New dialect identified in Mithilanchal

Faizan Ahmad | TNN

Patna: The minority community in some districts of Bihar like Darbhanga, Madhubani, Samastipur, Begusarai and Muzaffarpur speak a dialect that has no written record or name. The main language for communication in that region is Maithili. When Muslims speak among themselves, they speak a dialect that is different from Maithili, Hindi, and Urdu. This dialect does not have its own script or literature. This might be the reason this dialect went unnoticed to linguists so far.

Linguist M J Warsi did a comparative study of this new dialect with Hindi, Urdu and Maithili and found that to some extent sentence structure was different. For example, Hindi sentence - Hum jaa rahain hai - is spoken as 'Hum jaay rahal chhilli' in Maithili. But in the different dialect spoken by Mithilanchal Muslims, it is spoken as 'Hum joa rahaliya hae'.

A native of Darbhanga, Warsi, who teaches linguistics and Indian languages at the Washington University in St. Louis, USA, said, “Since I spent my childhood and completed my school education in this region, I was always thinking about this spoken language. Fortunately, I completed my higher education in linguistics and got an opportunity to look at this dialect more closely. Living in the US for many years, I was always thinking about the grammar, structure, and existence of this spoken dialect.” He has given the nomenclature of ‘Mithila Urdu’ to this dialect.

Realizing the importance of linguistic pluralism of the country, the Union government recently initiated a nationwide linguistic survey. Welcoming the move, Warsi said, “I would like to emphasize that this dialect must be included in the ongoing linguistic survey of India. Being linguists, we are more responsible for preserving and propagating our linguistic heritage.”

He said scholars, policymakers, educationists and linguists should come together and formulate a policy for the development of ‘Mithila Urdu’. Warsi also urged the state as well as Union government to provide necessary support so as this new dialect may get recognized as a language of communication for the people of Mithilanchal. “It might be difficult to recognize Mithila Urdu, but if we work together, we will be able to protect our linguistic and cultural heritage,” he added.