

# INTERNATIONAL OPINION ON LANGUAGE ISSUES

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## International Opinion on Language Issues

### Mother Tongue is the Key to Education, Knowledge, Science, and English Learning

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#### I. About this Document

Last month, the Government of India issued a notification which included some retrograde provisions regarding the place of Indian languages in central civil services examinations. The notification also added further to the weightage given to English language by proposing to include marks scored in the English compulsory paper to calculate merit. This has stirred up the linguistic debate once again. The present document was written in response to the situation arising out of the Indian government's issuing of the notification mentioned above, a step taken a la ignorance par excellence.

The government withdrew the notification on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March due to a very stiff indictment by language experts and a strong opposition from various political circles. The discriminatory attitude of Indian elite towards Indian languages in India, however, is still worse even than that of their colonial siblings. The language question is inseparably tied with issues of education, scientific development, knowledge in general, culture, heritage, and, very importantly, with the issue of the proper method of learning a foreign language. This document is an effort to provide a synopsis of professional international opinion on these matters.

Though the Indian languages have never been granted their rightful and essentially required status even after the British left, their plight has been worsening further and at a faster pace for the past 30 years or so. The English language is pushing Indian languages out even as medium of education in schools. Though the real reason for this is the Indian elite's misconceived vested interests, the following kinds of false arguments are concocted in support of this irrationality:

1. That English is the language of science and knowledge and the mastery of English, therefore, is essential to make progress in these fields;
2. English is the language of international communication and business and no international exchange is possible without it.

The above kinds of arguments are a result of total ignorance about the relationship between language and science, education, knowledge in general, and about the international linguistic scene. The aim of this document is to pull the mask off this ignorance.

## **II. Mother Tongue, Other Tongue, and Education**

It would be proper to first look at the international experience and scholarship with regard to the relationship between language and education, the most important domain of present times, and with regard to the relationship between language and science and knowledge in general. The following statement from the book titled ‘The Use of Vernaculars in Education’ published by the United Nation’s Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1953 is an eye opener; The book presents the essence of international research and wisdom on the issue:

“It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is means of identification among the members of community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.” @ (UNESCO, 1953:11)

This opinion of UNESCO was the result of a very comprehensive research. The UNESCO had stated this again in 1968:

“...the use of mother tongue be extended to as late a stage of education as possible. @ (UNESCO, 1968:691)

The following is recorded in UN’s developmental report of 2004:

“In the Philippines students' with the proficiency in the two languages of the bilingual education policy (Tagalog and English) outperformed students who did not speak Tagalog at home.” @ (UNDP Report 2004:61)

The following statement is about the US, a country where the overwhelming majority are native speakers of English:

“In the United States, Navajo students instructed throughout their primary school years in their first language (Navajo) as well as their second language (English) outperformed their Navajo-speaking peers educated only in English.” @ (UNDP Report 2004:61)

I would personally and earnestly request the Indian Anglo-maniacs to take the trouble to know in what a big number the non-English medium schools exist even in mainly English speaking countries such as the USA, Canada and New Zealand. The statements presented below are from the studies carried out throughout the world on the issue :

“Thus, the results of research reported by Modiano (1968, 1973) in Mexico; by Skutnabb-Kangas (1965) in Finland; as well as those from diverse studies summarized by Gudschinsky (1975) for Latin America **where a higher proportion of children who are introduced to schooling in their vernacular and later bridged into the second language, develop literacy in their mother tongue, achieve higher level of content mastery and second language proficiency and remain longer in school than children who are schooled exclusively in the second language.**” @ (Tucker, 1977:3). (Read ‘second language’ as ‘foreign language’).

The following citation is from the study carried out on the Finish children who had migrated to Sweden: "The Finnish-language skills shown by the test results are fairly closely connected with the grade in mathematics. In the upper level, Finnish seems to be even more important for achievement in mathematics than Swedish -- in spite of the fact that mathematics, too, is taught in Swedish. **This result supports the concept that the abstraction level of the mother tongue is important for mastering the conceptual operations connected with mathematics.... Subjects such as biology, chemistry, and physics also require conceptual thinking, and in these subjects migrant children with a good mastery of their mother tongue succeeded significantly better than those who knew their mother tongue poorly.** @ (Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma, 1976)." (quoted in Paulston, 1977:94)

Let us have a look at another statement about the USA :

"Likewise, in the United States, there has seemed to emerge a gradual awareness that many non-English residents are not best served by being submerged in a monolingual English education system where no attention is paid to the development of their native language." @ (Tucker, 1977:3)

This one is from a study on Ghana:

“Bokamla and Tlou (1977:45) report that in Ghana only 5 percent of all children who leave elementary school go on to secondary school. In Zaire, only 30 percent of the children who enter elementary school complete the first four grades. The authors attribute this to inability to master the language of instruction.” @ (Fasold, 1984:306)

Further, “It is not true, however, that students will not learn science and mathematics if they do not know English. The ideas of science are not bound by one language and one culture. The Russians, Germans, and French boast of excellent scientific discoveries without using English. The top five performers in the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), namely Singapore, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, and Japan, are countries where English is not the first language.” @ (Ricardo and Nolasco, 2009:6)

All of us know the proud place ancient India and the Arab world held without English in the field of knowledge. In a sense, English was not even born then.

The Norway’s Global Monitoring Report (Benson, 2005) states thus:

“The Six-Year Yoruba Medium Primary Project (Fafunwa et al. 1975; Akinnaso 1993; see Adegbiya 2003 for other references) demonstrated unequivocally that a full six-year primary education in the mother tongue with the L2 taught as a subject was not only viable but gave better results than all-English schooling....”

“More recent work demonstrates similar findings and goes beyond these to illustrate the positive aspects of mother tongue-based bilingual programs listed above....” @ (Benson, 2005). (The mother tongue-based bilingual education means that the education be imparted in mother tongue and the foreign/second language be taught as a subject).

Thus, we find that it is proved time and again throughout the world that the success in education which can be achieved through mother tongue medium cannot be achieved at all through a foreign language medium. Hence, it is not incorrect to state that successful education is possible only when it is mother tongue based. The following statement brings out some of the reasons for this:

“One’s own language enables a child to express him/herself easily, as there is no fear of making mistakes. MLE (multilingual education – the education method where mother tongue is the medium of instruction and

other language is taught as a subject - JS) encourages active participation by children in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and what is being asked of them. They can immediately use the L1 to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know. MLE empowers the teachers as well, particularly when they are more fluent and adept in the local language than in the languages of wider communication. Because the students can express themselves, the teachers can more accurately assess what has been learned and identify areas where students need further assistance, MLE creates the conditions for the integration of the people's community knowledge—the knowledge that informs their lives and give them meaning—into the school system. MLE makes it possible for the community to produce its own culturally relevant reading materials and teaching aids, together with the local writers, illustrators, cultural groups and other stakeholders in the community. MLE also empowers the parents who can take an active part in the education of their children because the school's and the community's language are also their language. MLE brings the community closer to the school and its programs.” (Ricardo and Nolasco, 2009:4)

The experts on language and education opine that if the child's mother tongue is not the medium of education, child wastes many of his/her years in learning the language, because in this way “...**the young learners and their teachers will concentrate on the language, not on Science and Math and literacy (that is more fundamental to learning)**. The best way to learn basic science and math, problem solving skills, and reasoning skills is through the L1.” @ (Ricardo and Nolasco, 2009:11)

We have seen above that the worldwide research and the expert opinions provide a definitive proof that success in education is possible only through the mother tongue medium. But, here in India, the people in control of language and education policies are hell bent on English and are keeping their eyes and ears shut. They are ruining India's education, language and culture beyond redemption. As stated earlier, a humble aim of this write-up is to remove the blinders off their eyes and the thick wax off their ears.

The findings of the international research being described below will further help in piercing this dastardly ignorance. These findings show that the mother tongue medium is essential for success not only in education, it is better than foreign language medium even for learning a foreign language.

### III. Foreign Language Learning and Mother Tongue Medium vs. Foreign Language Medium

It would be proper to start with a statement from the UNESCO:

"What seems to be standing in our way is a set of myths about language and learning, and these myths must be revealed as such to open people's eyes. **One such myth is that the best way to learn a second (read foreign - JS) language is to use it as a medium of instruction.** (In fact, it is often more effective to learn additional languages as subjects of study.) **Another is that to learn a second language you must start as early as possible.** (Starting early might help learners to have a nice accent, but otherwise the advantage goes to learners who have a well developed first language.) **A third is that the home language gets in the way of learning a second language.** (Building a strong foundation in the first language results in a better learning of additional languages.) Clearly, these myths are more false than true, yet they guide the way policymakers tend to think about how speakers of other languages must learn dominant or official languages." @ (UNESCO, 2008:12).

This statement is based on studies from 12 countries spread over all continents. The study included India too and it was funded by the World Bank, not an opponent of English.

A similar study is based on Finnish children who migrated to Sweden. This study showed, "Overwhelmingly, the better a student knew Finnish (as a function of having attended school for several years in Finland), the better he learned Swedish. An examination of language skills of siblings found that who moved from Finland at an average age of 10 have preserved an almost normal Finnish language level, and they also approach the normal level in Swedish of Swedish pupils... The children who moved under the age of six, or who were born in Sweden, do not do as well. Their Swedish language development often stops at the age of about 12, evidently because of their poor grounding in the mother tongue." @ (Paulston, 1977:92-3).

Thus, it is clear that foreign languages are better learned by studying through mother tongue medium. The following tells why it is so:

"Butzkamm insists that we have to re-define the role of the native language as the major resource in foreign language learning and teaching. As children grow into their mother tongue, (1) they have learnt to conceptualize their world and have fully grasped the symbolic function of language; (2) they have learnt to communicate; (3) they have learnt to speak and use their voice; (4) they have acquired an intuitive

understanding of grammar and have become aware of many of the finer points of language; (5) they have acquired the secondary skills of reading and writing. The mother tongue is, therefore, the greatest asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning. It provides an indispensable Language Acquisition Support System and makes instruction possible in the first place.” @ (WIKIPEDIA).

“Successful learners capitalize on the vast amount of both linguistic skills and world knowledge they have already accumulated via the mother tongue. For the most part, they need not re-conceptualize their world in the new language. They have acquired an L1 along with its accompanying discourse skills and pragmatic knowledge, which are directly available for incorporation into the target language system. For instance, they need not be told that requests, wishes or warnings can masquerade as statements. Also, the path breaking power of L1 grammar is not dependent on the fact that both languages share similar grammatical features. It is because all languages have evolved means of expressing abstract ideas such as possession, number, agent, instrument, negation, cause, condition, obligation etc., no matter how they do this; one natural language is enough to open the door for the grammars of other languages because all languages are cut from the same conceptual cloth. In a deep sense, we only learn language once”. @

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang\\_Butzkamm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_Butzkamm)

The facts described so far should suffice to take the blinders off the eyes and pull the deafening wax out of the of the ears of Indian policy makers. However, it won't do any harm to look into what is happening in the rest of the world language wise.

In fact, wherever English has been the medium of instruction, though it being a foreign language there, it has been phased out or is at least diminishing day in and day out. Few examples should suffice as evidence.

Uganda decided in 2007 that for the first three years the mother tongues should be used as medium of education and English should be taught as a subject. This has brought them success too. An appraisal done in just 2008 showed that the new policy had contributed to improvement in literacy.

It needs to be particularly mentioned here that there are 52 language groups in Uganda. The change in Uganda was based on the idea that a student learnt a foreign language better if he had a good foundation in

the mother tongue. Before this new policy, the school education in Uganda used to be in English medium from the very start. (See Kavuma, 2009 for these facts).

Malaysia decided in 2009 to teach Math and Science in Bhasha Malasia in National schools and in Chinese and Tamil in the Local schools.

There can't be a better comment on the illiteracy of Indian policy makers than that Malaysia finds it correct to teach science in Tamil medium to Tamils but it is considered almost a crime here in India. There is a proverb in Punjabi which means that 'without wisdom, even wells go dry'. We may not know much about that, but the English infected Indian heads have certainly gone empty. Anyhow, it won't do anyone any harm to have a look at some more evidence here.

“New Zealand and Britain have shown more regard for their indigenous minority languages (though not for immigrant languages) in recent years, which also shows in their employment as the medium of instruction in schools. The recent history of New Zealand's policy regarding the Maori language and culture is highlighted by S. May, with an optimistic outlook (pp. 21–41). Initial assessments of the newly institutionalised Maori elementary schools (Kura Kaupapa) with Maori medium instruction ‘suggest that the academic progress of children (. . .) is comparable to their mainstream peers, while providing the added advantage of bilingualism (p.35). In the case of Hong Kong there has been an increase in the use of Puntonghua, which has also been introduced as a widely taught school subject, while indigenous Cantonese still serves as the medium of instruction together with English. Malaysia, in contrast, has restrained the status and function of English and substituted it by Malay (Bahasa Malaysia) as the sole official language of the country and the sole medium of instruction in public schools and universities (S. Kaur Gill, pp. 135–152).” @ (Ammon, 2004)

It is clear, thus, that all English infected nations of yester-years are bidding it farewell. The reason seems to be that none wants to be a friend of ignorance (except us, the Indians, highly addicted to mental slavery, and quackery in policy making).

But why is it happening in India, then? The real reason for this is the Indian Neo-Manuvaad; The Indian elite want to plunder all and deprive other Indians of everything through the instrument of English language. Therefore, we need to demolish the ideological bases which sustain this Indian Neo-Manuvaad in the digital

age. These bases are some myths, which have been nicely unmasked in a Stockholm (Sweden) University Report (see Benson, 2005). Some of these myths are described below.

### III.2. Some More Myths Surrounding Language

**III.2.1. “The one nation—one language myth.** The colonial concept that a nation-state requires a single unifying language has influenced policy-makers in many parts of the world, yet imposition of a so-called “neutral” foreign language has not necessarily resulted in unity, nor have relatively monolingual countries like Somalia, Burundi or Rwanda been guaranteed stability. In fact, government failure to accept ethnolinguistic diversity has been a major destabilizing force in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka (Ouane 2003).” @ (Benson, 2009)

**III.2.2. “The myth that local languages cannot express modern concepts.** Another colonial concept is the supposed inherent worth of European languages in contrast to others, but **all human languages are equally able to express their speakers’ thoughts and can develop new terms and structures as needed. Léopold Senghor once illustrated this by translating Einstein’s Theory of Relativity into Wolof, a lingua franca of Senegal.** The difference lies in which languages have historically been chosen for “intellectualization,” or development, through writing and publishing (Alexander, 2003).” @ (Benson, 2009)

As is made amply clear by the statements above, each language is capable of expressing any kind of concept. But such ignorance prevails around in this regard that we need to go in a bit of detail.

No language can be dubbed rich or poor in terms of sentence formation. A cursory reading of grammar books of any two languages should reveal this. Even a language without a grammar book is grammatically as rich as the ones with written grammars. So, sentence structure wise, all languages are equally rich. It is the vocabulary which is root of all misconceptions about poverty or richness of any particular language.

It is often heard that our languages do not possess words for the fields such as science and technology. But, this view is based in a complete lack of knowledge about the language word stock.

Actually, each language has similar word power, because all words of a language are constructed from some basic elements called ‘roots’ and ‘affixes’. And, there is no marked difference among languages in terms of the number of these basic elements. The following English words can illustrate this very easily:

1. “**Haem**. A prefix signifying blood.
2. **Haemocyte**. A blood cell.
3. **Haemagogue**. Medicine that promotes the catamenial and haemorrhoidal discharges.
4. **Haemal**. Pertaining to the blood.
5. **Haemalopia**. An effusion of the blood into the globe of the eye; bloodshot eye.
6. **Haemngiectasis**. Dilatation of a blood vessel.
7. **Haemangioma**. A malformation of a blood vessels which may occur in any part of the body.
8. **Haemarthrosis**. The presence of blood in a joint cavity.
9. **Haematemesis**. The vomiting of blood.
10. **Haematin**. An iron-containing constituent of haemoglobin.
11. **Haematinic**. An agent improving the blood-quality.
12. **Haematinuria**. The presence of haematin in the urine.
13. **Haematocele**. A swelling filled with blood; haematoma.
14. **Haematocolpos**. Retention of the menses due to a congenital obstruction of vagina.
15. **Haematogenesis**. The development of the blood.
16. **Haematoid**. Having the nature or appearance of blood.
17. **Haematology**. The science dealing with the formation, composition, functions and diseases of the blood.
18. **Haematolysis**. Destruction of blood cells and liberation of haemoglobin.
19. **Haematoma**. The blood tumour; H. Auris, the blood tumour of the external.”  
( With thanks from Rawat, 1985)
20. **Haemophilia**. Tendency of blood not to clot.

At first sight, it would appear that our languages do not have words equivalent to these ones. But the truth is that all of the words above are derived by adding suffixes (endings) to the root (base) ‘Haem’, meaning ‘blood’. The following Hindi parallels, respectively, of these words will make it clear that either our languages do have their equivalents or we can get them in no time.

1. rakt 2. rakt-koshika 3. rakt-prerak 4. raktiya 5. raktiya-netr 6. raktvahini-paasaar 7. rakt-massa 8. raktjoR-vikaar 9. rakt-vaaman 10. lauhraktiya 11. raktvardhak 12. raktmuutr 13. rakt-granthi/suujan 14. rakt-maasdharma 15. rakt-utpaadan 16. raktruup 17. rakt-vigiyaa 18. rakt-hraas 19. rakt-granthi **20. rakt-jamaavhiinta.**

Thus, to state that our languages lack in vocabulary can only be a sound proof of one's not being in a sound state of information.

The English words cited above bring out another significant fact about the touted richness of English language; none of these words is an English one; all of them have been borrowed directly from Latin. It is a misconception, thus, to believe that one would understand the scientific vocabulary better if one were fluent in English, because a vast proportion of the scientific vocabulary in English is either Latin or of Greek origin.

Another myth responsible for the chronic English infection is the misconception that fluency in English will open the doors to the whole world. It is essential, therefore, to know what is happening around in the world linguistically.

**III.2.3. "The L2 as global language myth.** The foreign L2 is often seen as necessary for further education, work and other opportunities, yet, as Phillipson (1992) points out, this has not happened in a political vacuum but is the result of deliberate promotion by powerful countries or groups of their respective languages. Meanwhile, employment in the informal sector of low-income countries involves 50 percent or more of the population and is increasing, and primary schooling is still terminal for most. The vast majority will not be integrated into the global marketplace and will have little use for the L2 (Bruthiaux 2002)." @ (Benson, 2005)

#### **IV. The Contemporary Language Trends**

Two trends are distinctly visible in the present day linguistic scenario – one, the diminishing usage, prestige and dominance of English and two, the rising importance of languages other than English in all domains of language use.

We have already seen above that in all the non-English speaking countries (except the Great India and her past sibling and present geo-cum-wisdom-neighbour Pakistan) where education was imparted in the English

language, it has either been phased out or is in the process of being phased out. Same is happening in other domains.

Around 2000, eighty per cent of internet content was in English; it has come down to below forty now. Information is available on the internet in tens of languages today.

Coming to India, as per Microsoft, 95 per cent of commerce in India is in Indian languages and only 5 per cent in English.

The world has reached a linguistic state where you will be the last person to be offered a job by a company if you knew only English and didn't know any other language. A recent article in a prestigious English magazine, *The Economist*, stated that Britain are at a great disadvantage because they knew only English. The citation below provides an evidence for the linguistic direction the world is moving into:

"Not only do today's workers need to be able to communicate both orally and in writing in languages other than English, but they must be able to do so with persons who have not shared their own social and cultural experiences." @ (Stephanie Bell Rose, The Goldman Sachs Foundation; Vishakha Desai, The Asia Society, [www](#)).

"As other countries create funding and policies that promote, and even help prioritize, the study of foreign languages, experts say U.S. students are falling behind and could suffer in the global marketplace." @ (Asia Society News, 2nd April, 2009, [www](#)).

**"English losing its monopolistic position...."**

"No single language will occupy the monopolistic position in the 21st century which English has - almost - achieved by the end of the 20th century."

"It is thus clear that two trends will dominate the second wave of satellite broadcasting: other major world languages will increase their global reach and the larger providers will localise their services. Both trends indicate a more crowded and linguistically plural audio-visual landscape in 21st century."

"The close association between English and information technology may prove a temporary phenomena....So whereas English speakers used to enjoy the best and latest technology, this is no longer so true." @ (David Graddol. 2000 (1997).

Almost all of the schools in the developed world are trying to teach their students other languages along with the mother tongue, and these other languages are not merely English.

Things have gone so far that you can now find Chinese medium schools even in the USA in which 90 per cent of students come from non-Chinese language background. (Though this policy is very much wrong, yet, this speaks volumes about the rise of Chinese language in the world). The number of Chinese learners in the USA in 2007 were ten times more in comparison to 2000. (USA Today, 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2007)

"Panama is moving to make the teaching of Mandarin compulsory in all schools, in recognition of China's growing importance in the world economy." @ BBC News (www) 6th December, 2007)

Even in the countries which speak English mainly, more and more people whose mother tongue is not English are abandoning the use of English. During the 1990 census in the USA, 31.8 million persons recorded that they did not use English at home. The number had grown to 47 million in the 2000 census. This increase in number is far greater than the increase in population of the respective language groups. The number of such Spanish population alone had risen by 60 per cent. From 1980 to 2011, the number of persons who did not use English at home had risen by 140 per cent in the USA, though the US population had increased only by 40 per cent during these years. This means that the number of people who had abandoned English at home had doubled in absolute terms during these years. On the contrary, the Indian elite (the rashTar swamis sans information in this information age) have completely abandoned national self-respect, not English, and don't miss to pay daily obeisance to English morn, noon, and night.

The following figures from Argentina are a good evidence to show how English is being pushed out of the media in the former English colonies: 49 per cent of Argentine media in 1983 was from outside the country. The figure for 1996 was 22 per cent.

Thus, there should be no doubt left that English is diminishing in all the domains where it had held a dominant position earlier.

With the advent of numerous language based technologies (internet, computer, mobile telephony, e-books etc.), the commercial prospects of native languages cannot be overstated.

We also need to weigh the educational, economic, commercial, and cultural losses that English language has caused us. A brief account of these is given in the section below.

### **V. Other Serious Losses Due to Keeping all Eggs in the English Basket**

Due to the impelling commercial necessities, almost all countries of the world are presently engaged in learning the languages of other countries. But, we keep moon walking in the English cemetery, night and day. We are not paying any attention to need for learning of other languages. Due to this, we are suffering great economic and commercial losses. We will be left in complete isolation in the near future if we didn't learn the languages of other countries. Today, Chinese and Spanish should be more important to us than English. But we are completely blind not only to the near future but to the present as well. The English is being phased out throughout the world of all the mother tongue domains, which it had occupied earlier. But we are increasingly handing over all our education, culture and communication spaces to the English language. A cursory look at the decreasing Indian share in the world trade should be enough to know what benefits it has brought us. In 1950, the Indian share in world trade was 1.78 per cent. It has now come down to 1.50 per cent. The increase in the spread of English in India during these years is pretty obvious to all of us. This constant decrease in India's share in the world trade tells that the Indian policy makers' English ride is a fine children's story of 'one eyed mare and the blind rider' (kaani ghoRi andha svaar). A few days back, the honourable minister Mr. Shashi Tharoor, of UNO fame, had stated that English was the key to India's progress. Had he read some UNO document on language, while he was at the UNO at least, he would have never said that. But why should an Indian minister read when illiteracy pays better dividends! A recent survey about the ranking of Indian universities in Asia should be of great interest to honourable Shashi Tharoor ji; No one of Indian universities is amongst the first 40 of Asia. And important Asian countries such as China, Japan, South Korea are teaching their university students in their mother tongues.

Less said the better about the cultural losses the English language has caused us and still continues to cause increasingly. A farmyard generation is being raised, a generation who neither have any intimate connection with their language, literature, culture, history, religion, knowledge or even science and nor they can have any deep sensibility for higher artistic creation or appreciation. The Indian elite who flirted with the Persian language earlier were called ‘malechhas’ (the fallen ones) by Baba Nanak at that time. Now, when the present Indian elite have buried even Baba Nanak’s message deep, who will listen to Gandhi Mahatma. He wore ‘dhoti’ only. The things would have been different had he pronounced Bye-Bye to Indian culture and worn tie-vie.

## VI. The Death of a Language

In a recent article (Joga Singh, 2013) , I had stated that even a language like Punjabi, which has a literary history older (and perhaps richer too) than English , is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest spoken language of the world and is first official language of India’s Punjab state, has entered the process which ultimately leads to the death of a language. The condition of other scheduled Indian languages is almost the same. Hindi too can be included in this list. Less said the better about the non-scheduled languages. A number of them are already on verge of extinction. I request the readers to read UNESCO (2003) document ‘Language Vitality and Endangerment’ to make assessment of Indian languages themselves. I will not go into more details on this. The following statements will, however, provide an indication of the direction the Indian languages are moving into.

“This mirrors the typical process of language death; people become ashamed of their own language and abandon it in favour of a more prestigious one. Eventually, they no longer pass on their native tongue to their children so that ‘the minority language is then effectively deserted by its speakers, becoming appropriate for use in fewer and fewer contexts, until it is entirely supplanted by the incoming language’ (McMahon,1994:285)”. @ (Eckert, T et al, 2006)

“However language loss... is also due to the absence of local languages in educational system. Schools play key role in preserving minority languages and consequently their culture.” @ (Eckert. T et al, 2006). But the Indian elite would close all mother tongue medium schools tomorrow, if they could. The Indian Knowledge

Commission is the most ignorant agency in this regard. To find out the truth, you please read the Knowledge Commission's recommendations on English language yourself.

## **VII. An appeal**

This document has been prepared from some parts of my forthcoming book on language policy. The book was taking some time but I realized that the issue required an immediate response. I thought that the international opinion on the language issue needs to be immediately brought to the notice of Indian citizens. Hence, I decided to publish this booklet. A lot of this booklet has already been published in Punjabi in the Punjabi media. It has also been presented by me in a number of lectures at various places in Punjab. This booklet is being published in Punjabi, Hindi, and English versions (and possibly other Indian languages too), so that it could reach wider audiences. Therefore, I request all Indian people who love their mother tongues and who are convinced that India cannot make progress as a modern nation without the foundation of mother tongues to bring this booklet to the notice of other Indians. An essential task is to translate this document into various Indian languages. Whoever can do this for whichever language, please do this. I shall be thankful to the core of my heart. Since few persons have already taken the responsibility for some languages, please get in touch with me before you translate it. Along with the reasons described behind, there is an essential other reason to embrace our mother tongues; the wisdom of thousands of years preserved in our mother tongues needs to be imbibed and passed on to the coming generations. This is our utmost moral responsibility. A little delay can result in civilizational losses.

I have added a relatively longer bibliographic section here so that anyone interested in a further investigation on the issue could make use of it.

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