

In Defence of Linguistic Purism

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THOSE who advocate the free use of foreign words in Indian languages contend that the foreign words are easier. Using Sanskrit words in their place is a circumlocution, they say, serving no purpose other than to make the language difficult.

In what sense are English and Persian words easier than Sanskrit words? Can anyone maintain that a person who is brought up in a home where Hindi is used and one who has not attained more proficiency in English and Persian than in Hindi will find Sanskrit words more difficult than English and Persian words? Does a man whose medium of communication is Hindi find 'propaganda' easier than 'prachar', 'academy' easier than 'peeth', 'drama' easier 'natak' and 'short-wave' easier than 'laghu-lahari'? If anyone seriously maintains this, it is futile to argue with him.

In general, it may be said that longer words are more difficult than shorter words, and joint letters are more difficult than simple letters. From both points of view, English words are generally more difficult than Sanskrit words. 'Prachar' has only one joint letter and only three phonemes. 'Propaganda' on the other hand, has two joint letters and four phonemes. 'Peeth' has two phonemes whereas 'academy' has four. 'Natak' has no joint letter whereas the very first letter in 'drama' is joint.

Brevity is as important a feature of simple language as ease in pronunciation. From this point of view 'har-jitka faisla hue bina match khatam hua' is certainly far more difficult than 'dvanda anirnitaraha' and 'gharili mamloke vazir' can by no

stretch of imagination be declared to be easier than 'griha-mantri'.

Meaningfulness is the third quality of a simple language. An Indian will naturally always find Sanskrit words more meaningful than English ones. 'Sahitya-Peeth' will be easier to him than 'Sahitya Akademi', because the word 'peeth' is more familiar to him in such words as 'vidyapeeth', 'vyaspeeth', etc., 'prachar' will always be more meaningful to him than 'propaganda' because the meaning of 'prachar' can be easily inferred from such expressions as 'achar', 'vichar', etc. It is not unrealistic to expect that one who reads Hindi newspapers should be familiar with the words 'laghu' and 'lahari'. On the other hand it is not reasonable to expect that a Hindi speaker who is ignorant of English will have heard of 'short' and 'wave'.

Some English words are admittedly more current than their Sanskrit equivalents, for example: station, bomb, petrol, etc. It is, therefore, obvious that the suggested Sanskrit equivalents, *sthanak*, *gola* and *martail* will appear difficult, i.e., unfamiliar today. But this unfamiliarity does not arise from some inherent property of these words. It is an outcome of the educational and political policies of the British. If the Ministry of Railways uses 'sthanak' in place of 'station', if the Army uses 'gola' in place of 'bomb', and the schools use 'martail' in place of 'petrol', within 5 or 10 years the wide currency of 'station', 'bomb' and 'petrol' will become a thing of the past, and 'sthanak', 'gola' and 'martail' will take their place. Lokmanya Tilak was a master of Sanskrit and Marathi. Even then he thought it odd to say 'pustak' for 'book'. The Indian languages got a more respectable place in the

curriculum after his time and the schools began to use 'pustak' in place of book. Nobody therefore now-a-days thinks that 'pustak' is in any way less natural than 'book'. The state, in modern times, is becoming omnipotent, it can give currency to any word it likes. We should not, therefore, attach undue importance to the fact that certain words are widely current today.

(Cont. in col. 2)

Moreover very often, the contention that a particular English or Persian word is more current is itself baseless. It is frequently said that the words 'time', 'istemal' and 'rahem' are more current than the words 'samaya', 'upayog' and 'daya'. Those who do not live in Western U.P. or Punjab will need no persuasion to dismiss this contention. The following table will show this:

| | Sanskrit | Punjabi | Gujarati | Oriya | Marathi | Tamil | Telugu | Malaya- lam | Kannada | Bengali |
|---------|----------|---------|------------------|--------------------|---------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|---------|---------------|
| Time | Samay | Chir | Samaya | Samaya | Vel | Neram | Samay- amu | Samai | Samai | Samay |
| Istemal | Upayog | Vartana | Vyapar Upayog | Vyavahar Upayog | Upayog | Upayo- gam | Upayog- amu | Upayog | Upayog | Vyava- har |
| Rahem | Daya | Daya | Daya | Daya | Daya | Dayavu Karunai | Daya | Karunai | Karunai | Daya |

Sanskrit vocabulary is predominant not only in the so-called Dravidian languages like Tamil but also in Sinhalese and South-East Asian languages. In spite of this, some people oppose the free use of Sanskrit words because our educational system has been monopolised by English. Right from the first day at school English is showered on the child. Many schools advise the guardians to speak to their wards in English even at home. It has become a mark of progressiveness to talk to children in their cradles in English. These 'progressives' think that Indian languages are useless except for abusing 'native' servants. The boy who is brought up in such a 'progressive' atmosphere will find even everyday words in his own language unfamiliar. For him to say that Sanskrit or Hindi is difficult is as rational as for the illiterate Indian villager to say that English is difficult.

In addition to English, Persian has also encroached on the Indian languages. The language of Punjab is obviously Punjabi (or Hindi as some of the Punjabis would have it). The language of Kashmir is Kashmiri. The vocabulary of Kashmiri and Punjabi is highly Sanskritised like that of any other Indian language. In spite of

this, education in the Punjab was so much Persian-dominated that the child started muttering *Alif Be* before he could hear *Ka Kha*. The mother tongue was used only by the unlettered. Those whose educational and professional work is thus carried on in Semi-Persian or English, find their own mother-tongue and its Sanskrit vocabulary unfamiliar. It is not surprising that people so educated should clamour against Sanskrit words. But those whose education is more in line with their own culture have a duty to bring it to their notice that the whole of India need not be governed by their ignorance.

This alien bias in language education is responsible for many false notions about the nature and place of Urdu in India. Philologists regard Urdu as a literary form of Hindi (Linguistic Survey of India). It follows, therefore, that Urdu cannot be the mother-tongue of anyone. If it is not used in education or administration, it will automatically disappear. Kashmiri and Punjabi have been excluded from education and administration for many years past. Even so, lakhs of people speak Kashmiri and Punjabi. These languages have not disappeared. But the fate of Urdu will be otherwise, because Urdu is not a

people's language. It was a language of administration and literature. If the schools and Governments do not deliberately patronise Urdu, the Persian words popularised by Urdu will soon disappear.

Even today, Urdu and Persian words are familiar in some circles but if we take a wide enough population they have to be regarded as unfamiliar. If we take a small segment of Maharashtra, we would find that the various dialects Varadi, Kokani, etc. are more familiar there. But if we take Maharashtra as a whole, none of these dialects can be said to be widely understood. It is the language used by the Marathi newspapers that is most widely understood in Maharashtra, though it is not identical with any of the dialects. It is natural that one should find a standardised language intelligible over a wide area less familiar than one's own local dialect. It is, therefore, necessary to decide how large an area we are considering in pronouncing a verdict on the relative familiarity of a language. It may be true that some circles in Lucknow or Delhi find Urdu more familiar than Sanskritised Hindi, but if we consider the whole of India, the conclusion that it is more familiar than any other language, is inescapable.

Moreover in saying that a particular Persian word is more current and therefore it should be used in place of a Sanskrit word, we are considering a word apart from its other ramifications. It is, true that the word 'kanoon' is more current in the sense of law in Hindi than the Sanskrit word 'vidhi'. But this is scant justification for using 'kanoon' for 'vidhi' because we can derive the forms 'vaidh' (legal), 'vaidhanik' (constitutional) 'samvidhan' (constitution) 'vihit' (legalised), etc. and hundreds of other forms from the word 'vidhi'. No such derivations from the word 'kanoon' will find wide acceptance.

Currency is thus no adequate justification for the indiscriminate use of Persian and English words.

But the case for English and Persian words does not end here. English has a

very wide currency among the educated in India. Similarly Persian and Urdu are very widely current in North-Western portions of India. Why then should we fight shy of using English and Persian words for enriching our languages?

But although it is broadly true that a language is enriched by incorporating a larger number of words, the advocates of foreign words want these words to be used *in place of* Sanskrit words, and therefore, if we follow their suggestion, there will be no net increase in the number of words in the language. In saying 'istemal' in place of 'upayog' and 'time' in place of 'samaya' we have not in any way increased the number of words in our language. We have merely replaced two words by two other words.

Those who say that an indiscriminate adoption of foreign words will enrich our language have not given adequate thought to what is meant by 'enrichment' of a language. Language is a vehicle of thought and feeling. Whether this vehicle is efficient or not can be decided on the basis of some tests. Simplicity, for which the opponents of Sanskrit raise a hue and cry, is only one of them. Moreover, the opponents of Sanskrit have very confused notions of what is meant by simplicity. Familiarity is one of the tests of simplicity but what is familiar to me may be totally unfamiliar to someone else. Familiarity, therefore, is a purely personal criterion.

Ease of memorisation is a more general criterion than familiarity. The most time-consuming part in learning a language is mastering its vocabulary and idiom. English grammar is very easy and there is not much to learn of English grammar after the first year or so. One can, therefore, easily delude oneself that English is easy. But more prolonged efforts make it increasingly evident that even a life-long study of English does not enable one to dispense with the dictionary and many self-styled experts of English make ridiculous mistakes in English idiom.

The main reason for this is that English

has incorporated words from many languages and English vocabulary has, therefore, become heterogeneous and incoherent. If one knows the basic 2000 roots, one has the entire Sanskrit vocabulary at one's command, because all the other words are derived from these by rules which have nearly mathematical regularity. But English has no such facility. One has, therefore, to remember every word independently. Philately means stamp-collecting; but the knowledge of the word 'stamp' does not help in knowing the word 'philately'. Litigation means fighting law suits; but one who knows the words 'suit' and 'law' cannot infer what is meant by litigation. Horticulture means gardening; but the knowledge of the word 'garden' does not help in understanding the word horticulture. Such unconnected words of the English language make it very difficult to master its vocabulary.

If the habit of finding Sanskrit equivalents for foreign words is discouraged, the Indian languages also will not have any common scheme and it will become difficult to master them. It is today impossible for anyone to earn his livelihood without studying English and, therefore, we spend most of our life trying to master English. We thus succeed in acquiring a workable knowledge of that language. But the Indian languages are in a wilderness in their own homeland. Nobody suffers economically by not learning them. If, therefore, they also become as difficult as English, nobody will try to learn them.

The opponents of Sanskrit would not have the Sanskrit form 'prasarit' for broadcast. The logical corollary is that we should not say 'pratirasaran' for 'relay', 'utsaran' for 'jamming' and 'prasarit' for 'transmitter'. The derivatives 'pratiprasaran', etc. are not used today, and with the increasing fashion of talking in English to children in their cradles, it has become difficult to realise that the derivative of 'prasaran' would be far more easy to use than the many unrelated words of English. If, however, as the lovers of

Indian languages are hoping, English may become no more important in India than it is in Germany or Russia, the regular derivatives of the root 'sru' with the limited number of prefixes 'pra', 'prati', 'ut', etc. and a limited number of suffixes like 'tra' etc. would be found much easier to remember than the motley crowd of words, 'broadcast', 'relay', 'jamming', 'transmitter', etc.

The decimal system uses only 10 signs for expressing an infinity of numbers. Though the numbers expressed are infinite, it is easy to learn how to express them, because the method of expression obeys definite rules. It is comparatively far more difficult to use the Roman system of numerals because there is no such provision there. Giving up Sanskrit words and incorporating English and Persian words would be as great a folly as giving up the decimal system in favour of the Roman.

The use of unconnected words will not only make our languages difficult, but also incapable of coining new words. The power of Sanskrit to coin innumerable words from a few basic roots is admirable. But if we lose the habit of word-coining, our languages will lose this power and become sterile. The thoughtless incorporation of foreign words, far from enriching our languages, will dry up their creativity.

Foreign words affect the power of a language. But foreign grammar does far more damage. It creates anarchy in a language. No English-educated person would be prepared to say 'buse' as a plural of 'bus'. He will naturally say 'buses'. Similarly the Persian word 'lafz' would bring its plural 'alfaz' with it. The plural of 'shabd' is 'shabd'; but the plural of 'lafz' cannot be 'lafz'. If we accept the word 'interest', we must also accept the related words 'interested' and 'interesting'. If we borrow words from four different languages, the word-formation of the four different languages will also have to be incorporated with those words, and one who wants to handle those words will have to know these four original languages

in addition to his own, or as in English, regard every word as independent and get no guidance about its use from the rules of word-formation in his own language.

Simplicity is a merit but very often it is a minor merit. In scientific discourse for example, accuracy is more important than simplicity. For a scientific discourse a word becomes unsuitable precisely because it is current. A current word has many meanings which are not intended by the scientist. Moreover many scientific notions can simply not be expressed in popular words. Coining of scientific terminology thus becomes a necessity. For us, there is no better base than Sanskrit for coining such a terminology.

The opponents of Sanskrit urge against this that English already has the terminology for all the sciences. This terminology is 'international'. Why should we then try to coin our own terminology?

This argument is one of the many examples showing how the protagonists of English simply do not take the Indian languages seriously as a solid basis for the future. But the lovers of Indian languages are aiming at a state of affairs where only a few specialists would need to learn English and it would be unnecessary for the vast majority of the school and college students. Sanskrit terminology becomes unavoidable in the context of this objective. A student who has not studied English and is not intending to do so, will find it immensely difficult to master English terminology in studying any subject. In comparison, he will find Sanskrit terminology very easy.

Moreover, the claim of the protagonists of English that the English terminology is international is demonstrably false. Only a man who has never seen an English-French dictionary of Chemistry or an English-Italian dictionary of Physics will dare make such a claim. Dr. Kothari, one of our leading scientists says that the only international terms in Science are the signs like = or +. Almost all other terms are peculiar to the different languages. Unless

we identify the world with England and America, we cannot declare the English terminology international.

On the contrary, Sanskrit terminology can be made popular outside India. If India gives the lead, East Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and South-East Asia will easily adopt Sanskrit terminology, as it will be very much akin to the vocabulary used in these regions. This field will not be in any way narrower than that of English terminology.

We have so far considered words as a means for the expression of thought. But expression of thought is not the only function of a language. Like thought, expression of feeling and creation of beauty are also the functions of a language. The vocabulary of a language must also be considered from these points of view.

Every language has a sound-system peculiar to itself. The words in any other language cannot easily fit into this system. One cannot darn velvet with jute threads. If it is done perforce, it is bound to offend good taste. The use of English words in Indian languages is similarly offensive to those who have developed a sense for the beauty of Indian languages. It is possible to determine the basic sounds of any language and the mode of their pronunciation by objective methods. Foreign words do not easily fit into this and if made to fit perforce, they are bound to offend those who have a sense for language.

It may be suggested that we should temper the pronunciation of foreign words according to the genius of our languages. 'Academy' must be pronounced 'akademi' and 'salute' must be pronounced 'silut'. With this 'conversion' the words will easily fit into our languages. This suggestion is acceptable only if the conversions are not jarring and are meaningful. But in practice it is difficult to ensure this. The adaptation of some words is not jarring e.g. 'sultan' was converted to 'suratrana' in medieval India. But though 'suratrana' is hundred per cent Sanskrit, it absurdly changes the original meaning. The idol-hater Sultan is

made into the protector of the gods. Some adaptations do not pervert the sense, for example, 'sunit' for sonnet and 'aspatal' for hospital. But these words do not pervert the sense simply because they carry no sense. It is only in association with sonnet and hospital that the words can be interpreted. I would, therefore, suggest the meaningful words 'chaturdashi' and 'upachar griha' for 'sonnet' and 'hospital' respectively.

It is not only foreign words that are disfiguring our beautiful languages. Even the foreign alphabet is doing its bit. Even in Hindi, we find the 'progressive' Wy Bee Deshpande. If we can use Roman initials in writing or speaking Hindi, there should be no objection to using Greek initials and saying Upsilon Beta Deshpande or Arabic initials and saying Ye Be Deshpande. Why should we lose the opportunity of enriching our languages by using all the alphabets in the world in mentioning initials!

The power to express feelings is as important in a language as the beauty of its sound-system. From this point of view 'Mummy' cannot take the place of 'ma', 'Begum Sita' cannot take the place of 'Rani Sita'; 'Lord Krishna' cannot take the place of 'Bhagwan Shri Krishna', 'Salam Amma Jan, cannot express the feelings expressed by 'Vande Mataram'. Only those who want to forget their heritage and borrow the plumes of others resort to such perversions. One may say that the enthusiasm for the use of English words is not activated by the motive to enrich our languages. The main reason is our wish to appear English. We feel more civilised when our own sons address us as 'Daddy' instead of 'baba'.

This attitude does not arise only in connection with words expressing intimacies or family relationships. A person once asked me 'Why should physics be called *bhoutiki*? Why not call it physics! Why not call a spade a spade?'

The idea behind this question is that the

English word physics has some natural connection with the science of physics and the Indian word *bhoutiki* is only an artificial concoction. This feeling is the outcome of a deeper and more pernicious feeling that science is the preserve of Englishmen and we are intruders in their realm. This attitude is not likely to prove very conducive to the growth of science in our country. If we Sanskritize scientific terminology, the feeling that science is somehow foreign to us will disappear.

The discussion so far may create a misleading impression that according to me, no words other than Sanskrit should be used in Indian languages. This impression is erroneous. The following classes of words other than Sanskrit will have to be used by Indian languages:

1. Every Indian language has a stock of words which are peculiar and native to it. Those who insist that Indian languages should give up these words and use Sanskrit words instead may as well say that no Indian language other than Sanskrit has a right to exist.
2. Proper Nouns should be retained in their original form. English has completely perverted most proper nouns. We are all familiar with Ganges and Kanchanjunga. But very few of us know that Sihanouk Norodom, Siberia, Russia, Paris, etc. are English distortions of Narottam Sinhahanu, Sibir, Rusi and Pari, respectively. In Indian language, we must use the original forms and discard the English distortions.
3. Those foreign words which have survived in our languages for hundreds of years *without the instrumentality* of foreign rule can be said to be our own words. The loss will be more than the gain in trying to replace them by Sanskrit words.

It must however be realised that these justifications are not applicable to the English and Persian words the acceptance of which is being advocated today.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Theory and Practice of Apartheid

STANLEY UYS

THE theory of apartheid is simple. It is that economic integration leads to political and social integration. Therefore, if the 12-million Africans in South Africa are allowed to become permanently economically integrated with the 3,500,000 whites, they will legitimately demand further rights, which will lead to their political dominance in a racially mixed society. All this apartheid admits.

Apartheid suggests, therefore, as the alternative to integration, a segregated country in which each racial group will enjoy full rights in its own area. To achieve this, the Whites must dispense increasingly with African labour and do their own work. Unless they make this sacrifice (declares apartheid), they will be behaving immorally, and the refusal of equal rights to the Africans will constitute White oppression. This is the moral base on which apartheid rests.

In accordance with this morality, Government leaders and the pro-Government Press have continually exhorted the Whites to start getting rid of their African servants. The only recorded occasion, however, on which a White employer has responded to these exhortations was in the Transvaal a few years ago, when a pro-Government newspaper (of which the Prime Minister, Dr. Verwoerd, is chairman) invited its readers to state what sacrifices they were prepared to make for apartheid.

A loyal Government supporter wrote to

the newspaper to relate what had happened to him when, in a dedicated moment, he had dismissed two Africans who had worked for him for five years. 'They were two faithful, thorough souls,' he said. 'They were satisfied, and I was satisfied, but at the insistence from the Press and the public platform, I decided as a loyal citizen to do without their services. I dismissed them and informed the Native Commissioner accordingly, highly satisfied that I had now contributed my share in the effort. But what happened? I am being ridiculed because I sit now without farm labour, and the two labourers now work for two of my neighbours.'

It is not only this Government supporter's two neighbours who have refused to make the sacrifice required by apartheid; it is the whole White population. Instead of dispensing with African labour, White employers have engaged them in ever-increasing numbers; instead of Africans flowing from the so-called 'White sector' to the segregated Reserves, they continue to flow in the opposite direction. In every year since the Nationalist Government came to power in 1948, the urbanisation and industrialisation of the African population has increased, not diminished. In 1951, South Africa's urban population was 5,397,000, of whom 3,326,000 (62 per cent.) were non-Whites; by 1960, the urban population was 6,970,000, of whom 4,509,000 (65 per cent.) were non-Whites. In other words, in 1960, two-thirds of the

QUEST IS BEING CHANGED from 'a bimonthly of arts and ideas' to 'a quarterly journal of inquiry, criticism and constructive thought'. If that sounds a bit ambitious, we must say at the outset that we are a bit ambitious. --- We would add, however, that it is by no means our intention to eschew creative literature and the other arts altogether, though the emphasis henceforth will be on 'ideas' rather than on 'arts'.

In the first policy statement of this journal occurs the sentence: 'Quest's policy is to deal specifically with cultural questions and with politics by implication.' We endorse that, but would like to be a little more analytical. The word 'politics' is used in two different though interdependent senses. In one sense 'politics' borders on 'ethics' and refers to the goals and ideals which society puts before itself; it is concerned with the investigation and evaluation of social growth. In this sense politics is very much a cultural question, and will be treated as such by *Quest*. Which does not mean that we are intending to turn it into a journal of political science. Politics will have to take its place alongside history, economics, society, metaphysics, ethics, the positive sciences, the theory and criticism of literature and other arts, as well as creative literature. We are inviting contributions on all these topics, only reminding our contributors that they will be writing not for the specialist but for the generally intelligent and educated layman. The attempt should be at simplicity without superficiality, at thoroughness without the minutiae of scholarship.

It is politics in the other sense, in the sense of day to day political practice, of the party line, of national and international conflict, which will be dealt with only by implication, i.e., in so far as it has bearing on cultural questions. On one particular cultural question, however, even current politics has the strongest bearing — the question of cultural freedom. And our journal, sponsored by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, is naturally concerned with that question in a very special way.

It is sad to reflect that here in this country, by and large, we are not so deeply stirred by the issue of cultural freedom as are the thinkers and writers of the West. That is so for two reasons. Firstly, we are not fully aware of the threat to cultural freedom that has been rumbling in the

political clouds of the last few decades. Secondly, we have had a long tradition of being reconciled to or even happy at the fact of culture (to be more specific, thought and art) serving as the handmaid to theology and religion. And we are not quite over that tradition yet.

One of the most vital elements in the European renaissance was the assertion of the freedom of thought and art from any kind of subservience, the assertion of their claim to be spheres of experience possessing intrinsic worth. Such a renaissance has yet to come to fruition on the Indian soil. Its very promising efflorescence in mid-nineteenth century Bengal was largely swept away by gusts of revivalism and nationalist hyperaesthesia to everything Western.

But we will not be dogmatic about our conception of cultural renaissance. If any one wants to hold forth that knowledge and art have other ends beyond themselves, e.g., moral upliftment, the establishment of a classless society based on justice and human brotherhood, or deepening our intuition of unity with the Cosmos or with God, we shall not dispute his right to maintain that. But we must insist that what ends knowledge and art are to serve, whether intrinsic to themselves or extrinsic, is for the individual thinker and artist to determine. This is what we mean by the freedom of culture; and we hold that this freedom is a sacred right of all those who work in the fields of culture, and of those who enjoy its fruits.

We will treat with respect all views and attitudes however different from ours provided they are presented with reason, tolerance and competence. As believers in the primacy of freedom, we cannot naturally claim to possess the truth or any monopoly of wisdom. Against one thing only our opposition is total—and that is anti-reason. Although we are ready to admit the limitations of reason, and certainly of our own reasoning powers, we reject totally its total rejection. If that is intolerance, then we are intolerant to that extent, but precisely to that extent. With unreason we intend to hold no truck; with reason that follows a line different from ours we shall always be patient, ready to be persuaded and eager to persuade. We extend our invitation to all those who have views which they consider worth expressing, whether they agree with us or differ from us. This journal is an open forum.

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