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**THE MEDIUM**  
*of*  
**INSTRUCTION**

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*By the same author*

The Fountain of Life

England Through Indian Eyes

Roti kā Rāg

Mānava

Segāon kā Sant

THE MEDIUM  
*of*  
INSTRUCTION

*By*

SHRIMAN NARAYAN AGARWAL

PRINCIPAL, GOVINDRAM SEKSARIA  
COLLEGE OF COMMERCE, WARDHA

*With a Foreword*

*by*

MAHATMA GANDHI

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सेवाग्राम  
वर्धा सी.पी.

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA, C.P.

سیواگرام  
وردیا - سی۔ پی

Principal Shriman Narayan Agarwal's treatise is timely and should go a long way in dispelling the fear and distrust about the possibility and desirability of giving the highest instruction through the mother-tongue. For me it is tragic that such an obvious truth requires arguing. Although Principal Agarwal imbibed all that his ambition could desire of the English language, he never allowed his love of the mother-tongue to be displaced by his regard for English. He is, therefore, well equipped for the mission which he has made his own. I hope that he will not rest till the mother tongues in the various provinces have come to their own.

I have no doubt whatsoever that if those who have the education of the youth in their hands will but make up their minds, they will discover that the mother-tongue is as natural for the development of the man's mind as mother's milk is for the development of the infant's body. How can it be otherwise? The babe takes its first lesson from its mother. I, therefore, regard it as a sin against the motherland to inflict upon her children a tongue other than their mother's for their mental development.

18 - 3 - 42

M.K. Gandhi  
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## THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

### I

It is generally admitted on all hands that the present system of education in India has failed to meet the pressing and vital needs of national life. It is out of touch with economic and social realities, and envisions no life-giving and creative ideal. While national circumstances and problems are continually changing and growing intricate, the educational system goes on functioning listlessly as before, unresponsive to new requirements and situations. Indian students, after many years of dull and arduous intellectual labour, leave the portals of the Universities only to encounter hideous unemployment staring them in the face. The educated youth finds himself incapable of facing the stern realities of life; he stumbles and falls. But the learned Professors see no reason to disturb their routine of class lectures, and the examiners are never

tired of marking the copies red and blue.

I have no desire to discuss all the problems of present day education in these pages. The problems are legion, and it will require a regular book to deal with all of them. It is the question of the medium of instruction that has, of late, been engaging my serious attention, and I have now begun to feel that of the various defects of the Indian educational system, the foreign medium of instruction is, perhaps, the most tragic and absurd.

That the medium of instruction in all stages of education including the Universities should be the mother-tongue is but the simple affirmation of a fundamental psychological principle which has been recognized and is being followed in all the free and progressive countries of the world. There is nothing in the proposition that is extraordinary or startling. "One language only holds the key to our emotions; one language only conveys to us, surely and instinctively the subtler overtones of suggestion which its words possess. That is the language that we use at our mothers' knees; the language of our first prayers and our first spontaneous outbursts of joy or grief. To make any other the vehicle of educa-



tion is not merely to add immeasurably to the pupil's labours; it is to lame his mind in its freedom of movement," observes Mr. H. N. Brailsford, the well-known English writer and thinker. But India is a strange land with a medley of cultures, races and rulers where the most ordinary and normal facts appear sensational and even sacrilegious, and where incontrovertible maxims are mercilessly dragged into domains of diehard contention. It is a thousand pities that the mother-tongue medium has not yet been made compulsory as the medium in all provinces even up to the High School stage. And the most comic or perhaps tragic part of the story is that in this 20th century there do exist parents and teachers in this hapless land who still think that our young boys and girls should continue to learn through the English medium.

## II

It is indeed high time we realized that Indian students are obliged to fritter away a colossal amount of their intellectual and even physical energy by being compelled to learn through a foreign medium. I moved a resolution to this effect in the Srinagar session of the All India Educational Conference in September 1941, and the Conference was considerate enough to adopt the resolution unanimously. The Nagpur University Court has also accepted the principle of my resolution regarding the gradual introduction of the mother-tongue medium in the colleges of the Central Provinces and Berar affiliated to the University. The Academic Council is expected to work out the details before long. Pandit Amaranatha Jha, the Vice-Chancellor of the Allahabad University also informs me that a Committee has already been appointed to prepare a definite scheme for the introduction of Hindi-Urdu media in the Allahabad University. It is

also understood that the Lucknow University is seriously thinking of adopting the Hindustani medium of instruction. In the course of his recent convocation address to the Andhra University, the Vice-Chancellor of the Osmania University also remarked: "The principle of imparting University education in an Indian language is likely to become popular as it gives a clearer grasp of the subject to the student who has not to struggle with the difficulties of a foreign tongue in the process of learning other subjects." Dr. Mackenzie, the late Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Osmania University also confessed that the students learning through an Indian language showed better progress than those learning through the English medium. This fact was corroborated even by the Hartog Committee which reported: "Many witnesses have told us that the boy who has received a vernacular schooling, though he may be handicapped at first by his weakness in English, very often outstrips the Anglo-Vernacular boy in the long run in consequence of his better grasp of those general subjects which he has learnt through the Vernacular."

### III

The English medium of instruction was introduced in India with complex motives. In the early days of its dominion in India, the East India Company had little inclination for the doubtful experiment of introducing Western learning into India. Warren Hastings, the dominating figure of the time was a great admirer of Indian culture and literature. He tried to revive ancient learning and promote the studies of Sanskrit and Arabic. But the East India Company required a host of English-knowing clerks to carry on the routine of their administrative machinery. Indian leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy thought that the introduction of English language and Western secular learning would facilitate social and religious reforms in India. It was with this object that the Hindu College and the Medical College were established in Calcutta. An impetus to the introduction of Western learning and a foreign medium of instruction was given by the Christian

missionaries. A few Indian leaders were very keen to encourage the studies in the Indian classics and were against the Western learning through a foreign medium. There was, for several years, a regular tussle between the Orientalists and the Anglicists. Lord Macaulay gave his award in favour of the Anglicists in his famous Minute of 1835. Macaulay, it may be recalled, was a Whig leader and it was his earnest intention to spread the principles of democracy in India through the study of English language and literature.

At that time it was not contemplated to make the English medium of instruction a permanent feature of the Indian Educational System. Since suitable text-books in the Indian languages were not available and most of the current text-books were written in verse, it was thought advisable to prepare up-to-date English text-books; but even British educationists thought that the Vernacular medium alone could be successful in the long run. The Bengal Committee of public instruction definitely laid down: "We conceive the foundation of a Vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed." In his famous despatch of 1854, Sir Charles Wood, later Viscount Halifax, also

emphasized the importance of encouraging the study of the Vernaculars as the only possible media of mass education in this country. But the East India Company made the knowledge of English compulsory for public services and consequently the study of the Indian languages was soon relegated to the background. Even the Indian leaders felt a great sense of pride and prestige in speaking and writing English. In course of time they began even to look down with contempt on the Indian languages. The Government needed an increasing number of clerks for its numerous departments and English education became a passport for obtaining jobs. English-knowing people soon became the symbols of the ruling class. The Vernacular teacher in the schools was the least paid, and therefore, the least respected. In the higher classes in schools and colleges the Indian languages had absolutely no place in the curriculum. A few Indian educationists emphasized the need of imparting higher education through the Indian languages but their voice was drowned in a chorus of English-intoxicated Indians. It is interesting to know that when Sir Theodore Morrison read a paper in London in 1914 before a distinguished

gathering of Indians, pleading the cause of the Indian languages, he found very few supporters among the audience. One Indian leader opined that English was the only living language in India; another Indian gentleman remarked that English should not be regarded as a foreign language in India because it originally came from the same stock as the Indian languages. As I said in the beginning, India *is* a strange land !

Apart from the medium of instruction, Indian educationists did not even think it worthwhile to allot a proper place to the Indian languages as optional subjects. It is surprising to know that when Sir Asutosh Mukerjee, the renowned Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, first proposed that Bengali should be recognized as an optional subject in the colleges, he met with strong opposition. Thus, even in Bengal which is now proud of its language, Bengali won tardy recognition as a respectable subject for University examinations. Various Committees and Commissions were appointed during the last few decades by the Provincial and the Central Governments to examine the problem of education in India. But the educationists, in the course of their discussions on various educa-

tional aspects, took it for granted that English should remain the medium of instruction in the higher school classes and colleges. The position of English as a foreign language and as medium of instruction was discussed by a representative conference which met at Simla in 1917 under the Chairmanship of Sir Sankaran Nair, the then Education Minister. Although it was generally conceded that the teaching of school subjects through a medium which was imperfectly understood led to cramming and memorizing of text-books, the use of the English medium was defended by some on the ground that it improved the knowledge of English, as if the sole aim of education in India was to make Indian youngmen past masters of the English language. Twenty years ago the Sadler Commission commended the ideal of using the mother-tongue as medium of instruction. Yet even today the English medium of instruction reigns supreme in our educational system and curiously enough many of us do not realize the utter illogicality of the situation. Our learned Professors in some Universities regard it a matter of pride and privilege to deliver lectures on Kalidas, Tulidas and Surdas in the heaven-born English



language. Question papers on the Indian languages and their literature are often set in English. Could anything be more ludicrous? These facts are worthy to be included in an Anthology of Humour, or in the book, 'Believe it or Not'!

But there are still people among us who hold that English can be the only natural and successful medium of instruction in this country. Despite such friends it seems certain that the English medium is now on its last legs. It has had its day and should now cease to be. As Mahatma Gandhi, in the course of his recent address on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Benares Hindu University pertinently and candidly remarked: 'The business of crossing the hurdle of the English language before anybody could learn anything is a game not worth the candle and dissipates the energy of the nation's youth which could otherwise be much more usefully employed.' We feel elated in writing and speaking in English. But with due apologies I may frankly remark that the English of even the most learned Indian Professors is extremely forced and un-English though their pretensions are to the contrary. Our pronunciation is worse and our accent generally on the

wrong syllable. In point of fact, this is but natural. But our defects of grammar, accent and pronunciation appear revolting because we pretend to speak English like Englishmen. My visit to England has also showed me that even Englishmen were surprised that we patronized the English language to such a great extent, and, believe me, the cultured Englishman detests to hear Indians conversing with one another in English. But with political slavery, intellectual slavery has entered our blood and bones with disastrous results.

## IV

The unnatural place that the English language occupies in our educational system has led to unnatural and even comic results in our national life. The Professors deem it below their dignity to talk to their students in the mother-tongue and they really feel insulted when a student dares to take the liberty of conversing with them in a provincial language. In Northern India at least, father and son often carry on correspondence in English to this day. I have known young men who feel delighted to receive letters in English from their wives. It has become almost impossible to get an entry into the best society without a knowledge of English. Some of the best Indian *litterateurs* suffer from an inferiority complex because they do not know English. In South India the English language has become a part and parcel of the spoken Tamil and Telugu. This infatuation for English is a sure sign of our slavery and degradation. The sooner we get out of this hypnotism the better for us and the nation.

## V

It is tragic that about 50 per cent of students fail at University examinations in India. No other country in the world, perhaps, can boast of such criminal waste of national intellectual wealth. The following statistics will testify to my statement:—

### RESULTS OF THE PRESCRIBED EXAMINATIONS

1937—1938

<i>Nature of Examination</i>	<i>No. of Examinees</i>	<i>Number passed</i>
Master of Arts ..	2285	1653
Bachelor of Arts ..	15711	8789
Inter Arts .. ..	29403	15530

A few cynical Indian educationists have tried to account for this waste by under-rating the average intelligence of Indian young men as compared with English and European students. No argument could be more vicious and mischievous. Scores of even English educationists have borne testimony to the fact that the Indian student is in

no way inferior and is even superior in some respects to his English class-fellows in the British Universities. Our young men have to work under the great handicap of learning through a foreign tongue. The Hartog Committee estimated that an Indian student has to devote at least one-third of his time to the study of English alone. Many students fail in their examinations because their only crime is that they did not succeed in mastering a language of which they knew nothing till they had outgrown their most impressionable years.

## VI

It is also an established fact that the English medium of instruction not only taxes the Indian student's intellectual energies, but also cripples his thought and expression. The Punjab University Enquiry Committee explicitly stated that as a result of the sad neglect of the mother-tongue 'a large proportion of the pupils are unable to think or write clearly in any language.' English education has weighed too heavily on the students and has smothered their originality and initiative. It has undermined their self-confidence and engendered an inferiority complex. Indian students after wasting their many valuable years do not know well either English or their mother-tongue. Language is a vehicle of thoughts, and lack of command over it is bound to make thought inexpressible. Some of the Indian Universities are anxious to understand causes of the miserably low standard of English in colleges. They are devising various means to improve the

standard by laying more emphasis on the teaching of English. They fear that the introduction of mother-tongue media will bring down the standard of English further. But a little reflection will show that they are placing the cart before the horse. If the Indian student is given opportunities to master his mother-tongue and learn his various subjects through it, he will surely develop coherent and lucid thought. The mastery of his mother-tongue will naturally lead to a better grasp of the English language and he will, then, be able to wield it with more ease and grace. On the other hand, if the mother-tongue is dethroned by English, the Indian student will always be an anomaly and a problem.

## VII

The English medium of instruction has also estranged the educated Indian young men from the masses. It is evident that the English language can never be the *lingua franca* of India. It has nothing in common with the various Indian provincial languages. Despite all the English education during the last century, only about 1.25 per cent of the Indian people are literate in English. The Indian student, after passing his highest examination in an Indian University is incapable of serving the masses because he cannot approach them through an Indian language. It is impossible for him to adapt his knowledge to the Indian conditions. He knows much more about England and the other foreign countries, and is an alien in his own land. He cannot understand the language of the people, and the people do not understand him. That is why education has failed to affect the masses in India. As Dr. Annie Besant observes: 'The want of education



through the mother-tongue has made India admittedly the most ignorant country in the civilized world. There is a stratum of highly educated people, and huge masses of uneducated.' We have rushed into a blind alley and we are going we know not where.

The cases of China and Japan are inspiring examples for us. China, like India, is also a big and backward country, but it has been showing steady progress because its system of education is more natural. There are a number of Universities in China, and all the teaching is done in the national language, though European languages including English are taught in secondary schools and colleges. After the invasion of Japan, China has quickly built up a new co-operative civilization. It has been able to resist the Japanese aggression because the students and professors could rise to the occasion and establish direct and living contacts with the masses. Thousands of students have migrated to the Western portion of China and they have succeeded in spreading a network of cottage industries based on co-operative principles. The Co-operative Societies are running schools, hospitals, small scale industries, and even the towns are administered by them.

The instance of Japan has also valuable lessons to teach. There was a time when the educationists in Japan also favoured the introduction of the English medium of instruction, but good sense prevailed and they did not commit the fatal fallacy of neglecting their own tongue. Japan today has been able to challenge the Western powers not because it has slavishly followed their language and culture, but because the Japanese had the power and the vigour of adapting the Western qualities to their national circumstances. They spread the good points of Western culture in their country through their own tongue and the masses imbibed them without much difficulty. Both in China and Japan English is taught compulsorily in the colleges besides German or French. But the Japanese and the Chinese know how to respect their own languages. They do not hug English pathetically like slaves as we do.

The protagonists of the English medium contend that but for Western learning India would not have produced a galaxy of leaders as it has done, and that whatever is valuable and fruitful in their writings and thought is directly or indirectly the result of Western culture and education. It is futile to underestimate the value of

Western thought and it must be conceded that India has many lessons yet to learn from the West. But it is preposterous to suggest that the present system of education in India has been instrumental in creating leaders in this country. The fact of the matter is that despite the clogging and cramping effects of the present education, India has been able to produce leaders of originality and stamina. If the educational system in India had been more natural and scientific, we would have not witnessed the sad spectacle of a wide and almost unbridgeable gulf gaping between the leaders and the led. The Indian masses have almost nothing in common with the educated class; they may listen to them and admire them, but they cannot regard them as their patterns. That is why almost all the schemes launched by the educated hierarchy have failed to penetrate the masses. For instance, the Co-operative Movement in India has not borne fruit because the educated people and the Government servants have tried to impose it on the Indian masses, without comprehending the innate problems and difficulties that face the sons of the soil. The predominance of the English language has, thus, weaned the leaders from the

teeming millions of India, and education in this country, consciously or unconsciously, lends itself to unreal and barren theorizing and vain intellectualism.

## VIII

Let me not be misunderstood. I harbour no hatred or ill-will against the English language. It will be stupid to overlook the fact that English has become the language of international commerce and intercourse. Nor can we deny that English is a rich and well-developed language and possesses valuable gems of literature. It must also be conceded that English has served to bring at least the educated people in India together so far. But it is one thing to learn a foreign language, and another to make it the compulsory medium of instruction. In the present circumstances, English cannot be banished altogether from the Indian educational system; that is neither possible nor desirable. Just as the students of China and Japan learn two European languages besides their mother-tongue, so the Indian young men can also learn English in the upper secondary schools and colleges. Provision could be made for the study of French, German

Japanese and other foreign languages as well. But the English language should now occupy its reasonable and just place; it should no longer be allowed to suppress and throttle the Indian languages and trample on their legitimate rights.

It is also presumptuous to hold that English can serve as the *lingua franca* of this country. The Englishmen have tried to spread the English language all these well-nigh hundred and fifty years. But only one-hundred and twenty-three out of ten thousand people in India have been able to learn English so far. The kind of English that they have learnt need not be described. The less said about it the better. But the figures take the wind out of the sails of those who argue that English should continue to be the medium of instruction because it is the common language of India and its thorough knowledge will help to cement the different parts of India into a unified national structure.

## IX

It is also necessary to point out that the Indian students should be asked to learn the modern English language for political, commercial and international use and not for the subtle beauties of English literature. The Abbott and Wood Report on Vocational Education in India also recommends that the teaching of English should be simplified and made more 'domestic.' "The repetition and critical study of difficult English prose and subtle English poetry works which would tax the appreciation of students in England should not form so systematic a part of the instruction of boys.....The prime necessity, however, for pupils is for them to become familiar with English as it is written and spoken in every-day life and in the ordinary English-speaking home." It is fantastic to expect Indian young men to master Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth when they cannot even write a few sentences in English correctly. Those who wish to study the

beauties of English literature are, certainly, entitled to do so. But intensive study of English literature cannot and should not be made compulsory in this country. A working knowledge of the modern English language, with a good grasp of its grammar, idiom and pronunciation for practical business should be sufficient for our purpose. It is the undue importance given to the study of English literature that has given birth to the well-known poetic or 'flowery' English of the Indian students, so much so that they often quote Shakespeare and Milton even in their matter-of-fact applications and other business transactions. If an Indian student is made to read and 'appreciate' the works of English Poets even though he may not follow the language, we cannot expect better results specially when he is sedulously deprived of the knowledge of literature in Indian languages. I mean no insult to the Indian professors when I say that even they are no better ideals before their students. The ornate style which is used by them in their lectures is naturally aped by their pupils. The sooner the study of the English language is 'domesticated' the better for both the teachers and the taught.



## X

Before I proceed to examine the various objections raised against the introduction of the mother-tongue as medium of instruction, I must pay a warm tribute to the founder of the Osmania University which is the only University in India to impart the highest knowledge through an Indian language i.e., Urdu. The University surmounted the difficulty of suitable text books by establishing a Translation Bureau which has so far published about 360 text-books. Dictionaries of technical terms have also been prepared with incessant labour and devotion. The standard of the Osmania University cannot be regarded as lower than many of the other Indian Universities. Even the British Universities admit graduates of the Osmania University on the same footing as the graduates of any other University in India. In All India examinations like the Indian Civil Service, the Osmania University graduates also enjoy the same status as the students of other Universities. It must, however, be pointed

out that Urdu is not the mother-tongue of a majority of students of the Hyderabad State, and it is not fair to overlook the legitimate claims of Telugu, Marathi and Hindi in the educational system of the State. It is but proper that the Nizam Government should allow Telugu, Marathi and Hindi students to learn through their respective mother-tongues at least up to the High School stage. Even in the college classes, it would have been much better if at least the Telugu and Marathi languages had been made the media of Instruction by establishing colleges in the respective linguistic areas. Hyderabad is a big state and can easily afford to have several colleges in its Dominions.

The Nizam Government have recently published a Press Note in which they have tried to remove misunderstandings regarding the propriety of introducing Urdu as the medium of Instruction. In the course of the Note it is pointed out that Urdu has been used as the medium of instruction in the High School and University stages because it is the *lingua franca* of India and is the common language understood by the people in the State. Neither reason is convincing. The *lingua franca* has no right to displace the provincial languages and, to be frank, the difficult Urdu prevalent

in the State cannot be even the common language of India. It is the mother-tongue of a very small percentage of the State population. Never-the-less the Osmania University must be given due credit for undertaking pioneer work in introducing an Indian language as the medium of instruction in all the branches of knowledge up to the highest classes. Urdu may not be the predominant language of the Hyderabad Dominions, but it is much better to have Urdu rather than English as the medium of instruction. As the Press Note rightly points out, 'if the use of Urdu is objected to where it happens not to be the mother-tongue, the force of the objection is multiplied ten-fold in the case of the use of English.'

Professor Karve also deserves to be warmly congratulated for introducing Marathi as the medium of instruction in his Indian Women's University. Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi and the various Vidyapiths have also done pioneer work in this direction. I have, however, no hesitation in saying that the work of the Osmania University has been much more thorough than that of the other institutions.

## XI

Let me now anticipate a few objections to the introduction of the mother-tongue medium. The most common objection is that there is dearth of suitable text-books in the Indian languages. Learned educationists also tell us that the Indian 'Vernaculars' are not yet sufficiently developed to deserve the honour of being the vehicles of 'Light and Learning.' The answer to this vain argument is simple. English was not developed to its full stature in a day; nor were the host of English text-books produced over-night. I have absolutely no doubt that we can get the best text-books in the Indian languages on all subjects within a few years. It is sheer foolhardiness to expect the Publishers to publish suitable text-books in Indian languages when there is no market for them. If there is a demand, adequate supply will follow before long. To argue that the mother-tongue cannot be a medium because there are no text-books is putting the cart before the horse. It is very strange that almost

all the Commissions and Enquiry Committees appointed for educational reconstruction in India overlooked the legitimate claims of the Indian languages by entrenching themselves behind the argument of the paucity of proper text-books. This is a good illustration of the intellectual bankruptcy of our educationists whose minds always move in particular grooves. It is very difficult for them to get out of the traditional ruts.

We cannot expect the Indian languages to be as developed as English without rehabilitating them in their proper places. If we do not allow them to be the vehicles of highest learning, they will never get a chance for enrichment. Our mother-tongues that have been smothered all these decades are bound to resurrect themselves when invoked with reverence. Languages are developed through use even as we learn swimming by jumping into a running stream.

## XII

The difficulty of technical terms in the Indian languages is not insurmountable. The Central Advisory Board of Education also recently examined the problem of technical terms. They are of opinion that the English terms should be used for All India purposes and the Provinces can formulate their terminology on the basis of either Sanskrit or Arabic-Persian. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in his brochure, 'The Question of Language' observes:—

‘We should be bold enough, I think, to lift bodily foreign and technical words which have become current coin in many parts of the world and to adopt them as Hindustani words. Indeed, I should like them to be adopted by all the Indian languages. This will make it easier for our people to read technical and scientific works in various languages, Indian and foreign. Any other course will lead to chaos and confusion in the mind of the student who has to grapple with large numbers of technical terms, and

who often has to read important books in other languages. An attempt to have a separate and distinguished scientific vocabulary is to isolate and stultify our scientific growth and to put an intolerable burden on the teacher and taught alike.

‘Many foreign words can and should thus be taken in, but many technical words will have to be taken from our own language also. It is desirable that linguistic and technical experts should make a list of such words for common use. This will not only bring about uniformity and precision in matters where variety and vagueness are highly undesirable, but will prevent the use of absurd phrases and expressions.’

The suggestions of Pt. Nehru are quite practicable. For the time being the Provincial languages should be allowed to develop their own technical terms based either on Sanskrit or Persian-Arabic or both. As far as possible the terms should be simple and not too learned. Wherever possible the current indigenous terms should be adopted. Later on attempts should be made to pick up the most suitable technical terms and standardize them for provincial as well as All India purposes. In

the meantime, English terms could be used within brackets in the text-books. Latin or English technical terms which have become quite popular with us should also be accepted and adopted without any hesitation. For the benefit of those students who are desirous of studying the English, French or German books on technical subjects, lists of technical words in the various Indian languages could be published with their equivalents in the foreign languages.



### XIII

It is also pointed out that English must remain the medium of instruction so long as it is a State language and its knowledge is insisted upon in our public life. If the Universities do not help students in attaining proficiency in the use of English the students will be seriously handicapped. This argument is also futile. I do not want English to be exiled altogether from the schools and colleges in India. It can remain a compulsory subject and the students may certainly study the English language and learn it well. Our young men, therefore, will not suffer from any handicap so far as State services and public life are concerned. But I see absolutely no reason on earth why Indian students should be obliged to obtain all their knowledge through the English language.

It is feared that the introduction of the mother-tongue media will engender linguistic consciousness and rivalry, because the students of different linguistic areas will not get a chance to mix with

one another. This again is a mischievous argument. If it is a sin to obtain the highest learning through one's mother-tongue, woe be to that learning! Peculiar ideas have been inculcated in us regarding the language problem. Some of us seem to think that the best and the safest solution of our linguistic problem is to scrap all the Indian languages and enthrone the supreme 'heaven-bred' language, English. In Switzerland the people speak three languages i.e., German, French and Italian, and yet the Swiss people are an ideal nation. There is no linguistic rivalry amongst them. On the other hand, the peoples of Germany and Austria speak the same tongue, and yet the two countries (now, thanks to Hitler, they are united by the sword) have been hostile to each other. India is almost a continent and considering its large dimensions, the number of provincial languages is not large. The Indian people cannot unite by forgetting and suppressing their mother-tongues. Indian students should be taught to respect the Indian languages other than their own mother-tongue; the variety of languages in India should not become the apple of discord. Students will lose nothing by staying in their own linguistic areas and learning through their mother-tongues. They need not migrate to

other provinces for their education and incur unnecessary expenditure. For inter-provincial intercourse they will learn Hindustani, and for international contact, English.

Multi-lingual provinces like the Bombay and Madras Presidencies will present some difficulties in the introduction of the mother-tongue media. If the Government of India undertakes to redistribute Indian provinces on a linguistic basis, the problem will be easily solved. Till then, the difficulty can be overcome in a different manner. This question I have discussed in detail in a separate section.

There may be a few other difficulties in the way, but nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without a struggle. The game which is won easily is, perhaps, not worth the candle. If we are convinced that the present English medium of Instruction should be replaced by the mother-tongue media, we must brave all difficulties and surmount them.

## XIV

Let us now discuss details regarding the introduction of the mother-tongue media in the various Provinces of India. So far as primary education is concerned the question of the English medium of instruction does not arise. Each child has an inalienable right to get his early education through his mother-tongue even though he may be residing in a province other than his own. For example, if there is a sufficient number of Gujrati children in Bengal it is the duty of the Government to provide for their primary education in Gujrati. If the number of such children is very small, it is the duty of their parents to arrange for their primary education in their mother-tongue and the Government should recognize and assist such private ventures.

In this connection I may quote the convention adopted by the League of Nations with regard to the education of the children of the minorities in a country like Austria:—

‘Austria will provide in the public educational

system in towns and districts in which a considerable proportion of Austrian nationals other than those of German speech are residing adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Austrian nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision shall not prevent the Austrian Government from making the teaching of the German language obligatory in the said schools.’

So far as India is concerned, it is not necessary to make the provincial language compulsory for the children of a different tongue in primary schools. The provincial language must, however, be compulsory in secondary schools.

## XV

The Sadler Commission had recommended the immediate introduction of the mother-tongue media in the secondary stage about twenty years back. The Abbott and Wood Report of 1937 also stressed the imperative need of replacing the English medium of instruction in the High Schools by the 'vernacular' medium. The Report observes:

It is not possible accurately to assess the mental dislocation and the inhibitions which boys of say 16 years of age suffer from being required to give and receive information, to formulate ideas, to record their experiences and to express their sense of values in a language other than which they use and have always been in the habit of using in domestic and social life. Our experience of the High Schools persuades us that this use of English as the medium of instruction lies at the root of the ineffectiveness of many of them. As a whole the boys in the High Schools are responsive

and educable but they are hampered at every turn by having to handle an instrument which comes between them and spontaneity.....We would, therefore, urge that so far as possible the Vernacular should be the medium of instruction throughout the higher secondary schools, leaving English to take its extremely important place as a compulsory first language.'

It is really unfortunate that in spite of all the Reports and Commissions, the Vernacular medium has not yet been compulsorily introduced even up to the High School stage in most of the provinces. It is but fair that Provincial Governments should make the mother-tongue medium compulsory in High Schools without further delay. Provision for High-School teaching through English could be made, where necessary, for Anglo-Indians and domiciled Europeans. In the case of boys or girls residing with their parents in another province, the State should provide for their secondary education through their mother-tongue, if their number is sufficient, say at least 15 in each class of a High School. For example, if there is an adequate number of Marathi boys in Gujrati, it is the duty of the Provincial Government to arrange for their secondary education in Marathi. But there should be one

condition, viz., that these Marathi boys must learn the Provincial language Gujrati as well. If the number of such boys is small, their parents should try to run a private High School through the Marathi medium and the Government should recognize the school and assist it financially provided the Gujrati language is made compulsory in the institution.

The policy of trying Vernacular-medium and English-medium High Schools side by side is not sound. The student who learns through his mother-tongue may be tempted to join the English medium school, feeling that his standard of English may become lower than that of his friend studying in an English-medium High School. This practice will unnecessarily create an unhealthy atmosphere. The Vernacular medium of instruction should also be soon introduced in the colleges, otherwise students passing their High School examination through the mother-tongue medium will find it extremely difficult to follow lectures in English in the college classes. The predominance of English in the Universities will tend to discourage the prevalence of mother-tongue media in the secondary stage.



## XVI

In the case of colleges and universities, the medium of instruction should be the predominant language or languages of the province. If the Government of India redistributes the Provinces strictly on a linguistic basis, the problem will be much easier. For the present, the difficulty could be solved in the bilingual or trilingual provinces by providing for instruction in the various provincial languages in different colleges. For example, in Central Provinces and Berar, the colleges in the Central Provinces will have the Hindi medium and the colleges in Berar will impart education through Marathi. In Nagpur the colleges may provide instruction through Hindi or Marathi, or both. Similarly in the Bombay Presidency, the colleges in Karnatak, Maharashtra and Gujrat will impart education through Kannarese, Marathi and Gujrati respectively. In Bombay some colleges will have the Marathi and some others the Gujrati medium; a few may provide for both. If there is a

sufficient number of, say, Bengali students in Bombay their parents may try to establish a college and impart education through Bengali. The Bombay University should recognize it, though a grant-in-aid is not necessary. Similarly the Nagpur University should affiliate a private college of Gujrati or Urdu medium if there is a sufficient number of students, say, at least 30 in each class. If the number is not adequate, the Gujrati or Muslim students will have to join either a Hindi or a Marathi college. In the bilingual or trilingual provinces the Universities will have to conduct examinations in two or three languages. This will entail extra expenditure; but in order to conserve the national energy of our youngmen and make education scientific, more money must be found for the purpose. If necessary, more universities could be established for each linguistic area. For example, there may be a Poona University for Maharastra, an Ahmedabad University for Gujrat and a Dharwar University for Karnatak.

In the United Provinces, it will be necessary to provide for both Hindi and Urdu media in Universities like Allahabad and Lucknow. In the Benares and Aligarh Universities the media may be Hindi and Urdu respectively. Hindi and Urdu

languages should not be confused with the Hindu and Muslim communities, and the Universities should not, therefore, become communal institutions. Under the Agra University a few colleges will have the Urdu medium, and the other the Hindi medium. In the Punjab I would prefer the medium of instruction from the primary to the University stage to be Punjabi. If it is not possible for the present to have Punjabi medium in colleges, we may have Hindi and Urdu media instead. Under the Calcutta University, the colleges in Assam should impart instruction in Assamese. A separate Assam University could also be established in course of time.

There are now 18 Universities in India and it is not possible for me to discuss the problems of each University in detail. Each University will have to face its own difficulties and work out details. It would be wrong to offer the same solution for the language problem of each province, because conditions vary considerably.

The mother-tongue media cannot be introduced in all the college classes at once. We should begin with the Intermediate classes and start the mother-tongue medium, say, after three years. In the meantime suitable text-books could be prepared conve-

niently. In order to enable students who pass the Intermediate examination through the Vernacular medium to prosecute their B. A. course in the same medium, the English medium in the graduate classes should be abolished after five years. Similarly for the post-graduate classes the mother-tongue medium could be introduced after seven years. Thus, we can have a Seven Year Plan for the gradual introduction of the Vernacular medium of instruction in the Indian Universities.

To begin with, the professors in the colleges may find it a bit difficult to master the Indian languages for imparting instruction. But they will soon discover that, after all, it is much easier to teach through the Indian languages than in English. However, their initial difficulty is of minor importance as compared with the enormous waste of students' energy. Those professors who find it impossible to teach through an Indian language, or may regard it below their dignity to lecture in the 'Vernaculars', can resign with honour. The country will not lose but gain by their retirement.

The introduction of the mother-tongue media may also lead to the reshuffling of professors among the various colleges in a province. For example, in the Central Provinces and Berar, some of

the Marathi professors in the Central Provinces colleges will have to be absorbed by the Berar colleges and vice versa. With the co-operation of the different colleges and the University this adjustment should be quite easy. The professors should not also find it difficult to be bi-lingual.

The English medium of instruction may continue for some years in All India Technical Educational institutions like the Indian Science Institute, Bangalore. The Benares Hindu University may also continue the English medium for a few years in its technical departments. But, sooner or later, Hindustani should be made the medium of instruction in such All India institutions.

## XVII

The various difficulties in the way of the introduction of the Vernacular medium in all the stages of education are bound to vanish like morning mists the moment we determine to rehabilitate the Indian languages. Where there is a will there is a way. But the greatest barrier in the path is our infatuation for the English language, a queer superstition that English, and not our mother-tongues, is capable of expressing the most abstruse and scientific ideas. The present educational system has torn us from our moorings and our vision is blurred. We fail to perceive the incongruities in our educational methods. We attach too much importance to minor points while larger issues are allowed to fade into the background.

In the New World Order to come let us hope that India will enjoy political freedom. If we are not liberated from the English domination, we must at least be freed from the tyranny of the English language. Mahatma Gandhi observes:

‘Among the many evils of foreign rule this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted by History as one of the greatest.

‘It has sapped the energy of the nation, it has shortened the lives of the pupils. It has estranged them from the masses; it has made education unnecessarily expensive. If this process is still persisted in, it bids fair to rob the nation of its soul. The sooner, therefore, educated India shakes itself free from the hypnotic spell of the foreign medium, the better it will be for them and the people.’

Will the Government of India, the University Vice-Chancellors and the Indian educationists respond to the national call?

S. N. Agarwal

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