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English language: A hype or a necessity

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Abstract

Language is the expression of human beings personality, in words, whether written or spoken. It's the universal medium likewise for conveying the common data and passions of life. In this ultra-modern world, there are a number of languages spoken by people. Some are spoken by only a many hundred while others by hundreds of millions. Some are dying out, either because the groups who speak them are abating or further generally because the speakers have espoused another, more useful language and the new generation does not bother to learn the old one. But some languages are growing in significance as the people who speak them increase in number and influence in the world. English is now one of those great and growing world languages.

Keywords: Expression, universal, medium, relinquishment, generation

Introduction

In its long history, India's ancient culture was subject to many foreign influences, some sporadic, others long standing, some of which produced a altering effect, others a fertilizing effect. The most important of all influences was that of the West which began from Europe, which came from the British. The European nations who were responsible for bringing in western influence were the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. But since India was fated to come under British domination, and since the English made the deepest in-roads into India's culture, the term western has come largely to mean English.

Western influence on our life and letters came through many channels like education, Christian missionary efforts, the work of European orientalist, the programmes of artistic societies, the press and progressive communication styles. Educational effort both by the Government and missionary agencies was no doubt the topmost invasion of westernism on our literature and culture.

The representatives of the British government in India had chalked out a clear-cut plan for introducing the western type of education by the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed as early as 1813, according to the Charter Act of the time, it was decided to set apart a sum of not lower than a lakh of rupees in each time for the betterment and enhancement of literature and creation of a knowledge of the lores. An important stay in the reorganization of the Indian educational system was taken in 1835. The important and known minute of the great statesman Hon. T. B. Macaulay is worth coating:

"We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern- a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

The British Regime consolidated power in India under the East India Company. Since then the use of English, in spite of criticism has waxed in significance.

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C. Rajgopalachari has bravely asserted that English is the gift of Saraswati to us and we shall reject this light from the West only at danger to our reason and security. For administration, communication, pursuit of knowledge at the advanced stage, for maintaining and promoting transnational connections, English is proving a necessary tool, a cementing force, a channel all together. English is the veritable Suez Canal for intellectual intercourse between the West and the East.

Lord William Bentinck on 07 March 1835 resolved that British Government ought to promote European Literature among native Indians and all finances appropriated for the purpose of education would be employed on English education alone. India was being led out from secure and stationary medievalism to restless, dynamic euphemism.

The britishers have by and large succeeded in forming a class of Indians who are English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect and the process has been going on for over a century. B. M. Srikantiah of Kannada, O. Chandu Menon of Malayalam, Subramonia Bharati of Tamil, Viresalingam of Telugu, Hari Narayana Apte of Marathi, Bankim Chandra of Bengali, Premchand of Hindi, Govardhan Ram Tripathi of Gujarati and Bhai Vir Singh of Panjabi, to mention only a few, belong to this special class who came to be the foregoers of western education and culture through literature. It's they, among numerous others of same persuasion, who have refined and bettered the languages of their region inspired by the literatures of the West, particularly English. Macaulay knew that Englishmen couldn't perform this special role and re-vitalize Indian literature.

Every advance in wisdom, in engineering, in trade, in politics, in every branch of human study is bandied, published, circulated and made available in English. Anyone who can read English can keep in touch with the whole world without leaving his own room. Unless we've an acceptable proficiency in understanding English, all advancements in different fields won't be available to us. As the language of science and technology, English is important for industrial and economic development. However, we'd cut ourselves from the flow of ever growing knowledge, If we give up English, people in all fields won't have access to the available professional literature related to their subjects of specialization. If they don't have access to this knowledge, our standards of education would deteriorate and our participation at the world level would become negligible.

Though people are very emotional and sentimental about their regional languages, they don't realize that the latest information in a number of subjects will not be available in their regional languages. If they want to enjoy the pleasure of development, they must understand the value of English in this modern competitive world. It is high time to rise above power politics and regionalism and think about the future of the ever energetic and dynamic young generation who has the capability to do miracles but is unable to do so because of the unavailability of the latest information and wisdom in regional languages

Presently only nine of the twenty eight states and three union territories have introduced English as a compulsory subject from class one. There is a dire need to enforce the introduction of English from class one all over India. Otherwise a large section of the society would remain deprived of the knowledge and Indian entrepreneurs will be unable to get educated English speaking youth to run their out-sourcing companies. The executives and managers working in BPOs, call centres and IT industry will

immediately appreciate the necessity of this step.

Even at the individual level, the value of English as the language of opportunity & developments cannot be ignored. If a person wants to seek higher prospects and opportunities in any sphere of life, he will feel that he has to acquire all the language skills in English.

Moreover in India, English is important as a Lingua Franca because diverse population living in different regions would otherwise be unable to communicate with each other. One reason for the dominance of English is "its propensity for acquiring new identities, its power of assimilation, its adaptability to decolonization as a language, its manifestation in a range of varieties, and above all its suitability as a flexible medium for literary and other types of creativity across languages and culture". English has become more nativized in the Indian environment. Rather it now belongs to India's linguistic repertoire in a very natural way. It has been observed that no society can prosper on old traditions, ethos and even languages. Time has come to accept that we need English and we must learn it because English is the language which will keep us ahead for years to come in which tomorrow's wisdom will be typed and printed. In the absence of English, India will be at a disadvantage and Indians will be at a great loss.

It is true that the western authors and western books were basically responsible for initiating the leavening influence of the West on our languages and literatures. But for its extensive and perhaps intensive impact, it was the Indian authors and Indian books that were more responsible. Great writers like Tagore, Bankim Chandra and Premchand were responsible for propagating a more palatable and easily assimilable form of western modes and thoughts. In other words, it was the "class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes and opinions" that were largely responsible for this cultural osmosis which proved to be blessing opening new vistas for us.

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