

Report from AP :

Controversy over the Medium of Instruction

Recently the government of AP headed by YSRCP leader Jaganmohan Reddy has decided to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all the government schools. The previous government of TDP introduced English as medium of instruction along with Telugu.

The decision raked up a controversy that revolved around gaining the political upper hand, counter posing one section of people with another section and lastly sentimental arguments about the mother tongue. In the process, the scientific approach that has to be adopted for the learning process by our children became a casualty.

For centuries, the West has been colonizing, usurping, literally terrorizing the entire planet. Hundreds of millions have died as a result of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism and the plunder is still going on. Wealth, cultural and educational institutions, hospitals, transportation, parks - all that Europe and North America possess to date and boast about - was constructed upon mountains of bones, on genocide and unbridled plunder.

As Andre Vitcek observed, slavery, mass murder, genocidal expansions; the West robbed the world, and then consolidated its power, promoting its exceptionalism through relentless brain washing (called education) , propaganda (called information) and twisted entertainment for masses that inhabit poor countries (called culture and arts) .

The mannerism among the upper classes in south Asian subcontinent are those of UK (and lately, of US) . Elites here go out of their way to be more British than Brits; more Californian than the inhabitant of the US west coast. Private countless private Indian universities (of late, public universities) call themselves as *‘American’* or *‘British’* with *‘Oxford’* or *‘Cambridge’* frequently decorating their names.

-To be accepted- in Europe or US is the highest honour in all the former colonies. *-Well groomed-*, well educated and modern Asians, Latin Americans and Africans are expected to ape westerners; to dress like them, eat like them and to defend the *‘same values’* as them. But expected by whom? Not surprisingly their own people. Such is the cultural impact of colonialism and imperialism on the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America which have not broken all the colonial ties completely through a genuine democratic and national revolution.

The countries that had changed their social systems thoroughly have advanced in many ways. In this context, their national languages flourished to provide education from primary to higher level of education, including the adoption of latest technologies like computers. At the same time learning foreign language to expand the knowledge also grew in these countries. One can witness with full appreciation this development in China, Vietnam, Mangolia, Korea, Cuba, and so one.

One can see the passion for everything *-English-* in India in this background. Even after seven decades of so-called independence and recognising 13 languages as national languages, every affair of the state is run through the medium of English. The legislature, the executive and the judiciary uses only English and when a difference arises, they refer to an English dictionary compiled in London. The Constitution of India, often boasted as the wisdom of democracy, has not been translated into national languages except Hindi that took 50 years. A citizen of India need to be a pundit in English to know what was written in the constitution by which he had to conduct all his public affairs. Every law passed by the Parliament and score and half state Assemblies has to be written in English and if get translated into vernacular languages what we get is sanscritised versions. These

versions are as foreign and as difficult as of English for 95 per cent of Indians. Thus English is virtually the official language of India and there was a wrong perception that the Indian languages are so backward that they are unfit for adoption in the present fast changing society. There is also another misperception that the down trodden people, particularly those suffered under the despicable caste system, could only progress with English education that came with the colonial rule.

As the Indian big bourgeoisie betrayed the people of India and compromised with the colonial masters, the social and economic system has been continuing in the country and it became a impediment to the democratic development of all aspects of lives of the people. The big bourgeoisie of India is the front runner in placating the exceptionalism of imperialism as use it as a tool to perpetuate the existing society. Thus in India, the people are made to believe that their social emancipation and advancement is linked to English education.

The controversy and heated debates on the medium of instruction is deflective in nature. Many of the participants in the debate, mostly the politicians had counter-posed English and mother tongue sidelining the facts and reality from discussion. That either English or vernacular languages are not epitomes of knowledge and synonyms of employment is well documented as both the knowledge and employment are dependent upon factors that lie outside the realm of language. Similarly in the case of caste oppression and class deprivation, whose eradication is linked to the social revolution and not to the language of learning.

The medium of instruction debate is being conducted in such a way to obfuscate the reality. While the successive governments at the centre and in states are moving away from the responsibility of providing education to all the children and increasingly commercialising the education sector and for this purpose the government run schools are being deprived of all infrastructure, the introduction of English as a medium of instruction in the name demand from the people and effecting the social justice is in practice perpetuate the same class and caste system.

Many schools are being closed down in the name of rationalization. Now the students of poorer sections have to walk for miles to get education. More than half of the schools have no simple tool like black boards while the government talks eloquently about the e-classes being broadcasted to schools. The dropout rates have been on the rise before reaching level of fifth class. The government boasts of educating the children in corporate schools by paying tuition fee, but not a single private management had asked to do so. The present exercise of introducing English as medium of instruction as well as heated debates over it are not new and every time they came up on the political agenda it served the purpose of diverting the people's attention from the real situation and anti-people policies of the successive governments which depriving the children of poorer section of society from getting educated.

Instead of falling into the trap laid by the ruling classes, we have to demand for providing free education for all the children by the government; stop experimenting with the education system to likes and dislikes of those in the power. The medium of instruction should be in the mother tongue up to 10th class along with learning one more national language.
