tarapur, Teldiha and other places. Members of the Munger branch of the Association went to his home and expressed their condolences to the bereaved family.

## Sad bereavements

Newsdesk – Secretary of Bhagalpur branch has informed that father of Debashish Banerjee, (erstwhile secretary of Champanagar branch) and father-in-law of Kakoli Banerjee (ex-councillor) died on 5th September. While coming back from his funeral, a member of Champanagar branch, Shankar Chandra Acharya was hit by a buffalo. And sadly, he also died. Bengalee Association, Bihar expresses its condolences to both the bereaved families.

up and singing the national anthem.

Arrangements for breakfast, lunch and dinner were made in the backyards of the venue. Food was very good, tasty and the organisers in the food committee managed the crowd in an efficient way.

Local media gave full coverage to the events and especially the issues raised in the session like linguistic, educational and social rights of the Bengalees, anti-bengali campaign through NRC in Assam, upcoming programmes to celebrate birth bicentenary of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar etc.



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[We should be aware of the ground-level situation of the people in those states where an anti-Bengalee hate campaign has been launched by the vested interests to divide the unity of the people and divert their attention. One such state is Manipur, where there was a great flow of patronage to Bengali language and literature. Its relationship with Meitei language was friendly and they shared traditions. But now the things have changed. Hence, we sometimes may try to look at the realities through their eyes. We publish the Editorial of Imphal Times, September 10 2019]

## September and Hijam Irabot

With the coming of September month we the people of Manipur once more remember our pioneer leader Hijam Irabot.

Once again the people of the state will be observing the birth anniversary, the day he went underground and his death anniversary as all happened in the month of September.

Hijam Irabot is the only leader of Modern Manipur, who had renounced all the worldly pleasure and spent the later part of his life fighting for justice of the common and the downtrodden people. It was with the sheer unstinting effort of this leader that the thin bondage between the Hill people and the plain people was strengthened. The virtue of patriotism among each Manipuri was first embedded by this leader.

Years have gone and some among the people still continue to follow the path once paved by this leader but majority of the people had forgotten what Hijam Irabot really wanted to see in the Manipur of today. The kind of tribute being paid to the pioneer leader today on the occasion of his birth anniversary is worth every effort, but seemed to have lost the essence of keeping his dreams and ideologies alive to each one of us.

Just recalling his work, and praising him with cultured language by standing at the manmade podium is not really what is actually needed to remember Hijam Irabot, but to fulfil his dream should be the essence of remembering him.

Now Manipur is on fire. The bondage once tied by this leader is on fire and is on the verge of snapping off even while the blame game continues and nobody really cares to look back and reflect on what went wrong in the last few decades.

Is it the price of the merger of this erstwhile kingdom to the Union of India? Or is it the selfishness of the self-proclaimed leaders who ruled the state after the merger of the erstwhile kingdom to the Indian Union? A civil society organisation is blaming the merger of the erstwhile kingdom to the Indian Union as the root of all the things that is happening today.

They now campaign the public to mobilise a movement to restore the pre-merger status of Manipur, and this very well may turn out to be the right demand. But will this extinguish the fire raging today? Sixty plus years of democracy and till today there is no proper road connectivity with almost all the important places of the state. It takes the whole day on a good day, and longer most of the times, if someone from the capital town of Manipur tried to reach Singhat or Tamei or Jessami.

There are still many tribal people who never know that there is a place called Imphal which is the capital town of the state they are residing in. Many in the interior parts of the state had to spend the whole day fetching a bucket of water to drink or collecting firewood to cook for their family.

These people really have no time to think about the future of this 'once upon a time' nation state while struggling to survive each dawning day. The Government of India introduced a lot of beneficiary programme to improve the life of the common people living in the interior and inaccessible parts of the state particularly the tribal people. The absence of proper connectivity with these interior villages has built a communication gap.

And not to be surprised, these benefits provided by the government for these disadvantaged people are being pocketed by few vested interested people.

They hold the stomach of the poor people and play with any games they desire for their own narrow interests.

When there was enough time to check the missing link the rulers were busy building their houses and amassing wealth for themselves and their descendants. And now things seem to be going out of hand. For Hijam Irabot who renounced worldly pleasures for the cause of the poor and downtrodden, he certainly would have been crying in heaven or tossing in his grave, as the case may be, if only he can see the present state of affairs of the state we have come to be identified as Manipur.

Courtesy : [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.editorial.editorial\\_2019.September\\_and\\_Hijam\\_Irabot\\_IT\\_20190910](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.editorial.editorial_2019.September_and_Hijam_Irabot_IT_20190910)

Hijam Irabot, (30 September 1896 – 26 September 1951), also known as Lamyamba Hijam Irabot, was a freedom fighter, politician and social activist from Manipur. He was one of the founder leaders of Communist Party of India (CPI) in Manipur. He wrote journals and poetry, as well as plays in which he also acted. He was also a sportsman. He chaired the 4th Session of the Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha. He showed leadership against social injustices during the second Nupi Lan, 1939. In the June/July 1948 election to the Manipur Assembly, Irabot won from the Utlou Constituency.

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## Can we all live in harmony just because earth is so alone in space?

*We are celebrating the 50th anniversary of walking on the Moon and we are excited about landing on the Moon for the first time.*

*As Indians, we celebrate Apollo 11 for the opportunity to transcend our divisions, but in the same moment reaffirm them and acknowledge India's impending first attempt to soft-land a robot on the Moon.*

- Vasudevan Mukunth

These sentences are not out of chronological order nor are they false or mistaken. They are both true because the first 'we' and the second 'we' are not synonymous. They represent two different identities, and of the same individual if she is Indian: we – humans – are celebrating the 50th anniversary of walking on the Moon and we – Indians – are excited about landing on the Moon for the first time.

Neil Armstrong, the first human on the Moon, was moved by the sight of Earth beyond the satellite's horizon, a blue-green orb cradled by long stretches of darkness on every side and which he could blot out by closing one eye and holding his thumb up. He saw no borders, no contested lines on land or water, but all of humanity occupying the surface of a tiny marble, with only each other for company in a profoundly empty universe.

Some have even celebrated this as the unexpected legacy of Apollo 11: the birth of an image that inspires us to stay united. But this is much easier said than done, and not always for bad reasons.

Chandrayaan 2 is a case in point. Its very existence alerts us to our Indianness as separate from, rather a subset of, humanity. It reminds us gently that arbitrary lines do crisscross the face of Earth and that we Indians are decidedly on one side of some of those lines, as are the Americans, the Chinese, the French and the Russians. We may all seem to be in this together when seen from the Moon but we are not when seen from Earth, and this is perhaps the only vantage point that matters.

Armstrong's comments were well ahead of his time, or even ours, because they dream of a world where one human going to the Moon is the same as all humans going to the Moon. It is a utopian re-imagining of how spaceflight or even all of science works. It skips over some of the biggest problems assailing humanity today, instead suggesting the weight of loneliness our cosmos has imposed on Earth will alone suffice to bend the arc of justice down to where it belongs.

This will never happen. It is impossible to believe that it could if only because the arc of justice does not budge until it is acted upon by the very people it affects. It is impossible to believe humanity has been on the Moon when the only way a non-American person can get up there is by slogging it out through their own national space programmes. And this should be no surprise when it is impossible to overlook the inequities that mar the face of Earth, which seem no less invisible from the ground than they would be through the eyes of a white American man on the Moon.

Consider a scientist from the developing world. Let's say he is a male, English-speaking middle-class Brahmin so we can set aside the ceaseless discrimination the scientific community's non-male, non-heterosexual, Indian-language-speaking members face for the sake of our discussion. The picture has already been oversimplified. This scientist has access to some instruments, a few good labs, not many good mentors, irregular funding, not enough travel grants, subpar employment prospects, insufficient access to journals, lives in a polluted city with uneven public transport, rising costs of living, less water to spare and rising medical bills.

If at this juncture we reinstate the less privileged Indian in this matrix, it becomes a near-chaotic picture of personal, social, economic and political problems. Even then, it is still only the substrate upon which international inequities – such as access to samples from other parts of India and the world, information published in journals that 'or exclusion from the editorial boards of scientific journals – will come to bear. Finally, there is the climate crisis and its discomfiting history.

In this regard, there seems to be an awkward knot in our collective national imagination, at least in principle. It is as a confrontation between the reflex to celebrate the Apollo 11 mission and embrace the opportunity it affords to transcend for once the issues that divide us, and in the same moment reaffirm these divisions and acknowledge India's impending first attempt to soft-land a robot on the Moon.

## NRC continues across Barak Valley to be at the centre of controversy

SILCHAR: Protests by different civil bodies against final list of NRC continue across Barak Valley. They have raised question about the way the names of genuine Indian citizens have been dropped despite all the necessary documents. They are also worried if the 19 lakh left outs would get justice from FTs or will it be another round of mental and physical harassment? In all eventuality, these left outs will go through lot of anxiety and uncertainty after they get speaking order from NRC seva kendras. Shyama Paul, Secretary, Forum for Civil Rights based at Karimganj, at a press-meet on Saturday claimed majority of the people failing to make it to the final list are Indian citizens.

Those enlisted in the final list should be given national identity cards. Shyama Paul said the left outs should be provided necessary legal assistance and guidance. Those without valid documents should be included in NRC on the basis of the 2014 voters' lists. He quoted proviso 4(k) of the Citizenship Amended Rule 2003 which leaves the onus of proof of being Indian citizens on the person himself. Paul pleaded Indian Evidence Act be applied to decide the cases of the left outs.

Citizens Rights Protection Committee staged a protest demonstration against the wayward functioning of the State Coordinator Prateek Hajela in preparing the final list. Dr Tapodhir Bhattacharya, an important functionary of the Committee, asked if the left outs would get justice from FT process. He demanded reexamination of the documents of all left outs. There should be no discrimination on the basis of caste and creed. He also condemned the move to create division among the left outs on the basis of religion. He dubbed it as 'politically motivated'.

Dr Bhattacharya made the statement while addressing the members of the CRPC and the media before the statue of Khudiram Bose, the venue of agitation, here. Attempts are also being made to create division among people on the most sensitive issue. But, he cautioned no curtailment of fundamental rights of any individual to defend himself before the law of justice would be tolerated. He called it most unfortunate that many in fear and tension have lost their lives. CRPC hoped when the FT process begins, no one is denied justice.

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Courtesy: <https://www.sentinelassam.com/north-east-india-news/cachar-news/nrc-continues-across-barak-valley-to-be-at-the-centre-of-controversy/>

**Continued from Page-4** If I don't speak Hindi...

India is a country characterised by its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and this innate nature of our country is jeopardised by imposition of Hindi. Yes, India is indeed fragmented, but foisting a single language on us would not solve that problem. The ominous reminder of why Bangladesh was formed is not too far away.

There is a tide of Hindi everywhere that is engulfing other Indian languages and threatening those cultures. This is tacitly endorsed by the government as it attempts to manufacture a unified national identity that does not exist. I am a Bengali, moulded by my language and culture. For me Hindi will always remain a foreign language thrust upon me unnecessarily. Hindi is not my language and Bollywood is not my cult. Does that make me a second-class citizen in my own country?

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Courtesy: <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2015/08/hindi-imposition-india/>

Art, music, cinema and fantasy could help unknot it, but not entirely. It might also help to remember that the romance of having a man on the Moon itself was the product of a perceived politico-ideological imbalance. And it was perceived so strongly that it disregarded even as, over time, it began to invent justifications for itself through iffy economics and misplaced nostalgia.

So then, who are we? Are we human, are we Indian or are we somehow a superposition of the two? If you were swayed by the messages of humanitarianism on July 16 and July 20, you were also reconceived by yourself as much as everyone else as an individual of the Homo sapiens of Earth. If you were swayed by the messages of nationalism on July 15 and perhaps will be on July 22, there will be no escaping the reminders of your Indianness.

Either way, it is a strange identity to embody, and it is not immediately clear how one could embrace both without situating them in a hierarchy of progression: our cultural-sexual-political-social-economic identity first, biological next, and envision the endeavours of humankind as a journey from one stage to the next, when one human walking on, say, Ganymede, will truly stand for all humans walking on Ganymede.

But until then, for good or for bad, but mostly for good, we walk separate paths, acknowledge the lines between us and work to make them as invisible on the ground as they are from the Moon.

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Courtesy: <https://thewire.in/space/the-view-from-the-moon>

## A TRIBUTE

### Bharatendu Harishchandra

- Bidyut Pal



Bharatendu Harishchandra was a great Indian poet, dramatist, critic, and journalist, commonly referred to as the "father of modern Hindi." His contributions in founding a new tradition of Hindi prose were recognized even in his short lifetime, and he was admirably called Bharatendu ("Moon of India"), an honorific that has taken precedence over his own

Born – Sept. 9, 1850, V r nasi name.

Died – Jan. 6, 1885, V r nasi Harishchandra was born into a distinguished family that traced

its descent from Amirchand, (Umichand) the prosperous banker whose intrigues against his master, the Nawab of Bengal, and deception by Robert Clive is a infamously noted incident of modern Indian history. His father, Gopalachandra (pen name Giridharadaja), was a poet who composed a considerable amount of traditional Braj Bhasa (a dialect of Hindi) verse. Being a family having good relationship with the East India Company and subsequent British colonial rulers, for young Harishchandra it had been challenging to develop critical, rather sharply critical ideas against that rule in his writings.

Harishchandra began his own literary career at the age of 17, when he established (1867) the first literary magazine in Hindi, the Kavi-vachana-sudha, followed in 1872 by Harishchandra Magazine, later called Harishchandra Chandrika. A circle of distinguished poets and litterateurs whom he generously patronized gathered around him, and their work resulted in a radical transformation of and literature in the pages of his magazine. He was an ardent protagonist of vernacular education, as his evident from his celebrated poetic lines, "nij bhasha unnati ahai, sab unnati ko mool" and his later submission while giving evidence in front of the Education Commission. He was even interested in developing the dialects, and enthused litterateurs to write lyrics and songs in dialects and 'women's language' to be nearer to the people.

During this period, he often visited to Calcutta, the seat of British power, and developed good acquaintance with Pundit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar also, whenever he visited Varanasi where his parents used to live at that time, went to Harishchandra's house without fail, to use the rich family library with numerous rare Sanskrit manuscripts, in his house.

Vidyasagar, senior to young Harishchandra by 30 years, adored his creative enthusiasm and reformatory zeal. Harishchandra in his turn was greatly inspired by Vidyasagar's personality and his relentless struggle to better the status of Hindu women in Bengal, which had already unleashed waves of change all over India. This, and also Vidyasagar's stress on education, particularly education of women, brought great changes in Bharatendu's own understanding of the aims of his literary pursuits.

Not only Vidyasagar, Harishchandra was greatly influenced by Bengal Renaissance itself. In 1868 he translated the drama Bidyasundar, written by Bharatchandra. The Hindi litterateurs of that time translated a number of Bengali books, including plays by Girish Chandra Ghosh.

Harishchandra's influence was deep and far-reaching: his works mark the end of the R ti period of Hindi literature (c. 1650–1850) and usher in what is called the Bharatendu epoch, which in turn leads into the modern period. He advocated the development of modern Hindi language.

Harishchandra's poetry, in contrast to the rather dry poetry of the R ti period, was simple, deeply felt, and filled with devotional ardour and emotional lyricism. His numerous plays, written partly in modern Hindi and partly in Braj Bhasa verse, are among the first in the language and concern themselves with a wide range of themes. They include satirical farces and several dramas in which the poet expresses his intense grief at the stultifying poverty of India and the decline of its civilization under centuries of foreign domination and colonialism.

The third act of his celebrated play "Bharat Durdasha" begins with a dialogue by the character "Bharat Durdaiva", a cruel person clad in a weird attire which is half-English and half-Islamic and brandishing a sword. The character says, "Where is that India, the fool! Who still has faith on the God and the Queen of queens?" The allusion is clear. The Indian people must build their own destiny; lazy talks about 'fate' and keeping faith on the rule of queen Victoria (the British rule) won't do.

Harishchandra was also an accomplished actor, a keen and witty polemicist, a man of music, and was having an outrageous practical humour off and on stage. He loved travels and by that he had learnt many languages of Eastern and Western India.

Inputs from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Harishchandra>

With best compliments from -

**Dr. Supriyo Mukherjee**

Secretary

Samastipur Branch, Bengalee Association, Bihar

## History of Mergers in Indian Banking

Mergers of banks began in India in the 1960s in order to bail out the weaker banks and protect the customer interests. After that in post liberalization period the quest to create an Indian bank that would be in the league of global giants had been continuing since 1990. Moving on the path of creating one of the largest global banks, the government had approved the merger of five associate banks with SBI in February 2017. Later in March, the Cabinet approved merger of BMB also.

### Merger & Nationalization during the period from 1961-1969:

The period is called pre-nationalization period because in 1969 the government nationalized 14 private banks. As many as 46 mergers took place mostly of private sector banks in order to revive the poorly performing banks which proved to be quite a successful move for the underperforming banks.

### The period from 1969-1991:

The period was called post-nationalization period. It saw six private banks being nationalized in 1980. In this period 13 mergers took place mostly between public and private sector banks.

### The post liberalization period (1991-2015):

The post liberalization period saw major economic reforms initiated by Government of India. Many new policies were framed. Greater FDI and foreign investment was allowed which saw resurgence in Indian Banking. As many as 22 mergers took place - some to save weaker banks and some for the sake of synergic business growth.

### Bank Mergers (1993-2004):

The merger of Oriental Bank of Commerce with Global Trust bank in 2004 saved the latter after its net worth had wiped off and also handed OBC a million depositors and a decent market in South India. Mergers of Punjab National Bank (PNB) with the then eroded New Bank of India (NBI) in 1993-94 and that of Benaras State bank Ltd with Bank of Baroda in 2002 also proved to be life saving for the weaker bank.

### Bank Mergers & Consolidation 2008-2010:

SBI first merged State Bank of Saurashtra with itself in 2008. Two years later in 2010, State Bank of Indore was merged with it. The board of SBI earlier approved the merger plan under which SBBJ shareholders got 28 shares of SBI (Rs.1 each) for every 10 shares (Rs10 each) held. Similarly, SBM and SBT shareholders got 22 shares of SBI for every 10 shares.

Post the merger, the SBI was in the process to rationalize its branch network by relocating some of the branches to maximize reach. This, according to SBI helped the bank optimize its operations and improve profitability. SBI had approved separate schemes of acquisition for State Bank of Patiala and State Bank of Hyderabad. There was no proposal for any share swap or cash outgo as they were wholly-owned by the SBI.

### Consolidation of Banks (2015-2017) –

This phase saw five associates of SBI and Bhartiya Mahila Bank getting merged in SBI. The vision was to have strong banks rather than having large number of banks. This resulted in SBI being one amongst the 50 largest banks in the world.

Union Cabinet decided to merge all the remaining five associate banks of State Bank Group with State Bank of India in 2017. After the Parliament passed the merger Bill, the subsidiary banks ceased to exist and the State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959 and the State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956 were repealed.

Five associates and the Bhartiya Mahila Bank became the part of State Bank of India (SBI) beginning April 1, 2017. This has placed State Bank of India among the top 50 banks in the world. The five associate banks that were merged into State Bank of India were- State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur (SBBJ), State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH), State Bank of Mysore (SBM), State Bank of Patiala (SBP) and State Bank of Travancore (SBT). The other two Associate Banks namely State Bank of Indore and State Bank of Saurashtra had already been merged with State Bank of India. After the merger, the total customer base of SBI increased to 37 crore with a branch network of around 24,000 and around 60,000 ATMs across the country.

### Merger of Banks 2018-

The government had merged Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda, creating the third-largest bank by loans in the country in 2018.

### Mega Merger of Banks 2019-

With the mega merger announce on August 30, 2019, ten public sectors banks will be reduced into four large banks. The four sets of banks are to be created out of Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank merger; Indian Bank and Allahabad Bank merger; Union Bank of India, Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank merger; and the bank to be created after merger of Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India.

Six Banks Untouched: The mega merger has left untouched six other banks out of which two are national

banks and the four have regional focus. The untouched banks are Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Uco Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Punjab & Sind Bank which will continue as separate entities as before.

### India has 12 Banks Now

The biggest overhaul in public sector banks has left India with only 12 banks now instead of 18 before the decision. According to the Government this decision of making large entities will make the Indian banks capable of meeting the higher funding needs of the economy and will help in acquiring the global scale.

Banking order (Largest to Smallest)	Business in Lakhs of crore Rupees	Market Share
State Bank of India	52.1	22.5
PNB+OBC+United Bank	17.9	7.7
HDFC Bank	17.5	7.6
Bank of Baroda	16.1	7
Canara + Syndicate Bank	15.2	6.6
Union+Andhra+Corporation Bank	14.6	6.3
ICICI Bank	12.7	5.5
Axis Bank	10.6	4.6
Bank of India	9.0	3.9
Indian + Allahabad Bank	8.1	3.5

Source of the list: Tol dt Aug 31, 2019

Courtesy: <https://www.mbauniverse.com/group-discussion/topic/business-economy/banks-merger-in-india>

### View of the employees

"We observed a press conference of the Union Finance Minister today, where she announced fresh set of mergers of Public Sector Banks. As per the announcement, 10 PSBs will be reduced to 4, thereby taking the total number of banks to 12.

"We are having bitter experiences following the merger of 5 Associate Banks and Bhartiya Mahila Bank with State Bank of India. More than 1000 branches and administrative offices were closed, about 4000 employees/officers went out through VRS, thousands of employees were transferred to different places. As per media reports, about 800 branches of merged entity of Bank of Baroda may be closed also. The merger had adverse impact on employment generation of these banks.

"Recently, the PSBs completed its 50 years' journey since nationalisation of 14 banks in 1969. The PSBs contributed a lot for economic sovereignty of the country and safeguarding the hard-earned deposits of the people of the country. Since 1991, as an off shoot of the neo-liberal economic policy, the Govt. formed many Committees starting from Narasimham Committee-I. Most of the Committees recommended for merger/ amalgamation of the PSBs.

"After today's announcement, UFBU decided to hold protest demonstration throughout the country tomorrow. This programme will be followed up by wearing black badges. Some more action programme will be announced after due consultation within UFBU."

[From the Circular of Bank Employees Federation of India]

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If I don't speak Hindi, does that make me a second-class citizen in my own country?

- Sanjana Chowdhury

The patriotic fervour of 15th August was a little dampened by the twitter campaign organised by Facebook advocacy group, Promote Linguistic Equality or PLE's Bengaluru chapter.

Hundreds of twiteratti protested how non-Hindi speakers are forced to use Hindi, despite there being 22 languages recognised by the 8th Amendment of the constitution. On the day when we were all in the mood for "Jai Hind", the protesters with the hashtag #StopHindiImposition raised thought-provoking messages like: "Bengal to Nagaland flight filled with Bengalis & Nagas, no safety instruction, announcements in Bengali or Nagamese" and "Language imperialism has wounded & broken nations (e.g., Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Ukraine etc). Stop hurting India." As a Bengali, I felt proud of this protest movement, because as a non-Hindi speaker I too have been annoyed and hurt by Hindi imposition for too long. My language is not merely a "regional language" – it is an integral part of this country too. Indian, Not Hindian

Despite the fact that Hindi is NOT the national language of India, there is a subtly cultivated notion that Hindi is the "rashtra bhasha", which is further fed by the current government's parochial propaganda of "Hindi. Hindi. Hindustan."

I'm a Bengali living in West Bengal, and yet I have to face linguistic discrimination every day of my life. Everytime I go to our local branch of State Bank of India, I'm appalled to see hundreds of forms only in Hindi and English. Even the passbook printing machine has the option of Hindi and English. Yet, most people who come to these local bank branches are not very educated people with nearly no knowledge of English and Hindi. Are they not entitled to banking transactions?

In banks, railways, Swachh Bharat Ads – wherever you look, there is no space for regional languages. Even the safety instructions on LPG cylinders are in Hindi and English – is there no regard for the safety of crores of people who don't know these two languages?

Mother tongue remains an optional language in the syllabus of schools under the Central Board of secondary Education, while English and Hindi are compulsory. What is the government playing at? Though 60% of Indians have mother tongues other than Hindi, all-India examinations – like, IIT, IAS, NET, government job exams – are all held in Hindi and English. Is the government implicitly trying to take away the job opportunities of Non-Hindi speakers?

Our government intends to spend the Non-Hindian taxpayers' money for and celebrating Hindi Diwas. Our Prime Minister addresses Indians in Madison Square, Sydney and Dubai in Hindi. His speech on Independence Day was in Hindi, and it was not even translated by the regional Doordarshan Channels.

Are we not Indians if we are not Hindians?

**Manufacturing Nationalism**

Continued to Page-3

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