

Evil Wrought by the English Medium

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

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This is a timely issue of some of the most important of Gandhiji's writings on such a vital question like the medium of education in India. The time is ripe now for the decision whether we shall fulfil the promise to the Nation that whenever there will be Swaraj we shall replace English by our national languages.

The Official Language Commission has recommended the change. The Radhakrishnan Commission Report on Higher Education in India had already before it recommended that our regional languages should be the medium even for higher education. Most of the universities in India have expressed themselves by now in favour of this recommendation.

However, things do not move as they should. The main difficulty is that Governments do not begin to change the medium of administration. The medium of public services examinations still does not change, thus blocking the way of universities to change as they desire to do, even for sound academic reasons.

The Parliamentary Committee to consider the Hindi Commission Report and recommend to the President the steps for this eventful change-over is sitting at present.

Under these circumstances, Shri R. K. Prabhu, the editor of this brochure, suggested that it was time **some** material from his book *India of My Dreams*, which is now in the press in its revised second edition, might well be issued separately in the form of a booklet, which we gladly do hereby. We hope it will help clear our ideas and decide aright and in the true interests of our whole people and not the very few who know some English.

1-9-1958

Chapter I: EVIL WROUGHT BY THE FOREIGN MEDIUM

To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result. ... Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium; that, when I become a Barrister, I may not speak my mother-tongue, and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? It is we, the English-knowing men, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us.

Hind Swaraj, 1908

The strain of receiving instruction through a foreign medium is intolerable. Our children alone can bear it, but they have to pay for it. They become unfit to bear any other strain. For this reason our graduates are mostly without stamina, weak, devoid of energy, diseased and mere imitators. Originality, research, adventure, ceaseless effort, courage, dauntlessness and such other qualities have become atrophied. We are thus incapacitated for undertaking new enterprises, and we are unable to carry them through if we undertake any. Some who can give proof of such qualities die an untimely death. . . . We the English-educated class are unfit to ascertain the true measure of the harm done by the unnatural system. We should get some idea of it if we realized how little we have reacted upon the masses.

The correspondence that should exist between the school training and the character imbibed with the mother's milk and the training received through her sweet speech is absent when the school training is given through a foreign tongue. However pure may be his motives, he who thus snaps the cord that should bind the school-life and the home-life is an enemy of the nation. We are traitors to our mothers by remaining under such a system. The harm done goes much further. A gulf has been created between the educated classes and the uneducated masses. The latter do not know us. We do not know the former.

They consider us to be 'Saheblog'. They are afraid of us. They do not trust us... Fortunately the educated class seems to be waking up from its trance. They experience the difficulty of contact with the masses. How can they infect the masses with their own enthusiasm for the national cause? They cannot do so through English... Owing to the barrier thus created the flow of national life suffers impediment.

The fact is that when English occupies its proper place and the vernaculars receive their due, our minds which are today imprisoned will be set free and our brains though cultivated and trained, and yet being fresh, will not feel the weight of having to learn English as a language. And it is my belief that English thus learnt will be better than our English of today.

When we receive our education through the mother-tongue, we should observe a different atmosphere in our homes. At present we are unable to make our wives co-partners with us. They know little of our activity.

Our parents do not know what we learn. If we receive instruction through the mother-tongue we should easily make our washermen, our barbers, and our bhangis, partakers of the high knowledge we might have gained. In England one discusses high politics with barbers while having a shave. We are unable to do so even in our family circle, not because the members of the family or the barbers are ignorant people. Their intellect is as well trained as that of the English barber. We are able to discuss intelligently with them the events of Mahabharata, Ramayana and of our holy places. For the national training flows in that direction. But we are unable to take home what we receive in our schools. We cannot reproduce before the family circle what we have learnt through the English language.

At the present moment the proceedings of our Legislative Councils are conducted in English. In many other institutions the same state of things prevails. We are, therefore, in the position of the miser who buries underground all his riches... It is brought up as a charge against us that through our thoughtlessness we allow the water that flows from the mountain-tops during the rainy season to go to waste, and similarly treat valuable manure

worth lakhs of rupees and get disease in the bargain. In the same manner, being crushed under the weight of having to learn English and through want of far-sightedness, we are unable to give the nation what it should receive at our hands. There is no exaggeration in this statement. It is an expression of the feelings that are raging within me. We shall have to pay dearly for our continuous disregard of the mother-tongue. The nation has suffered much by reason of it. It is the first duty of the learned class now to deliver the nation from the agony.

– *From the presidential address to the Second Gujarat Educational Conference held at Broach on October 20, 1917.*

The greatest service we can render society is to free ourselves and it from the superstitious regard we have learnt to pay to the learning of the English language. It is the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges. It is becoming the *lingua franca* of the country. Our best thoughts are expressed in it... This belief in the necessity of English training has enslaved us. It has unfitted us for true national service. Were it not for force of habit, we could not fail to see that by reason of English being the medium of instruction, our intellect has been segregated, we have been isolated from the masses, the best mind of the nation has become gagged and the masses have not received the benefit of the new ideas we have received. We have been engaged these past sixty years in memorizing strange words and their pronunciation instead of assimilating facts. In the place of building upon the foundation, training received from our parents, we have almost unlearned it. There is no parallel to this in history. It is a national tragedy. The first and greatest social service we can render is to revert to our vernaculars, to restore Hindi to its natural place as the National Language and begin carrying on all our provincial proceedings in our respective vernaculars and national proceedings in Hindi. We ought not to rest till our schools and colleges give us instruction through the vernaculars... The day must soon come when our legislatures will debate national affairs in the vernaculars or Hindi as the case may be. Hitherto the masses have been strangers to their proceedings. The vernacular papers have tried to undo the mischief a little. But the task was beyond them. The *Patrika* reserves its biting

sarcasm, the *Bengalee* its learning, for ears tuned to English. In this ancient land of cultured thinkers the presence in our midst of a Tagore or a Bose, or a Ray ought not to excite wonder. Yet the painful fact is that there are so few of them.

– *From the presidential address to the First All India Social Service Conference held at Calcutta on 27th December, 1917.*

It is my considered opinion that English education in the manner it has been given has emasculated the English-educated Indian, it has put a severe strain upon the Indian students' nervous energy, and has made of us imitators. The process of displacing the vernacular has been one of the saddest chapters in the British connection. Rammohan Rai would have been a greater reformer, and Lokamanya Tilak would have been a greater scholar, if they had not to start with the handicap of having to think in English and transmit their thoughts chiefly in English. Their effect on their own people, marvelous as it was, would have been greater if they had been brought up under a less unnatural system. No doubt they both gained from their knowledge of the rich treasures of English literature. But these should have been accessible to them through their own vernaculars. No country can become a nation by producing a race of imitators. Think of what would have happened to the English if they had not an authorized version of the Bible. I do believe that Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Guru Govindsing, Shivaji, and Pratap were greater men than Rammohan Rai and Tilak. I know that comparisons are odious. All are equally great in their own way. But judged by the results, the effect of Rammohan and Tilak on the masses is not so permanent or far-reaching as that of the others more fortunately born. Judged by the obstacles they had to surmount, they were giants, and both would have been greater in achieving results, if they had not been handicapped by the system under which they received their training. I refuse to believe that the Raja and the Lokamanya could not have thought the thoughts they did without a knowledge of the English language. Of all the superstitions that affect India, none is so great as that a knowledge of the English language is necessary for imbibing ideas of liberty, and developing accuracy of thought. It should be remembered that there has been only one

system of education before the country for the past fifty years, and only one medium of expression forced on the country. We have, therefore, no data before us as to what we would have been but for the education in the existing schools and colleges. This, however, we do know that India today is poorer than fifty years ago, less able to defend herself, and her children have less stamina. I need not be told that this is due to the defect in the system of Government. The system of education is its most defective part.

It was conceived and born in error, for the English rulers honestly believed the indigenous system to be worse than useless. It has been nurtured in sin, for the tendency has been to dwarf the Indian body, mind and soul.

Young India, 27-4-'21

Reply to Tagore

...English is today studied because of its commercial and so-called political value. Our boys think, and rightly in the present circumstances that without English they cannot get Government service. Girls are taught English as a passport to marriage. I know several instances of women wanting to learn English so that they may be able to talk to Englishmen in English. I know husbands who are sorry that their wives cannot talk to them and their friends in English. I know families in which English is being *made* the mother tongue. Hundreds of youth believe that without a knowledge of English, freedom for India is practically impossible. The canker has so eaten into the society that in many cases, the only meaning of education is a knowledge of English. All these are for me signs of our slavery and degradation. It is unbearable to me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been. I cannot tolerate the idea of parents writing to their children, or husbands writing to their wives, not in their vernaculars but in English. I hope I am as great a believer in free air as the great Poet. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other peoples' houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. I refuse to put the necessary strain of learning English upon my sisters for the

sake of false pride or questionable social advantage. I would have our young men and young women with literary tastes to learn as much English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world, like a Bose, a Roy or the Poet himself. But I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother-tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house. It has room for the least among God's creation. But it is proof against insolence, pride of race, religion or colour.

Young India, 1-6-'21

The foreign medium has caused brain fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them for filtrating their learning to the family or the masses. The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars. If I had the powers of a despot, I would today stop the tuition of our boys and girls through a foreign medium, and require all the teachers and professors on pain of dismissal to introduce the change forthwith. I would not wait for the preparation of text-books. They will follow the change. It is an evil that needs a summary remedy.

Young India, 1-9-'21

But for the fact that the only higher education, the only education worth the name has been received by us through the English medium, there would be no need to prove such a self-evident proposition that the youth of a nation to remain a nation must receive instruction including the highest in its own vernacular or vernaculars. Surely, it is a self-demonstrated proposition that the youth of a nation cannot keep or establish a living contact with the masses unless their knowledge is received and assimilated through a medium understood by the people. Who can calculate the immeasurable loss sustained by the nation owing to thousands of its young men having been obliged to waste years in mastering a foreign language and its idiom of which in their daily life

they have the least use and in learning which they had to neglect their own mother-tongue and their own literature? There never was a greater superstition than that a particular language can be incapable of expansion or expressing abstruse or scientific ideas. A language is an exact reflection of the character and growth of its speakers.

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 would be for them and the people.

Young India, 5-7-'28

Chapter II: MY OWN EXPERIENCE

Let me give a chapter from my own experience. Up to the age of 12 all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother-tongue. I knew then something of Arithmetic, History and Geography. Then I entered a High School. For the first three years the mother-tongue was still the medium. But the schoolmaster's business was to drive English into the pupil's head. Therefore more than half of our time was given to learning English, and mastering its arbitrary spelling and pronunciation. It was a painful discovery to have to learn a language that was not pronounced as it was written. It was a strange experience to have to learn the spelling by heart. But that is by the way, and irrelevant to my argument. However, for the first three years it was comparatively plain sailing.

The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English—Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry, Astronomy, History, Geography. The tyranny of English was so great that even Sanskrit or Persian had to be learnt through English, not through the mother-tongue. If any boy spoke in the class in Gujarati which he understood, he was punished. It did not matter to the teacher if a boy spoke bad English which he could neither pronounce correctly nor understand fully. Why should the teacher worry? His own English was by no means without blemish. It could not be otherwise. English was as much a foreign language to him as to his pupils. The result was chaos. We the boys had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all. My head used to reel as the teacher was struggling to make his exposition on Geometry understood by us. I could make neither head nor tail of Geometry till we reached the 13th theorem of the first book of Euclid. And let me confess to the reader that in spite of all my love for the mother-tongue, I do not to this day know the Gujarati equivalents of the technical terms of Geometry, Algebra and the like. I know now that what I took four years to learn of Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra, Chemistry and Astronomy, I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had not to learn them through English but Gujarati. My grasp of the subjects would have been easier and clearer. My

Gujarati vocabulary would have been richer. I would have made use of such knowledge in my own home. This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through English schools. My father knew nothing of what I was doing. I could not, even if I had wished it, interest my father in what I was learning. For though he had ample intelligence, he knew not a word of English. I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. What happened to me was not an uncommon experience. It was common to the majority.

The first three years in the High School made little addition to my stock of general knowledge. They were a preparation for fitting the boys for teaching them everything through English. High Schools were schools for cultural conquest by the English. The knowledge gained by the three hundred boys of my High School became a circumscribed possession. It was not for transmission to the masses.

A word about literature. We had to learn several books of English prose and English poetry. No doubt all this was nice. But that knowledge has been of no use to me in serving or bringing me in touch with the masses. I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I should have missed a rare treasure. If I had, instead, passed those precious seven years in mastering Gujarati and have learnt Mathematics, Sciences, and Sanskrit and other subjects through Gujarati, I could easily have shared the knowledge so gained with my neighbours. I would have enriched Gujarati, and who can say that I would not have, with my habit of application and my inordinate love for the country and the mother-tongue, made a richer and greater contribution to the service of the masses?

I must not be understood to decry English or its noble literature. The columns of the *Harijan* are sufficient evidence of my love of English. But the nobility of its literature cannot avail the Indian nation any more than the temperate climate or the scenery of English can avail her. India has to flourish in her own climate, and scenery, and her own literature, even though all the three may be

inferior to the English climate, scenery and literature. We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we borrow another we impoverish our own. We can never grow on foreign victuals. I want the nation to have the treasures contained in that language, and for that matter the other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars. I do not need to learn Bengali in order to know the beauties of Rabindranath's matchless productions. I get them through good translation. Gujarati boys and girls do not need to learn Russian to appreciate Tolstoy's short stories. They learn them through good translations. It is the boast of Englishmen that the best of the world's literary output is in the hands of that nation in simple English inside of a week of its publication. Why need I learn English to get at the best of what Shakespeare and Milton thought and wrote?

It would be good economy to set apart a class of students whose business would be to learn the best of what is to be learnt in the different languages of the world and give the translation in the vernaculars. Our masters chose the wrong way for us, and habit has made the wrong appear as right.

I find daily proof of the increasing and continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-Indianizing education. These graduates who are my valued associates themselves flounder when they have to give expression to their innermost thoughts. They are strangers in their own homes. Their vocabulary in the mother-tongue is so limited that they cannot always finish their speech without having recourse to English words and even sentences. Nor can they exist without English books. They often write to one another in English. I cite the case of my companions to show how deep the evil has gone. For we have made a conscious effort to mend ourselves.

It has been argued that the wastage that occurs in our colleges need not worry us if, out of the collegians, one Jagadish Bose can be produced by them. I should freely subscribe to the argument, if the wastage was unavoidable. I hope I have shown that it was and is even now avoidable. Moreover, the creation of a Bose does not help the argument. For Bose was not a product of the present education. He rose in spite of the terrible handicaps under which he had to

labour. And his knowledge became almost intransmissible to the masses. We seem to have come to think that no one can hope to be like a Bose unless he knows English. I cannot conceive a grosser superstition than this. No Japanese feels so helpless as we seem to do.

The medium of instruction should be altered at once and at any cost, the provincial languages being given their rightful place. I would prefer temporary chaos in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating.

In order to enhance the status and market-value of the provincial languages, I would have the language of the law courts to be the language of the province where the court is situated. The proceedings of the provincial legislatures must be in the language, or even the languages of the province where a province has more than one language within its borders. I suggest to the legislators that they could, by enough application, inside of a month, understand the languages of their provinces. There is nothing to prevent a Tamilian from easily learning the simple grammar and a few hundred words of Telugu, Malayalam, and Kanarese all allied to Tamil. At the centre Hindustani must rule supreme.

In my opinion this is not a question to be decided by academicians. They cannot decide through what language the boys and girls of a place are to be educated. That question is already decided for them in every free country. Nor can they decide the subjects to be taught. That depends upon the wants of the country to which they belong. Theirs is a privilege of enforcing the nation's will in the best manner possible. When this country becomes really free, the question of medium will be settled only one way. The academicians will frame the syllabus and prepare text-books accordingly. And the products of the education of a free India will answer the requirements of the country as today they answer those of the foreign ruler. So long as we the educated classes play with this question, I very much fear we shall not produce the free and healthy India of our dream. We have to grow by strenuous effort out of our bondage, whether it is educational, economical, social or political. The effort itself is three-fourths of the battle.

Harijan, 9-7-38

Chapter III: INDIA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Nothing can be further from my thought than that we should become exclusive or erect barriers. But I do respectfully contend that an appreciation of other cultures can fitly follow, never precede, an appreciation and assimilation of our own. It is my firm opinion that no culture has treasures so rich as ours has. We have not known it, we have been made even to deprecate its study and depreciate its value. We have almost ceased to live it. An academic grasp without practice behind it is like an embalmed corpse, perhaps lovely to look at but nothing to inspire or ennoble. My religion forbids me to belittle or disregard other cultures, as it insists under pain of civil suicide upon imbibing and living my own.

Young India, 1-9-'21

It stands for synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil. This synthesis will naturally be of the Swadeshi type, where each culture is assured its legitimate place, and not of the American pattern, where one dominant culture absorbs the rest, and where the aim is not towards harmony, but towards an artificial and forced unity.

Young India, 17-11-'20

The Indian culture of our times is in the making. Many of us are striving to produce a blend of all the cultures which seem today to be in clash with one another. No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive. There is no such thing as pure Aryan culture in existence today in India. Whether the Aryans were indigenous to India or were unwelcome intruders, does not interest me much. What does interest me is the fact that my remote ancestors blended with one another with the utmost freedom and we of the present generation are a result of that blend. Whether we are doing any good to the country of our birth and the tiny globe which sustains us or whether we are a burden, the future alone will show.

Harijan, 9-5-'36

Chapter IV: THE NEW EDUCATION

Whatever may be true of other countries, in India at any rate where more than eighty per cent of the population is agricultural and another ten per cent industrial, it is a crime to make education merely literary, and to unfit boys and girls for manual work in after-life. Indeed I hold that as the larger part of our time is devoted to labour for earning our bread, our children must from their infancy be taught the dignity of such labour. Our children should not be so taught as to despise labour. There is no reason why a peasant's son after having gone to school should become useless, as he does become, as an agricultural labourer. It is a sad thing that our schoolboys look upon manual labour with disfavour, if not contempt.

Young India, 1-9-'21

In my opinion, intelligent labour is for the time being the only primary and adult education in this land of starving millions... Literary education should follow the education of the hand—the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast. It is a superstition to think that the fullest development of man is impossible without a knowledge of the art of reading and writing. That knowledge undoubtedly adds grace to life, but it is in no way indispensable for man's moral, physical, or material growth.

Harijan, 8-3-'35

I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of

the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another.

Harijan, 8-5-'37

The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us; only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations.

Harijan, 8-5-'37

Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education.

Harijan, 8-5-'37

By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.

Harijan, 31-7-'37

In my scheme of things the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the pictures of letters and words as they will know other things in life, the ears will catch the names and meanings of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural, responsive and, therefore, the quickest and the cheapest in the world.

Harijan, 28-8-'37

Manual work will have to be the very centre of the whole thing. . . . The manual training will not consist in producing articles for a school museum, or toys which have no value. It should produce marketable articles. The children will not do this as children used to do under the whip in the early days of the factories. They will do it because it entertains them and stimulates their intellect.

Harijan, 11-9-'37

I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory Primary Education for India. I also hold that we shall realize this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilizing it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the rights to freedom.

Harijan, 9-10-'37

My plan to impart Primary Education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding etc. is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes.

Harijan, 9-10-'37

Chapter V: BASIC EDUCATION

This education is meant to transform village children into model villagers. It is principally designed for them. The inspiration for it has come from the villages... Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school.

Constructive Programme, pp. 15-6

The object of Basic Education is the physical, intellectual and moral development of the children through the medium of a handicraft. But I hold that any scheme which is sound from the educative point of view and is efficiently managed is bound to be sound economically. For instance, we can teach our children to make clay toys that are to be destroyed afterwards. That too will develop their intellect. But it will neglect a very important moral principle, viz. that human labour and material should never be used in a wasteful or unproductive way. The emphasis laid on the principle of spending every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship and incidentally makes Basic Education self-sufficient.

Harijan, 6-4-'40

Let us now glance at the fundamentals of Basic Education:

1. All education to be true must be self-supporting, that is to say, in the end it will pay its expenses excepting the capital which will remain intact.
2. In it the cunning of the hand will be utilized even up to the final stage, that is to say, hands of the pupils will be skilfully working at some industry for some period during the day.
3. All education must be imparted through the medium of the provincial language.

4. In this there is no room for giving sectional religious training. Fundamental universal ethics will have full scope.
5. This education, whether it is confined to children or adults, male or female, will find its way to the homes of the pupils.
6. Since millions of students receiving this education will consider themselves as of the whole of India, they must learn an inter-provincial language. This common inter-provincial speech can only be Hindustani written in *Nagari* or *Urdu* script. Therefore, pupils have to master both the scripts.

Harijan, 2-11-'47

The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose, for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour.

Young India, 1-9-'21

Chapter VI: HIGHER EDUCATION

I would revolutionize college education and relate it to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need. Thus the Tatas would be expected to run a college for training engineers under the supervision of the State, the mill associations would run among them a college for training graduates whom they need.

Similarly for the other industries that may be named. Commerce will have its college. There remain arts, medicine and agriculture. Several private arts colleges are today self-supporting. The State would, therefore, cease to run its own. Medical colleges would be attached to certified hospitals. As they are popular among moneyed men they may be expected by voluntary contributions to support medical colleges. And agricultural colleges to be worthy of the name must be self-supporting. I have a painful experience of some agricultural graduates. Their knowledge is superficial. They lack practical experience. But if they had their apprenticeship on farms which are self-sustained and answer the requirements of the country, they would not have to gain experience after getting their degrees and at the expense of their employers.

Harijan, 31-7-'37

The State Universities should be purely examining bodies, self-supporting through the fees charged for examinations.

Universities will look after the whole of the field of education and will prepare and approve courses of studies in the various departments of education. No private school should be run without the previous sanction of the respective Universities- University- charters should be given liberally to any body of persons of proved worth and integrity, it being always understood that the Universities will not cost the State anything except that it will bear the cost of running a Central Education Department.

Harijan, 2-10-'37

New Universities

There seems to be a mania for establishing new universities in the provinces. Gujarat wants one for Gujarati, Maharashtra for Marathi, Carnatic for Kannad, Orissa for Oriya, Assam for Assami and what not. I do believe that there should be such universities if these rich provincial languages and the people who speak them are to attain their full height.

At the same time I fear that we betray ourselves into undue haste in accomplishing the object. The first step should be linguistic political redistribution of provinces. Their separate administration will naturally lead to the establishment of universities where there are none.

There should be a proper background for new universities. They should have feeders in the shape of schools and colleges which will impart instruction through the medium of their respective provincial languages. Then only can there be a proper milieu. University is at the top. A majestic top can only be sustained if there is a sound foundation.

Though we are politically free, we are hardly free from the subtle domination of the West. I have nothing to say to that school of politicians who believe that knowledge can only come from the West. Nor do I subscribe to the belief that nothing good can come out of the West. I do fear, however, that we are unable as yet to come to a correct decision in the matter. It is to be hoped that no one contends that because we seem to be politically free from foreign domination, the mere fact gives us freedom from the more subtle influence of the foreign language and foreign thought. Is it not wisdom, does not duty to the country dictate, that before we embark on new universities we should stop and fill our own lungs first with the ozone of our newly got freedom? A university never needs a pile of majestic buildings and treasures of gold and silver. What it does need most of all is the intelligent backing of public opinion. It should have a large reservoir of teachers to draw upon. Its founders should be far-seeing.

In my opinion it is not for a democratic State to find money for founding universities. If the people want them they will supply the funds. Universities so founded will adorn the country which they represent. Where administration is

in foreign hands, whatever comes to the people comes from top and thus they become more and more dependent. Where it is broad-based on popular will, everything goes from bottom upward and hence it lasts. It is good-looking and strengthens the people. In such a democratic scheme money invested in the promotion of learning gives a tenfold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns a luxuriant crop. Universities founded under foreign domination have run in the reverse direction. Any other result was perhaps impossible. Therefore, there is every reason for being cautious about founding new universities till India has digested the newly-acquired freedom.

Harijan, 2-11-'47

Adult Education

If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. The villager's India is contained in his village. If he goes to another village, he talks of his own village as his home. Hindustan is for him a geographical term. We have no notion of the ignorance prevailing in the villages. The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils. . . . They do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner's presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education means, therefore, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. . . . Side by side with the education by the mouth will be the literary education. This is itself a speciality. Many methods are being tried in order to shorten the period of education.

Constructive Programme, pp. 16-7

Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and must be liquidated. Of course, the literacy campaign must not begin and end with a knowledge of the alphabet. It must go hand in hand with the spread of useful knowledge. The dry knowledge of the three R's is not even now, it can never be, a permanent part of the villagers' life. They must have knowledge given to them which they must use daily. It must not be thrust upon them. They should have the appetite for it. What they have today is something they [neither want nor appreciate. Give the

villagers village arithmetic, village geography, village history, and the literary knowledge that they must use daily, i.e. reading and writing letters, etc. They will treasure such knowledge and pass on to the other stages. They have no use for books which give them nothing of daily use.

Harijan, 22-6-'40

Religious Education

...there is no doubt that the vast majority of students who pass through the Government educational institutions are devoid of any religious instruction... I know also that there is a school of thought which believes in only secular instruction being given in public schools. I know also that in a country like India, where there are most religions of the world represented and where there are so many denominations in the same religion, there must be difficulty about making provision for religious instruction. But if India is not to declare spiritual bankruptcy, religious instruction of its youth must be held to be at least as necessary as secular instruction. It is true, that knowledge of religious books is no equivalent of that of religion. But if we cannot have religion we must be satisfied with providing our boys and girls with what is next best. And whether there is such instruction given in the schools or not, grown up students must cultivate the art of self-help about matters religious as about other. They may start their own class just as they have their debating and now spinners' clubs.

Young India, 25-8-'27

I do not believe that the State can concern itself or cope with religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions.

Teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the State. By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name of denominationalism. We have suffered enough from State-aided religion and a State Church. A society or a group, which depends partly or wholly on State aid

for the existence of its religion, does not deserve, or, better still, does not have any religion worth the name.

Harijan, 23-3-'47

A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion... There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions and that is, that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions.

Young India, 6-12-'28

Text Books

There seems to me to be no doubt that in the public schools the books used, especially for children, are for the most part useless when they are not harmful. That many of them are cleverly written cannot be denied. They might even be the best for the people and the environment for which they are written. But they are not written for Indian boys and girls, not for the Indian environment. When they are so written, they are generally undigested imitations hardly answering the wants of the scholar. ...

I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that books are required more for the teachers than for the taught. And every teacher, if he is to do full justice to his pupils, will have to prepare the daily lesson from the material available to him. This, too, he will have to suit to the special requirements of his class. Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of the pupils. It becomes a dead weight crushing all originality in them and turning them into mere automata.

Harijan, 1-12-'33

Teachers

I believe in the ancient idea of teachers teaching for the love of it and receiving the barest maintenance. The Roman Catholics have retained that idea and they are responsible for some of the best educational institutions in the world. The Rishis of old did even better. They made their pupils members of their families, but in those days that class of teaching which they imparted was not intended for the masses. They simply brought up a race of real teachers of mankind in India. The masses got their training in their homes and in their hereditary occupations. It was a good enough ideal for those times. Circumstances have now changed. There is a general insistent demand for literary training. The masses claim the same attention as the classes. How far it is possible and beneficial to mankind generally cannot be discussed here. There is nothing inherently wrong in the desire for learning. If it is directed in a healthy channel it can only do good. Without, therefore, stopping to devise means for avoiding the inevitable, we must make the best possible use of it. Thousands of teachers cannot be had for the asking, nor will they live by begging. They must have a salary guaranteed and we shall require quite an army of teachers; their remuneration cannot be in proportion to the intrinsic worth of their calling, but it will have to be in proportion to the capacity of the nation for payment. We may expect a steady rise as we realize the relative merits of the different callings. The rise must be painfully slow. There must therefore arise a class of men and women in India who will from patriotic motives choose teaching as a profession, irrespective of the material gain that it may bring them. Then the nation will not under-rate the calling of the teacher. On the contrary, it will give the first place in its affection to these self-sacrificing men and women. And so we come to this that as our Swaraj is possible largely by our own efforts, so is the teachers' rise possible mainly by their own effort. They must bravely and patiently cut their way through to success.

Young India, 6-8-'25

Self-supporting Education

The suggestion has often been made. . . . that in order to make education compulsory, or even available to every boy and girl wishing to receive education, our schools and colleges should become almost, if not wholly self-supporting, not through donations or State aid or fees exacted from students, but through remunerative work done by the students themselves. This can only be done by making industrial training compulsory. Apart from the necessity which is daily being more and more recognized of students having an industrial training side by side with literary training, there is in this country the additional necessity of pursuing industrial training in order to make education directly self-supporting. This can only be done when our students begin to recognize the dignity of labour and when the convention is established of regarding ignorance of manual occupation a mark of disgrace. In America, which is the richest country in the world and where, therefore, perhaps there is the least need for making education self-supporting, it is the most usual thing for students to pay their way wholly or partially. ... If America has to model her schools and colleges so as to enable students to earn their scholastic expenses, how much more necessary it must be for our schools and colleges? Is it not far better that we find work for poor students than that we pauperize them by providing free studentships? It is impossible to exaggerate the harm we do to Indian youth by filling their minds with the false notion that it is ungentlemanly to labour with one's hands and feet for one's livelihood or schooling. The harm done is both moral and material, indeed much more moral than material. A freeship lies and should lie like a load upon a conscientious lad's mind throughout his whole life. No one likes to be reminded in after life that he had to depend upon charity for his education. Contrarily where is the person who will not recall with pride those days if he had the good fortune to have had them when he worked in a carpentry-shop or the like for the sake of educating himself—mind, body and soul?

Young India, 2-8-'28

Chapter VII: NATIONAL LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT

If we are to make good our claim as one nation, we must have several things in common. We have a common culture running through a variety of creeds and sub-creeds. We have common disabilities. I am endeavouring to show that a common material for our dress is not only desirable but necessary. We need also a common language not in supersession of the vernaculars, but in addition to them. It is generally agreed that that medium should be Hindustani—a resultant of Hindi and Urdu, neither highly Sanskritized, nor highly Persianized or Arabianized. The greatest obstacle in the way are the numerous scripts we have for the vernaculars. If it is possible to adopt a common script, we should remove a great hindrance in the way of realizing the dream, which at present it is, of having a common language.

A variety of scripts is an obstacle in more ways than one. It constitutes an effectual barrier -against the acquisition of knowledge. The Aryan languages have so much in common that, if a great deal of time had not to be wasted in mastering the different scripts, we should all know several languages without much difficulty; for instance, most people who have a little knowledge of Sanskrit would have no difficulty in understanding the matchless creation of Rabindranath Tagore, if it was all printed in Devanagari script. But the Bengalee script is a notice to the non-Bengalis—"hands off". Conversely, if the Bengalis knew the Devanagari script, they would at once be able to enjoy the marvellous beauty and spirituality of Tulsidas and a host of other Hindustani writers. ... A common script for all India is a distant ideal. A common script for all those who speak the Indo-Sanskrit languages, including the Southern stock, is a practical ideal, if we but shed our provincialisms. There is little virtue, for instance, in a Gujarati clinging to the Gujarati script. Provincial patriotism is good where it feeds the larger stream of all-India patriotism, as the latter is good to the extent that it serves the still larger end of the universe. But a provincial patriotism that says "India is nothing, Gujarat is all", is wickedness... That the Devanagari should be the Common script, I suppose, does not need

any demonstration— the deciding factor being that it is the script known to the largest part of India. ... A spirit that is so exclusive and narrow as to want every form of speech to be perpetuated and developed, is anti-national and anti-universal. All undeveloped and unwritten dialects should, in my humble opinion, be sacrificed and merged in the great Hindustani stream. It would be a sacrifice only to be nobler, not a suicide. If we are to have a common language for cultured India, we must arrest the growth of any process of disintegration or multiplication of languages and scripts. We must promote a common language. ... If I could have my way, I would make the learning of Devanagari script and Urdu script, in addition to the established provincial script, compulsory in all the provinces and I would print in Devanagari chief books in the different vernaculars with a literal translation in Hindustani.

Young India, 27-8-'25

Let us now consider the question of a national language. If English is to become our national language then it must be made a compulsory subject in our schools.

Let us first consider whether English can become our national language.

Some of our learned men, who are also good patriots, contend that even to raise the question betrays ignorance. In their opinion it already occupies that place.

On a superficial consideration, this view appears correct. Looking at the educated section of our society, one is likely to gain the impression that in the absence of English, all our work would come to a stop. But deeper reflection will show that English cannot and ought not to become our national language.

Let us see what should be the requirements of a national language:

1. It should be easy to learn for Government officials.
2. It should be capable of serving as a medium of religious, economic and political intercourse throughout India.
3. It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.

4. It should be easy to learn for the whole of the country.
5. In choosing this language considerations of temporary or passing interest should not count.

English does not fulfil any of these requirements.

The first ought to have been placed last, but I have purposely given it the first place, because it seems as though English fulfilled it. Closer examination will, however, show that even at the present moment it is not for the officials an easy language to learn or to handle. The constitution under which we are being ruled envisages that the number of English officials will progressively decrease until finally only the Viceroy and a few more will be left here. The majority of the people in Government services are even today Indians and their number will increase as time goes on. I think no one will deny that. For them English is more difficult than any other language.

As regards the second requirement: Religious intercourse through English is an impossibility unless our people throughout the land begin to speak English. Spread of English among the masses to this extent is clearly impossible.

English simply cannot satisfy the third requirement, because the majority in India do not speak it.

The fourth also cannot be met by English because it is not an easy language to learn for the whole of India.

Considering the fifth we see that the status which English enjoys today is temporary. The fact is that in India the need for English in national affairs will be, if at all, very little. It will certainly be required for imperial affairs. It will remain the language of diplomacy between different States within the Empire. But that is a different matter. English will be necessary for that purpose. We do not hate English. All that we want is not to allow it to go beyond its proper limits. And because English will remain the imperial language we will compel our Malaviyajis, our Shastris and our Banerjees to learn it and expect them to enhance the glory of our country wherever they go. But English cannot become the national language of India. To give it that place will be like introducing

Esperanto into the country. To think that English can become our national language is a sign of weakness and betrays ignorance.

Then which is the language which fulfils all the five requirements? We shall have to admit that it is Hindi.

No other language can compete with Hindi in satisfying these five requirements. Next to Hindi comes Bengali. But the Bengalis themselves make use of Hindi outside Bengal. The Hindi-speaking man speaks Hindi wherever he goes and no one feels surprised at this. The Hindi-speaking Hindu preachers and the Urdu-speaking Maulvis make their religious speeches throughout India in Hindi and Urdu, and even the illiterate masses understand them. Even an unlettered Gujarati, when he goes to the North attempts to speak a few Hindi words. But the Northern *bhaiya* who works as gate-keeper to the Bombay *seth* declines to speak in Gujarati and it is the *seth*, his employer, who is obliged to speak to him in broken Hindi. I have heard Hindi spoken even in far off Southern provinces. It is not correct to say that in Madras one cannot do without English. I have successfully used Hindi there for all my work. In the trains I have heard Madrasi passengers speaking to other passengers in Hindi. Besides, the Muslims of Madras know enough Hindi to use it sufficiently well. It has to be noted that Muslims throughout India speak Urdu and they are found in large numbers in every province.

Thus Hindi has already established itself as the national language of India. We have been using it as such for a long time. The birth of Urdu itself is due to this fact.

Muslim kings could not make Persian or Arabic the national language. They accepted the Hindi grammar; only they used more Persian words in their speech and employed the Urdu script for writing. But they could not carry on intercourse with the masses through a foreign tongue. Similar is the case with the English rulers. Those who have any knowledge of how they deal with the *sipahees* in the army know that for this purpose they have coined Hindi or Urdu terms.

Thus we see that Hindi alone can become the national language. No doubt it presents some difficulty to the educated classes of Madras. But for Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, Sindhis and Bengalis it should be very easy. In a few months they can acquire enough command of Hindi to be able to use it for national purposes. It is not so easy for Tamilians.

Tamil and the other languages of the South belong to the Dravidian group. Their structure and grammar are different from those of Sanskrit. The only thing common between these two groups is their Sanskrit vocabulary.

But the difficulty is confined to the present educated classes only. We have a right to appeal to their patriotic spirit and expect them to put forth special effort to learn Hindi.

If Hindi attains to its due status, then it will be introduced in every school in Madras and Madras will thus be in a position to cultivate acquaintance with other provinces. English has failed to reach the masses. But Hindi will do so in no time. The Telugu people have already started moving in this direction.

(From Gujarati)

From Gandhiji's presidential address at the Second Gujarat Educational Conference held at Broach on 20th October, 1917.

Our love of the masses must be skin-deep, if we will not take the trouble of spending over learning Hindustani as many months as the years we spend over learning English.

Constructive Programme, p. 20

Chapter VIII: PROVINCIAL LANGUAGES

Our love of the English language in preference to our own mother-tongue has caused a deep chasm between the educated and politically-minded classes and the masses. The languages of India have suffered impoverishment. We flounder when we make the vain attempt to express abstruse thought in the mother-tongue. There are no equivalents for scientific terms. The result has been disastrous. The masses remain cut off from the modern mind. We are too near our own times correctly to measure the disservice caused to India by this neglect of its great languages. It is easy enough to understand that, unless we undo the mischief, the mass mind must remain imprisoned. The masses can make no solid contribution to the construction of Swaraj. It is inherent in Swaraj based on non-violence that every individual makes his own direct contribution to the independence movement. The masses cannot do this fully unless they understand every step with all its implications. This is impossible unless every step is explained in their own languages.

Constructive Programme, pp. 19-20

I must cling to my mother-tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course. That can only be for the select few—not for the millions. Today when we have not the means to introduce even free compulsory primary education, how can we make provision for teaching English? Russia has achieved all her scientific progress without English. It is our mental slavery that makes us feel that we cannot do without English. I can never subscribe to that defeatist creed.

Harijan, 25-8-'46

Unless the Governments and their Secretariats take care, the English language is likely to usurp the place of Hindustani. This must do infinite harm to the millions of India who would never be able to understand English. Surely it must be quite easy for the provincial governments to have a staff which would carry on all transactions in the provincial languages and the inter-provincial language, which, in my opinion, can only be Hindustani written in *nagari* or *urdu* script.

Every day lost in making this necessary change is so much cultural loss to the nation. The first and foremost thing is to revive the rich provincial languages with which India is blessed. It is nothing short of mental sluggishness to plead that in our courts, in our schools and even in the Secretariats, some time, probably a few years, must lapse before the change is made. No doubt a little difficulty will be felt in multi-lingual provinces, as in Bombay and Madras, until redistribution of provinces takes place on the linguistic basis. Provincial Governments can devise a method in order to enable the people in those Provinces to feel that they have come into their own. Nor need the Provinces wait for the Union for solving the question, whether for inter-provincial speech it shall be Hindustani written in either *nagari* or *urdu* script or mere Hindi written in *nagari*.

This should not detain them in making the desired reform. It is a wholly unnecessary controversy likely to be the door through which English may enter to the eternal disgrace of India. If the first step, that is, revival of provincial speech in all public departments takes place immediately, that of inter-provincial speech will follow in quick succession. The Provinces will have to deal with the Centre. They dare not do so in English, if the Centre is wise enough quickly to realize that they must not tax the nation culturally for the sake of a handful of Indians who are too lazy to pick up the speech which can be easily common to the whole of India without offending any party or section. My plea is for banishing English as a cultural usurper as we successfully banished the political rule of the English usurper. The rich English language will

ever retain its natural place as the international speech of commerce and diplomacy.

Harijan, 21-9-'47

Place of Sanskrit

I am of opinion that Sanskrit cannot be dispensed with in matters religious. The translation, no matter however accurate, cannot replace the original *mantras* which have an import of their own. Besides it would be detracting from the solemnity of the *mantras* which have been repeated in Sanskrit for centuries, to repeat them today in the vernaculars. But I am clear that each *mantra* and every rite should be accurately interpreted and explained to the person repeating the *mantra* or participating in the rite. A Hindu's education must be regarded as inadequate without a knowledge of the rudiments of Sanskrit. Hinduism would be extinct without Sanskrit learning and Sanskrit scholarship being cultivated on an adequate scale. We have made the language difficult by the present system of education, it is not really so. But even if it is difficult, practice of religion is still more so. He, therefore, who would practise religion must regard as comparatively easy all the steps to it, however difficult they may appear to be.

Young India, 13-5-'26

Chapter IX: HINDI IN THE SOUTH

I have the greatest faith in the Dravidians some day taking up Hindi study seriously. If an eighth of the industry that they put in in mastering English were to be devoted to learning Hindi, instead of the rest of India remaining a sealed book to them, they will be one with us as never before. I know that some would say the argument cuts both ways. The Dravidians being in a minority, national economy suggests that they should learn the common language of the rest of India than that the rest should learn Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayalam in order to be able to converse with Dravidian India. It is for that reason that Hindi-propaganda work of an intense type has been going on in the Madras Presidency.

Let no Dravidian think that learning Hindi is at all difficult. A little time taken from the recreation hour daily and in a systematic manner will enable an average man to learn Hindi in one year. I would venture to suggest too that large municipalities might now introduce Hindi as an optional language to be learnt in the municipal schools. I can say from experience that Dravidian children take to Hindi in a remarkably easy manner. Little does anyone know that almost all the Tamils and the Telugus living in South Africa can carry on an intelligent conversation in Hindi. I venture to hope therefore that the young men of Madras will show their appreciation of Marwadi generosity by availing themselves of the facility afforded to them of learning Hindi without payment.

Young India, 16-6-'20

Bengal and Madras are the two Provinces that are cut off from the rest of India for want of a knowledge of Hindustani on their part. Bengal, because of its prejudice against learning any other language of India, and Madras, because of the difficulty of the Dravidians about picking up Hindustani. An average Bengali can really learn Hindustani in two months if he gave it three hours per day and a Dravidian in six months at the same rate. Neither a Bengali nor a Dravidian can hope to achieve the same result with English in the same time. A knowledge of English opens up intercourse only with the comparatively few

English-knowing Indians, whereas a possible knowledge of Hindustani enables us to hold intercourse with the largest number of our countrymen. ... I appreciate the difficulty with the Dravidians, but nothing is difficult before their industrious love for the motherland.

Young India, 2-2-'21

English is the language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy, and it contains many a rich literary treasure, it gives us an introduction to Western thought and culture. For a few of us, therefore a knowledge of English is necessary. They can carry on the departments of national commerce and international diplomacy, and for giving to the nation the best of Western literature, thought, and science. That would be the legitimate use of English, whereas today English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother-tongues. It is an unnatural place due to our unequal relations with Englishmen. The highest development of the Indian mind must be possible without a knowledge of English. It is doing violence to the manhood and specially the womanhood of India to encourage our boys and girls to think that an entry into the best society is impossible without a knowledge of English. It is too humiliating a thought to be bearable. To get rid of the infatuation for English is one of the essentials of Swaraj.

Young India, 2-2-'21

If we were not living in artificial conditions, the people living in the South will not consider the learning of Hindi as a strain on them, much less a superfluity. It is surely more necessary for them to learn Hindi than for the Hindi-speaking population to learn the Southern languages. There are two speaking and understanding Hindi against one speaking the Southern languages in all India. There must be for all India a common language of inter-provincial contact in *addition to, not in the place of* the provincial language or languages. It can be Hindi-Hindustani.

Some who altogether dismiss the masses from their minds would regard English not merely as an alternative but the only possible medium. This proposition would be unthinkable but for the hypnotic influence of foreign domination. For

the masses of the South who must take an ever-growing part in national affairs, what can be easier—learning Hindi which has many words in common with their languages and which at once gives them access practically to the whole of the North or to learn English a wholly foreign tongue spoken only by a select few?

The choice really depends upon one's conception of Swaraj. If it is to be of and for only the English knowing Indians, English is undoubtedly the common medium. If it is to be for and of the starving millions, of the illiterate millions, of the illiterate women, of the suppressed 'untouchables', Hindi is the only possible common language.

Young India, 18-6-'31

Though I consider these Southern languages to be daughters of Sanskrit they are different from Hindi, Ooria, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Sindhi, Marathi and Gujarati. Their grammar is totally different from Hindi. In describing them as the daughters of Sanskrit, I only mean that they have a large number of Sanskrit words in their vocabulary and when they are in difficulty, they go to Sanskrit as to a mother—they seek her help and receive from her in the form of new words their requisite nourishment. They might have been independent in the olden days, but now they are enriching themselves with words taken from Sanskrit. There are many other reasons also why they should be regarded as the daughters of Sanskrit. But we may not go into them here.

I have always held that in no case whatsoever do we want to injure, much less suppress or destroy, the provincial languages. We want only that all should learn Hindi as a common medium for inter-provincial intercourse. This does not mean that we have any undue partiality for Hindi. We regard Hindi as our national language. It is fit to be adopted as such. That language alone can become the national language which is easy to learn. To our knowledge there has been no opposition to this view serious enough to take notice of.

If Hindi takes the place of English, I for one would be pleased. But we know well the importance of the English language. Knowledge of English is necessary to us for the acquisition of modern knowledge, for the study of modern literature, for knowledge of the world, for intercourse with the present rulers

and such other purposes. As things are, we have to learn English even if we do not wish to. English is an international language.

But English can never become our national language. True, it seems to dominate the scene today. In spite of all efforts to resist its hold on us, it continues to occupy a large place in the conduct of our national affairs. But this should not lead us to entertain the illusion that it is going to become our national language.

We can easily find proof for this from our experience in any province. Take for instance Bengal or South India where we find the influence of English to be the largest. Should we want anything done in these parts by the people, we cannot have it done through English, though at the moment we may also not be able to do it through Hindi. With the help of a few words of Hindi however we may succeed in expressing our meaning at least to some extent; but through English not even this much.

Of course, it may be accepted that hitherto no language has been able to establish itself as the national language. English is the official language. That is natural under the prevailing circumstances. But I consider it quite impossible for it to go beyond this. If we want to make India one nation, whether one believes it or not, Hindi alone can be the national language for the simple reason that no other language can hope to have the advantages enjoyed by Hindi. With some slight variations Hindi-Hindustani is the language spoken by about twenty-two crores of people, both Hindus and Muslims,

Therefore the most proper and under the circumstances the only possible thing would be to use the language of the province in the province, to use Hindi for all-India purposes and to use English for international purposes. While the Hindi-speaking people may be counted in crores, the number of those who speak English can never be increased to more than a few lakhs. Even the attempt to do so would be unjust to the people.

(From Hindi)

From Gandhiji's presidential address at the 24th session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan held at Indore in 1935.

There is nothing wrong in making a knowledge of Hindustani compulsory, if we are sincere in our declarations that Hindustani is or is to be the Rashtrabhasha or the common medium of expression. Latin was and probably still is compulsory in English schools. The study did not interfere with the study of English. On the contrary English was enriched by a knowledge of the noble language. The cry of "mother-tongue in danger" is either ignorant or hypocritical. And where it is sincere it speaks little for the patriotism of those who will grudge our children an hour per day for Hindustani. We must break through the provincial crust if we are to reach the core of all-India nationalism. Is India one country and one nation or many countries and many nations?

Harijan, 10-9-'38