

A Rationale for Joint Action by Indians and Indian Expatriates

The Indian Scenario

If you look at India of today, and compare it with India of 1947 when we became free, even the pessimists among us cannot fail to notice the great strides India has made. *If one considers the progress in depth, one cannot help notice that it is confined to the upper and the upper middle class, the persons adept in English. The avenues of advancement, in India, and the world over, are open to them. For the elite, English is the key to prosperity, for the overwhelming majority, English is an unsurmountable barrier.*

Making modern knowledge accessible to every citizen is the only way to empower a nation. A nation cannot stand on its feet, unless science and technology are brought within the reach of its humblest citizen. For the people of India, without the medium of Indian languages, even a modicum of science and technology will not reach the common man. Hindi is the mother tongue of 40% of Indians, understood by more than 70% Indians.

Hindi in USA

The Indian Diaspora is now being described as *Bharatvanshi, there is strong cultural bond between India and the people of Indian origin. Indian expatriates have to understand the strong correlation between language and culture: without the anchor of language, temples notwithstanding, culture will wither, it will be confined to songs and dances. Hindi can serve as an anchor for programs of India Studies. Without the knowledge of Indian languages, it will be difficult to get Indian perspective, with the result that the Western perspective will continue to prevail, leading to the erosion of our cultural heritage.*

It is estimated that 2 million persons of Indian origin inhabit USA My guess is that quarter of them can speak Hindi. This puts the number of Hindi speakers in USA to half a million.

Hindi, up to elementary standard, is taught in a few community centers and temples. *I am not aware of any statistics available for Hindi Schools at the community centers.* The number of such schools may be as high as 100, and the number of students studying there may be in the neighborhood of 2,500. To put it in proper perspective, let us compare it with teaching of Korean and Chinese languages ten years ago.

For Korean language, there were 607 schools. There are 27 Chairs of Korean Studies, a Chair costs about two million dollars. Korean Government matches funds collected by National Association of Korean Schools. Chinese is taught in 630 schools with more than 80,000 students.

The following data is taken from year 2002 Report from Association of Departments of Foreign Languages.

Language	Colleges	Enrollment
Japanese	782	52,238
Chinese	543	34,153
Arabic	264	10,584
Korean	102	5,211
Hindi	51	1,430