

Language, Region and Community

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Editorial

Language as a political issue in modern India could be traced back to the colonial period. However, it was in the 1940s and 50s, during the consolidation of Indian nationalism and later when the subcontinent was reorganized on the basis of linguistic identity, massive political energies were mobilized around the issue of language. From the 1980s through the 90s and after, as we all know, very different questions such as gender, caste and sub-region have occupied the centre space of politics in India, and such questions have been ably foregrounded by the respective feminist, dalit and the separate Telangana movements. Considering this history, it appears as though the language issue in the present could only be of some historical interest. But we believe that it is not really so. That is because the language question has not faded away entirely from the political domain. In fact, it has resurfaced in the form of serious intellectual debates in all these above mentioned movements, whether it is the question of formation of gendered subjectivities, or 'obscenity' attributed to the language of dalit literature, or the domination of Andhra Telugu vis-à-vis the aspirations for a separate Telangana state. Also, the issue of marginalization of Urdu/Dakkani after the accession of the erstwhile Hyderabad State to the Indian Union in 1948 and a further deterioration of its status after the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, vis-à-vis the survival of Muslims in Telangana has been simmering. What this broadsheet has tried to do is first to recapitulate and consolidate on a single platter, these extremely significant and thought provoking debates which have been otherwise scattered. Second, it has tried to get new writers to contribute, bringing in new perspectives. These two together should provide the reader a comprehensive picture of the issues around the questions of language, region and community. It is gratifying to see that the contributors to this issue are people who have serious investment in the language issue and we are glad that all of them responded positively to our request and took time to write for the broadsheet.

As one can make out from what is said above and from looking at the contributions to this

broadsheet, the focus is on the specific local political issues. Very few articles indeed deal with "pan-Indian" issues such as language standardization, dalits and English, the recent controversy of introducing Sanskrit in central schools and so on. Even those do not generalize the issue in an abstract way but make connections with the everyday local issues. Since this focus on the local (with the awareness that the local is not unconnected with the outside world) determined our choice of the writers/articles, understandably writings which deal with debates on many other Indian languages, however important they might be, have not been included in this issue.

Moreover, this issue is brought out at a time when efforts are being made by various individuals, institutions and the Telangana State to envision and consolidate what could be broadly termed as Telangana Telugu. For example, a committee has been constituted by the state to bring out school text books written in the local idiom. Some newspapers and other media also seem to be interested in promoting Telangana Telugu. However, although one could perceive some scattered local expressions mixed with Standard (Andhra) Telugu in the print and visual media, a distinctive Telangana Telugu for discursive purposes is yet to be created. It is also hoped that the state will formulate a new policy regarding Urdu/Dakkani. It is precisely this historical moment that makes this broadsheet significant and appropriate. However, the articles do not put forward a single perspective and, in fact, as you read on, you will find differing views on the issues in question, although by no means they cover the entire diversity of positions.

Putting together this broadsheet has been a great pleasure and an extremely fruitful exercise for us. In this process, as editors of this issue, we discovered pieces of writing on language which we had never known before, revisited some of the old debates in the light of the recent political developments, interviewed and elicited the experiences of people who were/are passionate about creating radical literature and/or participated

in social movements and so on. Members of the resident editorial team also found it worthwhile to discuss some of the issues that the broadsheet as a bilingual text poses for the question of translation. We also discovered some fresh talent—first time translators! Also, as you can see, some of us have also collaborated in translating when we realized that we possessed the required intellectual resources only in one of the languages involved, and while translating we benefited from each other. Translating Joshua's poetry was a challenge but also a pleasure, and it also made us realize that we need to take translation as a political practice much more seriously than we do at the moment.

N. Manohar, M.A. Moid and Gogu Shyamala

The editorial team thanks the writers as well as the translators

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Broadsheet on Contemporary Politics

Nizam's Rule and Muslims
Truth and Fairy Tales about Hyderabad's Liberation

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Excerpt from 'Idi Na Godava'

(This is my Protest)

■ Kaloji

There were sixteen districts in the Hyderabad Dominion – eight Telugu, five Marathwada and three Karnataka. The Telugus were a crore. The eight districts were together called Telangana. In the population of the dominion, the Telugus were 50%, the Maharashtrians 25%, Kannadigas 11% and the Muslims 12%. All over the dominion the patels (land owners) and patwaris (land clerks) were present in large number. These people wrote the kavilekattalu (records) in Telugu in Telangana, Marathi in Marathwada and in Kannada in Karnataka. The strange thing was that at the beginning of this century the administrative language was Persian. This language was spoken by a few families who came from Persia (present day Iran). In the Nizam's dominion, the commoners and the elite too spoke Urdu. But some Muslims, some kayasths (record keeping castes) and some brahmans learned Persian and Arabic – as some learned English seeking jobs under colonial rule. As there are Bhasha Praveena and Vidwan examinations in Hindi, there were examinations called "Munshi Faazil", "Kabir" in Arabic and Persian. The Muslim courtiers of the nawab sought Persian language expertise. Common Muslims did not know Persian; Arabic, not at all. Only those who came from Arabia spoke Arabic at home.

Take for example, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's family – such families came from Arabia several generations ago. There was good command over spoken Arabic in these houses. These people said that the Koran must be read in Arabic (just as vaidika brahmans alone must chant the Vedas). Reading the

Koran was called Kiraat. Azad wrote this in one of his letters from jail: "We brothers learned the Koran from a Bengali Maulvi (who, though a native Bengali speaker, was a teacher of Arabic). When my aunt (father's sister) came from Arabia, she listened to the Maulvi. She called my father and said 'This teacher is spoiling the children with his wrong pronunciation – stop these lessons'. She insisted that we 'send the teacher away'". I remembered Sripada Subramania Shastry's autobiography *Experiences and Memories*. At that time, whatever was written was in Sanskrit, and therefore whatever was read was in Sanskrit. When on one occasion Sripada wrote a poem in Telugu it is said his father broke his hand. In Sanskrit drama, women and sudra characters would not speak Sanskrit. They would speak Prakrit. Sita would speak Prakrit, and Ramudu garu (Kaloji's inflection of respect is sarcastic: translators) would speak Sanskrit. It meant that even as characters in the same family, men and women could not speak the same language. The plot would have to be related to the divine, to the Puranas and the language was to be Sanskrit only. The huge task of freeing the national languages from this hegemonic grip belonged to some great Englishmen. Just as Yeats freed Telugu with these words: 'Poetry must be written in the language of the common man' [Kaloji is referring to J A Yeats, inspector of schools in colonial Andhra, who promoted simple language], a Britisher did the good deed for each national language. Whatever their intention was, the result of this was a benefit to our languages. It is likely that behind these men, there were bishops and others who used these languages to proselytize. Be that as it

may, if today Telugu, Bengali, Marathi and Hindi remain in use, they have an Englishman behind them. In like manner, in Calcutta, Gilchrist worked for Urdu. The British worked for tribal languages – as did Haimendorf for Gondi. Similarly, the administrative language, once Persian, slowly changed to Urdu.

People never wrote poetry in Urdu even a hundred years ago. Just as Telugu was prohibited, so was Urdu. Writing was in Persian. Arabic was written only to praise God and pray to Him; any other use was prohibited. This was like Vishwanatha Satyanarayana asserting that praise of the Lord must be in the language of the Lord. As Muslims spoke Urdu but wrote poetry in Persian, a few non-Muslims too (about one in a crore) became famous as Persian poets. Speaking in Urdu was looked down upon.

I once told Vishwanatha Satyanarayana, "What you write in Telugu, even people like me cannot understand. Because you write in Telugu, your stature remains unknown in the non-Telugus areas. So, if you kindly stop writing in Telugu and write in Sanskrit, your merit will be known to people who know Sanskrit. Those of your standard will understand you. Why should you write in Telugu? And why indeed should we, without understanding your Telugu, suffer so? Further, why should we listen to you say, 'what will you understand anyway'? So please write only in Sanskrit!" (In order to make Vishwanatha's merit known to the North, his *Veyi Padagalu* [The Thousand Hooded Cobra of Vishnu] was translated into Hindi by the current prime minister PV Narasimha Rao under the title *Sahasra Phani*). Such were traditional views about the vernacular. First gods, then goddesses, after them the incarnations, and thereafter the great familial lineages – filled the Puranas. These were recited in the divine language. This was not the people's language and was not of their life either. Thus it was in every language. A descent from the royal language of Persian to the common language of Urdu was a great change was it not? However, this benefited only a single class.

[...] These scholars became expert in Persian, a language that was not their mother tongue. The language of the rest, even though they couldn't read and write, was Urdu. Therefore, for people who spoke Urdu at home and for those who knew Urdu, since the official communication occurred in Urdu, learning that language and gaining expertise in it was easy. A Telugu or a Kannadiga, or any other non-Muslim, however much he learned Urdu, would never be counted as an Urdu expert. The Kayastha whose mother tongue was not Urdu, even though he had certificates like Munshi, Munshi Faazil or Kabir etc., could never be seen appointed to teach Urdu in any primary or middle school. Even in poetry reading sessions, if twenty poets participated, one non-Muslim presence was exceptional. "Unless you know Persian, you cannot know Urdu! What do these people know of writing Urdu?" they asked. It was like asking, "Without knowing Sanskrit, how can you write Telugu?" In the Nizam's Dominions, the non-Muslims were eighty to eighty five out of a hundred. The remaining were Muslims. How many of these were educated? These were only those scholars of Arabic and Persian among the courtiers who came with the first Nizam-ul-Mulk from Delhi. It was their hegemony. Just as the Mughals came from outside the land and ruled these people did too. Their family names were distinct, e.g., Siddiqi, etc. Even though they came from Arabia twenty generations ago, they would boast, "We have come straight from Arabia, what will the locals know of our pronunciation? How can they speak?" and look down upon ordinary people – just as those who came from Bezawada and Sarkar districts would say to us, "What do you know of Telugu?" One says we don't know Telugu, the second says we don't know Urdu, and the third, that we don't know English! If so, what language we do know is the question that remains!

Translated by Shajahana Begum and R Srivatsan.

From Kaloji's autobiography, *Idi Naa Godava*, Pg.No.15-17, Swecha Sahithi Publications 1995.

Kaloji Narayan Rao (1914-2002), or Kaloji for short was a poet, freedom fighter, thinker and activist who was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Shajahana Begum is a Telugu poet and story writer.

Building my identity...

■ Joopaka Subhadra

There was a primary school up to class four close to my house near the Singareni Collieries. There were four classes in two rooms. Since it was build with bamboo partitions, it was called the "bamboo partition school". We had one "sir" teaching all the four classes. We had two classes a week for each grade/standard with great difficulty. Except during these two classes, the boys spent their time swimming in the ponds, picking berries and fruits and riding cycles on the ground. However, we girls played games such as toy house, toy marriage, kitchen toys, carrying water in small containers, washing dishes and sweeping the house. We also wanted to swim in the ponds, ride the cycles, climb trees and pick fruits with friends. Once when I secretly went to a ride a cycle with my friend, my brother found out and he beat us black and blue. Why couldn't they let us girls play freely like the boys?

I completed my fourth standard in half-taught classes, half heard and half studied. I was then admitted into a high school that was two kilometers from my house. Out of the 10-15 girls who studied with me till 4th class, only three joined high school with me. This school was away from the village in the officers' colony. The children of Singareni coal miners had to travel four kilometers to school. The residents of the colony, the teachers in my school and the children from the officers' colony would 'andi' and 'garu' at the end of every word. I found these words strange and alien. I tried grasping those words and I still can't.

Andhra cuisine, daddhojanam (seasoned curd rice), aavada (dahiawada), gongura, pootarekulu, bobbatlu, idly and dosas were talked about as telugu cuisine in our classes, but I had never heard of them. I don't know why the food from our villages such as onion

pulusu, pachhipulusu, tamarind pickle, fish curry, bone soup, brinjal dry fish, siyyalakuralu, jaggery rice, pashambuvva, bellappappulu, jawari roties, pelalu etc were not part of Telugu cuisine. Why were tongue splitting words like Subramanyam, Pankajam, Meenakshi, Subba Rao, Gayatri, Padmanabha Sastry found in textbooks. I wished there were names that we were used to such as Ellana, Mallanna, Samakka, Sarakka, Lingayya, Iyllaya, Komarayya, Bhadrakka, Posamma, Uppalamma in our text books. Even our gods were never found in books, never shown in movies and never mentioned on radio. I wished our books had Ramesudu, Buddhiposamma, Kattamaisamma, Komareelidevudu, Mallannadevudu, Samakka, Sarakka, Possavva, Uppalama and we could pray to them by placing peacock feathers in our books. I thought I could have studied better that way.

In Andhra Pradesh geography the names of the rivers were Krishna, Godavari, Penna, Tungabhadra. I wondered why there was no mention of our 'Ganga' flowing through my villages and many of our villages. When I asked my teacher, she yelled "What Ganga? That is in Varanasi. Shut up and sit down!" killing my enthusiasm for clarity. But the 'Ganga' flowing in our Mancherial was called Godavari. I did not know that until much later. I spent all my strength and intelligence during childhood memorizing and writing these words that were not agreeable to me, were unrelated to my family and my environment.

Courtesy of 22-12-2013 *Andhra Jyoti*.
Translated by Tejaswini Madabhushi.

Joopaka Subhadra is a Telangana dalit feminist poet and story writer.

Tejaswini Madabhushi is a feminist and activist.

Language breathes life into Telangana

■ Sangiseti Srinvas

The movement for a separate Telangana has made language a vehicle for the identity of the Telangana people. The political movements which culminated in the formation of a separate state of Telangana sought inspiration from the distinct cultural identity of the Telangana people. Poets and writers expressed in their writings and language, the idiom, sarcasm, anger and angst commonly expressed by the people. The poetic use of this played a crucial role in the realization of the movement for a separate Telangana. Writers went in search of the earthy flavor in the language of the common people sidestepping literary language which dominates writing and other literary activity. Many a singer and balladeer rose to sing the earthy fragrance of the Telangana language in their songs. The overwhelming facts pronounced by the writers, poets and activists over the years shook the political class and the movement for a separate state of Telangana made it to the banner headlines of the media.

The Telangana people are blessed with a unique language. Their language is grammatically and syntactically correct. What is called gasu nune in Telangana is called kirasanaulu in Andhra which is not a Telugu word. In gasu nune there is atleast 'nune' which is a Telugu word. As put by the poet Kaloji: "for them, the people of Andhra, 'road' is correct, but 'sada' is wrong". When Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao gave a speech in Vijayawada, some of the audience who had a strong preconceived notion that the Telangana people cannot speak Telugu, commented, "Your Telugu is quite good."

Some of the Telangana writers instead of making things simple for the people made them more difficult. Some writers made use of a large number of words as they are spoken, in their works. Vemula Yellaiah in his novels Kakka and Siddi recorded the life and struggle of the Dalit people in their language as spoken. This has made the book a difficult text. A book making use of vocal expressions

cannot be read with ease, unless the words that are used can be understood easily by the readers. Just as in English which has special texts for pronunciation, pronunciation guides are required to read such books in Telugu which make use of vocal expressions. Both book lovers and school children face similar difficulties.

In the name of a standardized version of Telugu, the students of Telangana, studied the Telugu language as it is spoken in the Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts. This is a foreign language to the people of Telangana. The teacher who teaches the text has no knowledge of this standard version of Telugu. From their incomplete comprehension they try to inform their students in a purely textual language. The students face a disconnect because of this peculiar situation. The language spoken by the student at home is different from the language spoken by the teacher at school. Balancing these diverse expressions, the student manages to write the answers in the examination, which may or may not fetch the required marks. The spoken language, the textual language and the language taught need to be harmonized to achieve the required permanency.

Language differences prevail due to caste and gender also. However, some intellectuals have restricted these differences to Telangana alone and marginalised the Telugu of the Telangana people to the status of a dialect. Noted intellectuals of Telangana like Suravaram Pratap Reddy, Adiraju Veerabhadra Rao, Biruduraju Rama Raju. Samala Sadasiva, Yashoda Reddy, Ravva Srihari and other spoke the Telugu of Telangana. They also taught and wrote in the language of the Telangana people. When Biruduraju Rama Raju wrote about 'tantela' in his books, they (the so called pundits) advised him through magazines to amend it as 'metlu' (steps). Still Biruduraju did not change the character of his language. He also wrote several books in the Telugu of the Telangana people.

Even today the language of Telangana is being branded as a dialect. They have expressed their spite by giving the language of Telangana an inferior status. In hundreds of public meetings Prof Jayashankar the ideologue of the separate Telangana movement has stated that the people of Andhra in spite of their belittling the Telugu of Telangana, use more Urdu words in their everyday communication. As an example he has highlighted the captions and headlines of newspapers like 'Jailu nunchi khaidi paraar' (prisoner escapes from jail) in which except 'nunchi' all the other three are Urdu words.

K. Chandrasekhara Rao, the TRS supremo deliberately spoke the Telangana language in his public speeches and press conferences. Not only did he speak the language but he also made use of the idiom, phrases, riddles and other colorful expressions in the language to convey his message easily to the people. His cheeky humor has also landed him in trouble at times. He called senior TDP leader Devender Goud an 'Ebushi'. The journalists who were covering the event interpreted it as 'Ebc gadu' a person who enjoyed the benefits of reservation because of his BC status; apparently a caste insult. The journalists missed the point that 'Ebushi' is a tribe in Telangana. KCR has earned the reputation of being a good speaker and orator because of his felicity not only with the Telugu language but also with Telugu Literature. His usage of the common man's idiom in his speeches which were publicised in the newspapers and the audio visual media like TV influenced the feelings of the Telangana people. It made them hear and take note of what KCR had to say and propagated the Telangana movement.

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh writers for a very long time were hesitant to employ the language of Telangana in their works. Power and authority ordered the standard language to be used and celebrated in the Telangana region. This situation changed to some extent by 1969 when the separate Telangana agitation started taking shape. Only Kaloji used Telangana Telugu consistently across all forums on most occasions. The 'Isitram' poetry of Panchara Reddy Lakshmana, 'Gudise Gunde' of Devaraju Maharaju, the stories of Vidyasagar written completely in the language of the Telangana people created a momentous stir. The former Vice-chancellor of Telugu University Professor N. Gopi has deliberately named his poetry after popular Telangana

names 'Tangedu Pulu' 'Kuduru' 'Yenda Poda.' As long as he lived Samala Sadasiva did not abandon the flavour of Telangana Telugu in his work. Writers like Ilaiah wrote in the Telanagana language in Srujana magazine. Several Telangana writers barring a few continued this trend after 1990 and they are continuing to do so. T. Krishnamurthy Yadav's 'TokkuduBanda' was written in true Telangana spirit. 'Pokkili' was the first compilation published during the Telangana movement. The very name of this compilation created a huge sensation. Vemuganti Murali's 'Munum' which was published at the height of the separate Telangana movement also showed the path to be followed. Annavaram Devender's contribution in this aspect is also significant.

Poets named hundreds and thousands of their books with Telangana words. Telangana poet and historian Sunkireddy Narayana Reddy hailed the uniqueness of the Telangana people by naming his literary research work 'Mungili,' his poems 'Dali,' his compilation 'Mattadi,' and his essays 'Ganuma.' An association of writers was formed by the name 'Singidi.' Every writer named his or her work

with the consciousness of the struggle for a separate Telangana. The magazine 'Soyi' became the forum for the expression of these sentiments. The Telangana writers association formed by this magazine enhanced the respect and provided publicity to Literature by conducting public meetings in various places.

The language spoken by people of Telangana may vary from district to district or for that matter between the tahsils within the same district. However the language spoken by the majority of the people in the ten districts of the state of Telangana or the language understood by a majority of the people in Telangana can be principally agreed upon as the standard language of the people of Telangana. New words and coinages keep getting added to this existing stream.

Nalimela Bhaskar's work, the Telangana word dictionary brought out in 2003 was inspired by the spirit of the separate Telangana movement. He created a primary resource pool of around 7000 neglected, forgotten words to marshal them for the separate Telangana struggle. As informed by Nalimela Bhaskar the words which are in usage in the districts of Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda did

not find a place in this dictionary. As an example the black Scorpion is called 'Inglikam' in Nalgonda is not found in this dictionary. There is a need to add more such words and make it more comprehensive.

Bhaskar has made a significant effort and compiled his work in spite of the several constraints faced by him. This has shown the way. While continuing the good work done there is a need to rework this and produce an academically new dictionary. Government should constitute a committee under the leadership of intellectuals like Ravva Srihari for this purpose. When this cultural change continues to happen and all the discarded and forgotten words of Telangana are brought back to usage, it will be possible to relish the sweetness of its native Telugu once again.

Translated from the Telugu by
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Gogu Shyamala's stories dissolve borders as they work their magic on orthodox forms of realism, psychic allegory and political fable. Whether she is describing the setting sun or the way people are gathered at a village council like 'thickly strewn grain on the threshing floor', the varied rhythms of a dalit drum or a young woman astride her favorite buffalo, Shyamala walks us through a world that is at once particular and small, and simultaneously universal.

Set in the madiga quarter of a Telangana village, the stories spotlight different settings, events and experiences, and offer new propositions on how to see, think and be touched by life in that world. There is a laugh lurking around every other corner as the narrative picks an adroit step past the grandiose authority of earlier versions of such places and their people—Romantic, Gandhian, administrative—and the idiom in which they spoke. These stories overturn the usual agendas of exit—from the village, from madiga culture, from these little communities—to hold this life up as one of promise for everyone.

With her intensely beautiful and sharply political writing, Shyamala makes a clean break with the tales of oppression and misery decreed the true subject of dalit writing.

Telangana and Language Politics of Telugu Cinema

■ Sathya Prakash Elavarthi & Vamshi Vemireddy

Introduction

The agitation for separate Telangana state brought to fore the language politics associated with Telugu cinema. As part of this agitation, Telugu cinema, which is dominated by people from coastal districts, has come under the active scrutiny of Telangana activists for denigration of Telangana dialect and culture. The most serious charge made against Telugu film industry is about its cultural insensitivity towards Telangana. There are quite a few films in which Telangana dialect and culture have been ridiculed and denigrated. In many Telugu films, Telangana dialect has been used as a tool to ridicule the nature of a character. This trend became distinctly visible after 1990's with the release of Jayammu Nischayammu Raa (1990) and Mondri Mogudu Penki Pellam (1991). This period also coincides with the increasing migration of people from Andhra and Rayalaseema into Hyderabad and the complete relocation of the Telugu film industry from Madras to Hyderabad. As an increasing number of Seemandhra people came into Hyderabad, their anxieties of using and preserving their own dialect created complicated situations.

Meanwhile when the Telugu film industry shifted to Hyderabad in 1994 with active backing of N.T. Rama Rao's regime, it was staring at Telangana as a different cultural space. Telugu cinema had to engage with Telangana, cinematically - as a distinct geographical, cultural and linguistic space. In

this encounter, we do find a "secret fascination of otherness" as cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall observed (in another related context), which subsequently resulted in stereotyping of the region, its culture and its dialect. The constructed "othering" of Telangana manifested itself culturally and linguistically on the screen at various levels in the following decades. All through their prior existence, Telugu films used coastal Andhra dialects (Godavari and Krishna) as de facto standard and ignored other dialects including that of Telangana. However the representation of culture and language was not politicized until Telugu films started denigrating the Telangana Dialect in the 90s, after which it snowballed into a huge issue of self-assertion and identity. At this stage Telangana dialect ceased to be a question of 'mere language', and became an issue of identity and representation. As the movement for a separate state picked up steam, Telangana activists started projecting their dialect as a defiant statement of identity in the face of standardization and false homogeneity of the universal Telugu identity promoted by all media industries, including cinema.

Telangana Dialect in the 90s Telugu Cinema

As mentioned earlier, there have been consistent attempts to stereotype and to construct Telangana dialect and culture as the "other" after 1990's in Telugu cinema. In Jayammu Nischayammu Raa, the actor Kota Srinivasa Rao speaks Telangana dialect to produce comedy. This character has the

compulsive habit of narrating film stories to people in Telangana dialect. In this film, interestingly, except Kota's character no one speaks in Telangana dialect, not even his son. Everybody else speaks the dominant coastal Andhra language. In addition, whenever this character speaks in the film, a donkey's bray in the background adds to the comic element, by suggesting that the Telangana dialect sounds like donkey's bray. In another film Mondri Mogudu Penki Pellam, Vijayashanti plays wife to a police officer. She is portrayed as a bubbly but 'ignorant house wife', who speaks Telangana dialect and does not know basic social etiquette. Except her character, no major character speaks her dialect in the film. Her behavior and language are ridiculed and used to generate comedy. Even though he loves her, her police officer husband is always ashamed of her language and makes sure that she does not speak in front of his colleagues and friends. When she speaks before a colleague in the first scene, he feels embarrassed and covers it up by saying, 'she is doing research in Telangana Dialect'. Even a few months before the bifurcation, Andhra politicians and supporters of unified state were using the analogy of wife and husband to suggest that the dispute is internal and does not require outside intervention. The film is suggestive of the strange relationship between the two regions, where one region is ashamed of being with the other and wants to reform it to meet its standards.

These two films introduce the idea of Telangana in terms of its language cinematically to the other regions for the first time. The paradoxical anxiety and simultaneous indifference towards the "other" is remarkable in these films. Similar representation continued through various symbols, codes and metaphors; in fact these extended from Telangana comic characters to portrayal of evil using the characters that speak Telangana dialect. One finds this trend with the block buster film Nuvvu Nenu (2001), where in it deploys Telangana dialect for an important character. In this film, the heroine's grandmother (played by Telangana Shakunthala) speaks Telangana dialect. In this

film, Telangana dialect is used to emphasize her cruel and villainous nature.. Even in this film, except the heroine's father and her grandmother, not one of the characters including his daughter who is the heroine of the film speak the same dialect. Many other Telugu films deploy characters with Telangana dialect to generate two extreme emotions i.e., comedy and villainy. Telangana dialect is the primary premise on which the idea of 'othering' is constructed in all these films. Besides being the 'other', several traits like lack of manners and etiquette, unsophisticated language and expressions have been attributed to the characters that speak Telangana dialect. Such characterization of Telangana dialect and culture by Andhra filmmakers seems to stem from their perception that it is an inferior version of Telugu language and culture.

Questioning the 'Telugu' in Telugu Cinema

Mamidi Harikrishna in his article titled 'Noorella Therpai Telangana Atma' (The soul of Telangana on hundred years of Screen) charges that there is no Telangana in Telugu cinema. He argues that mainstream Telugu cinema was not able to reflect and capture the soul, struggles, and diversities of Telangana, despite speaking the same language. He further argues that the special ways of life and conditions in Telangana have influenced and contributed to parallel and cross-over cinema in India. He lists Ankur (1974), Nishant (1975), Baazaar (1982), Mandi (1983), Susman (1987), Hyderabad Blues (1998), Angrez (2005), Hyderabad Nawabs (2006) and how despite being made in non-Telugu languages, they reflect the region, its uniqueness and flavor.

The Telangana movement problematised the issue of representation and language not only in cinema but at various levels.

Discrimination in school text books, state sanctioned cultural festivals, active endorsement of certain kind of Telugu in administrative activities while ignoring the heterogeneous nature of Telugu language were raised. Telangana movement primarily responded to Telugu cinema by attacking the hegemonic structures of the industry, and its

links to the political apparatus dominated by Seemandhra. Activists argued that film Industry was given prime land at heavily subsidized prices, besides production subsidies, soft loans and tax incentives by successive governments to facilitate the shift of the industry from Madras to Hyderabad. Telangana activists pointed out that by using these subsidies some coastal Andhra filmmakers not only increased their assets manifold but also discriminated against the locals by denying equal opportunity. The newspaper, Namaste Telangana ran a series of accusatory articles (titled "Bomma-Borusu", November, 2012) on the handful of big Andhra families that dominate Telugu film industry. The articles charge that film stars and studio owners close to political parties have made more wealth by acquiring real estate in Hyderabad than through film business. The articles also make very specific allegations of occupation of valuable government lands in Hyderabad, doing other business in lands assigned to build studios, and getting favorable "Re-use" Government Orders for the subsidized land assigned for film studios. The articles also charge vindictive attitude of these film families towards Telangana film producers, directors and artists by controlling the vital aspects of the industry.

'Dialect'ical challenge to Telugu cinema

The dialect which was denigrated in various ways in Andhra dominated media was consciously chosen as the language of resistance by Telangana activists. Coded in the 'ethno-aesthetics' of Telangana, this dialect produced cognitive dissonance in the speakers of 'standard' language. Through constant use in the movement, Telangana dialect was aestheticized positively to a great extent. Student groups, cultural troupes constantly produced new arguments and rhetoric against the alleged cultural aggrandizement of the Andhra Telugu culture. It was developed into a special art, mostly in song as the movement progressed. The Dhoom dhams and other cultural festivals gave enough spaces for creative usage and development of new

aesthetics based on Telangana dialect.

These platforms created a huge body of literature of resistance which also critiqued the media industries. Faced with this creative resistance, the standard language had started showing signs of weariness. Once Telangana based print and television news media organizations started using the dialect, the de facto power of the standard language started crumbling. The film industry too could not continue in the same mode, while under attack from the Telangana activists. Whenever the Telangana activists felt misrepresented, or when they felt the members of the industry were supporting United Andhra, they protested. These activities ranging from burning of the film reels, gheraoing film stars on location, vandalizing the film theaters and offices of film companies, burning of effigies, police complaints, to demonstrations put a lot of pressure on the film industry.

This situation pushed the film industry to re-think and re-articulate its position on portrayal of Telangana dialect and culture. Film industry started looking for positive portrayal of Telangana and for providing at least token representation for Telangana artists and themes. As a result film heroes, who were speaking Andhra dialect all through on screen, started speaking in Telangana dialect. Sometimes the story was set in Telangana regions to suggest that the hero is from Telangana. Telugu cinema finally yielded to the onslaught. The grand narratives of Telugu cinema and the hyperbole of the Andhra hero were easy target for the vibrant and people centered Telangana movement. The movement seems to have deconstructed every idea of Teluguness (culture, language, aesthetics). Political resistance centered on Dialect had been raised to the form of an art during Telangana Movement, while Telugu cinema was found wanting in all ways. Telugu cinema stood as a sore example for the cultural supremacy thesis of Andhras. When it was attacked it was hardly in a position to defend itself and all it stood for.

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Dalits and English

■ Kancha Ilaiah

One bright morning in 1960, when I was about eight, a newly appointed teacher came to my house. My mother had already cleaned our courtyard, or 'vaakili', and was sprinkling dung water all around. I was about to assist my elder brother in untying cattle and going along with them for grazing. The teacher asked my mother to send me and my elder brother, who was about 10, to school. What she told him shocks every one of us in retrospect: "Ayyaa — if we send our children to school to read and write, the devil Saraswathi will kill them. That devil wants only brahmins and baniyas to be in that business."

For centuries the so called goddess of education was against dalit learning, reading and writing in any language. She was the goddess of education of only the high castes — mainly of the brahmins and baniyas. The lower castes who were denied education treated her as a devil that would kill their children if they went to school.

The notion that she kills us was so deep that my grandmother fought with my mother for she was terrified of our imminent death, after my brother and I — not my sisters at any rate — were sent to school. She used to pray to Pochamma — our village goddess — that she should protect us from Saraswathi. Within a few months after we were sent to school my grandmother died of a future shock that we would not survive.

The democratic nation proved that those fears of lower castes were wrong. They went into regional language education in a big way. The goddess of Sanskrit education was adopted by lower castes as the goddess of regional language education too. Several school teachers across the country — many of them were OBC teachers — installed the Saraswathi picture even in government schools, ignoring

the fact there could be Muslim or a Christian or other minority students in the schools.

It is a known fact that there were several Hindu teachers who made humiliating remarks about Muslims and Christians, saying that they do not have goddess of education like Saraswathi and hence were inferior in educational values. Saraswathi Shishumandirs have cropped up all over the country. In the '70s and '80s the aggressive ownership of 'matru bhasha' (mother tongue) theory and adoption of Saraswathi as goddess of Indian education had acquired a nationalist overtone. So militant would that nationalism become that any opposition to installing Saraswathi's portrait in the schools and colleges would only invite fist blows.

The right wing student organisations started installing her portrait in the university departments. The regional language departments made Saraswathi an educational-cultural symbol. Unmindful of the secular constitution of the nation even the university teachers — mainly of regional language departments sporting a visible saffron tilak on the forehead, began to treat others who operate outside that cultural norm as inferior.

A walking goddess

With the increase of women teachers in schools, colleges and universities Saraswathi was made almost a walking goddess in the nation. Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Guru Nanak whose life though revolved around education to all humans never appeared on the nationalist map of education.

While the majority OBCs, some dalits and tribals began to worship Saraswathi in regional educational centres, of course on the real pooja day the priest talked to her only in Sanskrit. In spite of the fact, that under her

sharp and well decorated nose that language (Sanskrit) died to a point no return, and that except for the soliloquist priest nobody understands the slokas, she has become goddess of all Indian languages.

While the historically backward were enjoying their new status of proximity to the mythical Saraswathi, those leaving Saraswathi for the company of her cousin Laxmi (goddess of wealth) shifted her real operative base to the other world, called colonial English world. The backward class people of India, as of now, have no entry into that world so far.

The recent decision of the Central government to introduce English teaching from class one in all government schools will enable all the lower castes of India to enter a new phase of English education. Though this method of English teaching does not take the dalit-bahujan and minority community children to the level of convent educated upper castes, it makes a new beginning in the dream for an egalitarian education in future.

English education is the key to the modernist approach suitable to the globalised India. The upper castes have handled the contradiction between English and their native culture quite carefully. But when it comes to teaching English to the lower castes they have been proposing a theory that English will destroy the 'culture of the soil'. Having realised the importance of English the Central government has taken a right decision.

However, the next stage should be the move toward abolition of the gap between the private English medium schools and the government schools in terms of both infrastructure and teaching methods. In the domain of language both the public and private schools must be brought under two language formula of teaching 50 per cent of the syllabus in English and the other half of the syllabus in the regional languages across the country.

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Hail English, the Dalit goddess

■ Chandra Bhan Prasad

The road to Dalit empowerment was paved by Lord Macaulay. If there is a divinity that can take on the Hindu pantheon, it is Lord Buddha. However, being a great feminist, the Buddha wouldn't take on the exalted goddesses, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Durga, despite the fact that they have historically discriminated against the 'untouchables'. Who, then, is left to fight this formidable trinity whose hatred of Dalits is no secret?

It is a fact that untouchability has been propagated in the name of Hindu gods and goddesses. The segregation of Dalits was sanctioned by Hindu divinity and carried out in their name. Therefore, the victims of untouchability have always prayed for the day when Hindu gods and goddesses would no longer exercise such control over their destinies.

Dalits began looking for a goddess who could overwhelm the powerful Saraswati-Lakshmi-Durga triumvirate. They understood that the inhuman practice of untouchability was part of the Hindu caste system. Over a period of time, they began to realise that only the Goddess English had the power to destroy the caste order.

The pernicious Hindu caste order rests on the twin principles of occupational purity and blood purity. There is no caste without a rigidly fixed occupation, and vice versa. In Manu's scheme of things, no one can change their occupation and none can marry outside the caste. Historically, castes have been occupational clubs more than anything else. At the same time, they are marriage clubs as well. The occupations forced on Dalits were

pronounced degrading, and because they performed those degrading tasks, they were branded impure and polluting. Therefore, Dalits could exist only on the margins of society and do the work no one else would.

In the past 100 years, though, there have been significant changes. Millions of Dalits have been able to access dignified modes of employment. It is these relatively emancipated Dalits who have broken free of the shackles of caste-based occupations. The caste order will be destroyed the day a person's occupation ceases to be linked to the caste he/she is born into.

English makes it much easier for all Dalits to leave caste-based occupations. Will English-speaking Dalits, for instance, be asked to skin dead cows? Will English-speaking Dalits be expected to clean gutters and roads? Will English-speaking Dalits be content to work as menials at landlords' farms? The Goddess English can empower Dalits, giving them a chance to break free from centuries of oppression.

Today, English has become the lingua franca of the global village. The non-English speaking citizens of the world will be at a huge disadvantage. That is why 300 million Chinese — six times the total population of England — are learning English. Everyone — the French, Germans, Italians, Greeks — is learning English. Learning English has become the greatest mass movement the world has ever seen.

In India, too, well-off Indian parents invariably seek an English-medium school for their children. Yet many in India don't wish to acknowledge their desire to learn English.

They still consider it an alien language. Many Indians despise Lord Macaulay, who forced the English system of education on India. But it was thanks to him that 'untouchables' were able to, for the first time, get an education.

In the pre-English, indigenous system of education, untouchables were kept out of the educational loop. Often, the schools were either run in temples or in the residence of pandits — places Dalits had no right to enter. Lord Macaulay changed all that. That's why he is revered by the Dalits who are thus the natural legatees of English. The Goddess English, therefore, belongs to the Dalits. If non-Dalit India does not care about English and Lord Macaulay, what right do they have to monopolise this language?

Dalits should, therefore, decide that every Dalit child, within minutes of birth, will hear the English alphabet as the first sounds of the new world. Parents or immediate relatives can whisper them into the baby's ear. Another relative will hold the picture of Goddess English for a minute before the newborn. Every year, on October 25, the birthday of Lord Macaulay, Dalits will have their Bhagawati jagaran — Goddess English... Goddess English.

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Governments without Vision: Language Issues

■ Jayadhir Tirumalarao

Language sentiment is more important to humans than parents, property disputes and blasphemy. Hence, language is surrounded by politics and wars. Historically, the victors of the war did not limit themselves to ruling the [conquered] land. They worked towards implementing the use of their language. Arabic, Persian, Dutch and English were introduced to India in that way. English was forced on the colonized nations and its influence has weakened the national and local languages. Language facilitated the submission to others stalling one's growth. The British introduced English education into schools through the Macaulay reforms. English language continues to live since then. English language serves as one of the reasons why the American imperial designs such as privatization and globalization were easily imposed on us. Indigenous languages were crushed and English was forcibly imposed in African nations. Slaves from other languages have to learn English to serve the white man. For any white man, learning an indigenous language is below his dignity. For this reason, our rulers have enforced English education. Rulers always impose their minority language on a majority population. Some of our national leaders don't know that language has the power to enslave people. Our national leaders are imitating the western imperial language besides admiring their culture, art, food and lifestyle. Dominant nations are trying to establish modern colonies by employing language. By accepting the dollar as a standard, we are also accepting their culture and language as a standard. We are letting in their culture along with the multi-national investments. Language is the vehicle for this cultural mobility.

Occasionally, our national leaders follow the example of the imperial rulers by re-introducing 'national language' in various Indian states. Their main aim is not to compete with English by implementing Hindi, but to overpower other local Indian languages. No national party says 'Angrezi Hatao' (remove English) anymore. To continue the domination of northern India on the southern states (in a non-political way as well), language is crucial. Hence, they meddle in the national affairs on the pretext of Hindi language. They try to intrude through language interference and not direct politics.

In India, this dominance takes the form 'Indianness' against the south and the north-east India. The intention behind this is to spread the influence of Hindi language and culture on other regions. Many wars and occupations on India happened through the North India. The first foreign languages have started to spread their influence from the north. Hence they are familiar with language dominance. They introduce this dominance through language and culture. This leads to political supremacy. Therefore, our dominant national leaders are from North India, the purity of river Ganga is a national sentiment and Kashi becomes the most prominent religious centre, while Kanchi remains controversial. Similarly, Ganga civilization and Sanskrit's language domination continues. Their translations become classics. The classics in regional languages stay invisible.

The literatures in languages that have migrated internally and had a strong existence are also heavily influenced by Sanskrit. The North Indian Sanskrit poets are the most celebrated throughout the country. This tradition follows till date. Sangam literature in Tamil, Akka Mahadevi and Basavana's

writings in Kannada and poets like Palakuriki Soma, Pothana and Vemana in Telugu have no recognition nationally. They are not even recognized as South Indian poets. They are only recognized as poets in their regional languages. Their writings and translations don't receive prominence. Regional languages like Bengali and Marathi are recognized on a national level but there is no acknowledgement of great literature in South Indian languages.

The present central government is playing political games using Hindi. The results of these of these games will show after a decade. Hindi language shows its effect on other regional languages without causing slightest disturbance to English. This happened many times in history and it's happening now. There is minimal influence of the south in the central government. The only ones with influence are political leaders and those who like political games. They place their personal interests above their state's and regions' (South) interests. Unless South India unites in to a common political force, we will remain as a second class entity. The local and regional languages of the South will be suppressed.

Telugu language has attained some respect owing to the struggle for Telugu language development from the past decade. As a result, the government has set up some institutions for the growth of Telugu. Some of them were brought down by the government itself. Some were merged with other institutions. Sahitya Academy was dissolved and merged with the Telugu University. The aim behind setting up Telugu University was to work in the areas of Telugu higher education, science education in Telugu, language development, dictionary building and research in Telugu history. Later it was converted in to a regular traditional university to receive aid from UGC. Later, government decided to publish textbooks in science at intermediate, degree and postgraduate levels through Telugu Academy. But, these text books had more Sanskrit than Telugu in them. Instead of helping Telugu, this has created a new and complex variety of Telugu. The Sanskritized Hindi language practiced in central government's offices served as a model for this.

The Telugu Academy was formed 1968 with the funds received from the central government. Similar academies were set up in various states to make education accessible in regional languages and to write and publish textbooks for higher education. They were shut down in many states. The academy survived in Andhra Pradesh. Many opine that the academy has failed its function to protect the language.

The academy believed that learning in mother tongue is necessary to stabilize higher education and for this reason translated works into Telugu. They also had new text books written in Telugu. But, the language used in these books is not Telugu. It is similar to Sanskrit. It's a cloned version of Sanskrit. This language has created more Sanskrit words than words from any other language. Since English was difficult to understand, they created synonyms in Telugu. Unfortunately, this aim [of making it easier to read] was not achieved. Instead of saying creatures with spines and creatures without spines, they say "Akasekarulu" and "Sakasekarulu" increasing the complexity of both language and meaning. Creating a complex language instead of simplifying text book language has made

Telugu Academy abject. Students were able to get through in their exams with what they learnt in English from their teacher or in another fashion, rather than learning in Telugu from their text books. The creation of this artificial language has lost its influence in a short span. On the other hand, there was effort to gather and research words in various dialects from various districts. These efforts were limited to the study and research in linguistics. Hence, it failed in creating a democratic Telugu language. It couldn't address the practical interests and perspectives of the Telugu language. Though a few dictionaries were published by them, these had no influence on the society. They failed in standardizing and modernizing the Telugu language. Language should reach the needs of the changing society. The government institutions did not cater to these needs. All the institutions and employees were not able to create a standard dictionary in Telugu. Mini-dictionaries cannot replace a standard dictionary. We weren't able to provide dictionaries and reading material to students in Inter, B.A and M.A. So, we had to depend on English for higher education. English education increased in popularity. One of the main reasons for this is the failure of the

language based institutions. Telugu University, established more than three decades ago is also mostly dedicated to literature. There was no success in building dictionaries, updating and modernizing Telugu language.

Many government institutions did no justice to Telugu language. Every institution has made the language more complex. The growth of the language is not possible for unless the institutions are centered on people's perspectives. If there are budgets, there are no jobs. If there are jobs, there are no plans. Every institution has limited budgets. The lack of language centered perspectives is a curse to the people.

Rulers think that language's only function is to dominate. Hence, there are so many problems in our state and in our country. We need a vision to overcome this problem. If not, the issues of language will become grave in new and old states.

Translated into English by
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Gogu Shyamala

At home, I used to snuggle against my mother's warm body. If I had to go to the bathroom, my mother would wake up. When we went to bed, my grandmother Sangavva and her mother Lasumavva would regale us with stories. When we slept in the yard, we would count the stars in the sky and tell each other stories about the constellations—the Three Plough Spikes, the Golden Bed, the Hen and the Chickens, the Scorpio.

In the hostel, we told each other whatever stories we knew after dinner. I would tell the girls all the stories my mother and grandmothers told me. After that, we studied for a while, and then spread our mattresses and lay down in a row. When the watchman came and said, "Now go to bed, all of you," I would cover myself fully with my sheet, but wouldn't be able to sleep. I remembered events at home with a shudder and my stomach sank in anxiety. I wondered what had happened to my father, what the landlords had said to him, whether they had abused him or beaten him up, and how they might have made him suffer. I thought about how much my mother and Sangavva must have cried, and wept myself. I never knew exactly when I cried myself to sleep. I had nightmares and would wake up suddenly, sitting bolt upright. I missed my family deeply and wanted to go back to see them.

In the morning, the mess cook would ask, "What is it, my dear? Your face is swollen, your eyes are red—are you ill?" I would not reply. Not knowing what to say, I would shake my head and my desire to weep would increase. But I couldn't cry, because I was afraid they would say I wanted to go home and send me back. So I swallowed my tears. One day when the cook saw me all pensive like that, she inquired, "Remembering your mother and father, are you? In a few days, we'll be having a four-day holiday. Everyone will go home and come back. Why are you so sad? You should go too." I cheered up.

On the day I had to go home, I removed my ribbons, lightly combed the hair plaited the day before and tied it up in a loop. I quickly washed, ate my breakfast and went to school with the other girls. When the evening bell rang, I put the money my brother had given me from his winnings at the game of marbles into my skirt pocket. I put the new books that I had been given in the hostel into my bag, so that I could show them to my father. I slung the bag across my shoulder and started for home.

(Translated by R Srivatsan)

From the story 'Radam' in Father may be an Elephant, Navayana, 2012.

The Path Shown

by Joshua

■ Dokka Manikya Varaprasad

The new-born Telugu state of Andhra Pradesh, even as it is searching for something as ordinary as an appropriate location to build its capital, is equally and profoundly engrossed in finding an appropriate model of the development of the new state. It is also looking for a model for promoting Telugu literature and culture. The Telugu Desam party which now has the golden opportunity to govern the Telugu land and its people has the historical responsibility and burden to formulate its language policy - in such a way that it ensures uninterrupted progress of the Telugu language and community. To do this, it is necessary to take forward the love, hard work and dedication of the poets and linguists of the past and also of today whose work has enriched the Telugu language.

In the 11 century, Nannaya Bhattaraka, considered to be the one of the earliest Telugu poets, attempted to translate the great epic Mahabharatam into Telugu, in order to make it accessible to ordinary people. However, the language he used was the scholarly language of his day, i.e., predominantly Sanskrit. His contemporary Thikkana Somayaji, in his own translation of the great epic used quite of a bit colloquial Telugu and took this process further. Even his diction was a blend of both Telugu and Sanskrit. Thikkana's Telugu, admirable though, is eight hundred years old, and belonged to a bygone era. To my mind, it is ill-suited to our modern sensibilities.

Then, in the sixteenth century, came the great king Sri Krishna Devarayalu who proclaimed Telugu as the sweetest and the most refined of all the languages in the country in his time. Such a proclamation, no doubt, gave a much

needed boost to the Telugu literature of his time and helped it in its subsequent evolution. However, when it came to the language used during this era, what we see is nothing but a scholarly diction, which is closely associated with Brahminism, and reminiscent of a socio-religious texture of its time. And regarding Srinatha's profound verse soaked in sensuality that appeared in the same century, the less said the better.

In the subsequent period, i.e., the last phase of the Prabhandha era, even though Telugu was used, it has not produced any influential literary work or any major commentary in Telugu language. Further, in the middle ages, Vemana descended upon the literary landscape. Keeping ordinary people in mind, this great philosopher and poet wrote amazing poetry in people's language. In my view, in the history of Telugu literature, he was the first people's poet.

In the modern period, the language used by Gurajada had the signature and the flavour of the land of Kalinga; and in Sri Sri's poetry we witness the mastery over the scholarly Sanskrit, irreverence notwithstanding. In other renowned poets of the 20th century, we see the regional flavour of the dialect that each one belonged to.

It is against this backdrop that we must see Gurram Joshua. He stands out as a modern poet who adopted Vemana's kind of sensibility and expression, and a pure Telugu style and diction that brims with utter Teluguness and the sweetness of Telugu language. The distinct flavour of Guntur region where he was born and brought up, his caste background, and his life experiences, resulted in a language that stands out as sweet

as it is extraordinary. He was indeed a social revolutionary who adapted Guntur dialect into a sweet poetic expression. This is a historical time when we are considering making Guntur-Vijayawada region as the capital of the new state; and also a time when we are formulating a language policy. In a time like this, I see a need to pause and study the writings of Joshua whose writings though having appeared nearly a century ago in the same language and dialect, have a tremendous relevance and meet the need of the contemporary times.

Pick any poem from his large body of poetry. It is delightful and comforting. The Telugu is sweet and is comprehensible to one and all. It takes you on a journey in the pleasant Telugu land. It was because of Joshua's poetry that the Telugu language attained the great description: the Italian of the East. Following Gidugu Ramamurthy, we need to understand the fact that Telugu language gets its greatness mainly because of its colloquialism. To understand why Joshua's Telugu has that aroma and fragrance, and equally its intense Teluguness, we need to understand that the aroma of his language comes from his own life's backdrop - the circumstances under which he did his education, the ravages caused by untouchability during his time in the society that he lived in, the insults experienced by dalits around him, and so on. The language he used burst forth from the sufferings of the oppressed castes that he witnessed from such closed quarters.

Like Vemana, who was a people's poet par excellence, Joshua in his poetry chose the linguistic tradition of the ordinary people. He believed that literature had a larger purpose of political and social instruction, and not just for entertainment and pleasure of a few in the society; and that it ought to be used as a creative tool for a progressive social change. It was within this framework that he mastered Telugu language and developed a style of his own in which he wrote his poetry. This however does not mean that Joshua did not learn or use scholarly Telugu. He was indeed a learned man deeply anchored in humanist philosophy. He was well-versed in the ancient texts such as Ramayanam, Mahabharatam, Bhagavat Geeta, Puranas, the Holy Bible, and Koran. And so was he equally well versed in

modern literature. In a literary style that is now known as his own which is unique, he wrote poetry that demonstrated an extraordinary amalgamation and synthesis of apparently diverse texts and worlds.

At a time when poetry and literature were thoroughly and adamantly cast in the traditional and Brahminical mould, Joshua democratised verse by making it accessible to everyone. By doing so, he proved that it is possible to produce democratic and progressive writings in verse. Again, at a time when one contemporary poet boasted of breaking the back of Telugu poetry, and another roared that he would drag Telugu poetry away from its inappropriate and exalted place, down to earth, Joshua quietly wrote his verse that effectively democratised poetry and used it to depict the downtrodden lives of the dalit community. Joshua is indeed a true Telugu poet who blended all that was good in the old and in the new, and created in a style that is his own poetry that remains as sweet and sublime as nectar. His Telugu is the Telugu of the community, and of the people.

There are many illustrations of Joshua's devotion to Telugu culture and its great poets. His exquisite depiction of Sri Krishna Devarayalu in Andhra Bhojudu (1934) is unparalleled. In his entire body of work, the language and style that he used to describe

everything of Telugu land, is but the Telugu of Seemandhra. Today, when the Telugu people now have a separate state, the Telugu language that Joshua used has a great significance. What is today used as a standard Telugu in journalism, and that of literary Telugu of the Seemandhra region, is but the language used by Joshua.

In these times of globalisation and computerisation when English is touted as the only language of any significance and value, it is necessary for us to remind ourselves to pause reflect on the language used by a great universal soul like Gurram Joshua. We need to have a policy, on the one hand of full-fledged teaching of English while continuing instruction in the Telugu medium till High School, and on the other hand, introducing Telugu as the official language in the government. It is crucial for us, on this matter, to understand and follow the path shown by Joshua.

The new regime in Andhra Pradesh, while formulating its official language policy, needs to take into account the passion for the Telugu language that this great poet expressed.

Consider the following verse by him that evokes his devotion and loyalty to Telugu language:

Come what may...

*my envious detractors
who are not worth a penny
surround me as crowding vultures,
and try to stop me;
Or my lady love Sharada betraying me;
I shall not leave this land of mine,
nor shall I stop singing glory of my own language
Telugu*

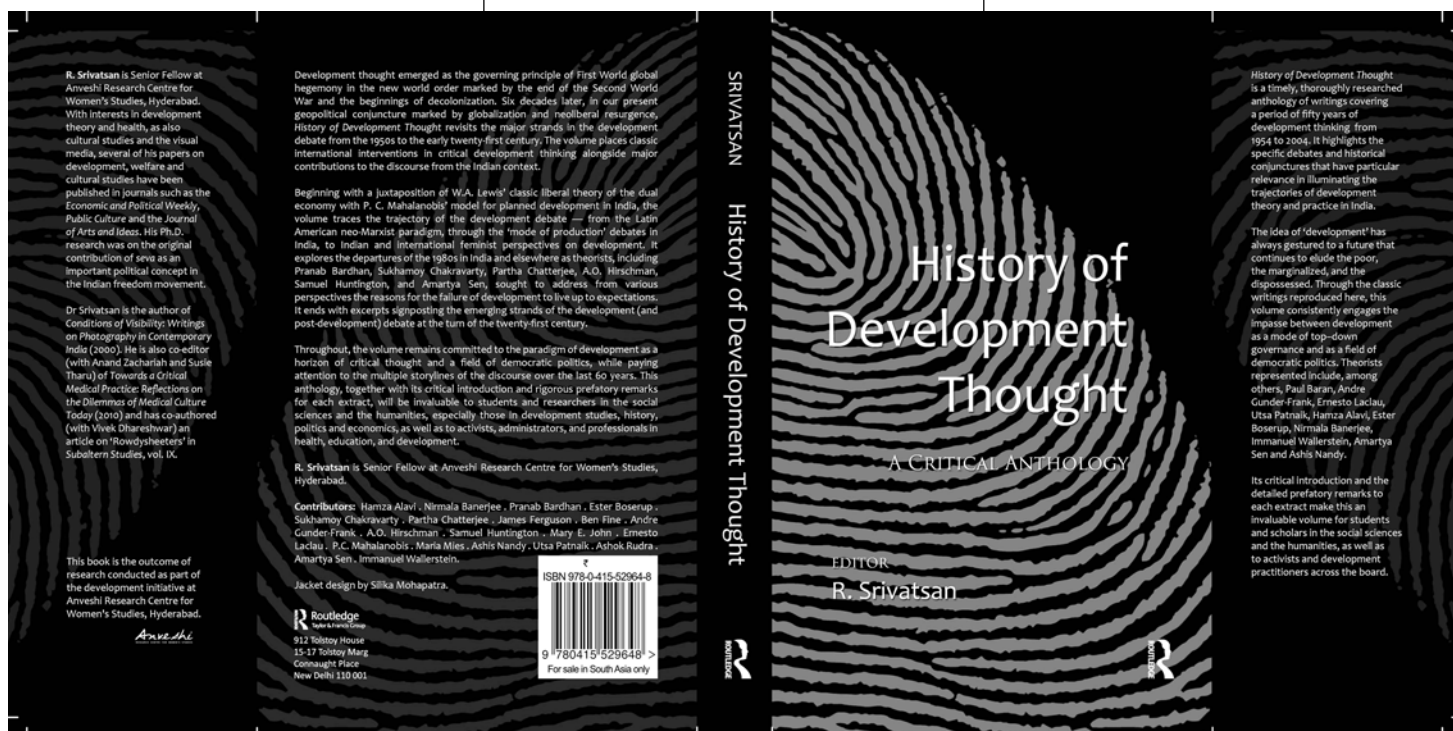
Among the statues of literary figures in our land, certainly Joshua's statues are more in number than anybody else's. I think that is because of his contemporary relevance. It shows the proximity of his literature to the common man. Joshua's literature will continue to interrogate us as long as inequalities exist in our society.

Lately, I see many lovers of Telugu expressing their desire to preserve the language. My appeal to them is that we should take Gurram Joshua's literature as much as possible into the Telugu community. That would be the only way we can ensure the continuation and preservation of this great language and its equally great literary tradition.

Translated by Sarath Davala

Dokka Manikya Varaprasada Rao is a politician and legislator, interested in language and literature.

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On Teaching Sanskrit and Mother Tongues: An Open Letter to Smriti Irani

■ Sowmya Dechamma

Dear Ms Irani,

Many of us are aghast at your decision to remove German from the list of languages that a child could have studied in Kendriya Vidyalayas (central government schools under the Ministry of Human Resource Development). More troubling for me is the decision to make the study of Sanskrit compulsory. Some have rightly pointed out the incommensurability of such a decision: the axe on German and the active neo-liberal policies that the current Indian Government is pushing forward. They have also pointed out how in this global world, studying a foreign tongue would only increase the skills and worthiness of our children, paraded as future citizens. It does not need to be reiterated it was the German Orientalists starting from Wilhelm von Schlegel in 1823 who translated, consolidated and categorised Sanskrit literature as the sole claimant of "Indian Literature". My concerns however, are elsewhere.

My son goes to a Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV) in Hyderabad. I was indeed puzzled to know that the KV offered Hindi, Sanskrit, and German but no Telugu or any other living Indian tongue. Sometime ago, I went to the school authorities and asked them about the absence of Telugu, especially since the three language formula that they cite does mandate that all schools need to teach the "local" / "regional" language / mother tongue. The answer was even more puzzling. If students or parents want Telugu to be taught, there needs to be request from at least ten parents. What I did not understand is this – if teaching of a "local" language has to be requested for, how come the teaching of Hindi and Sanskrit does not follow the same logic?

But I have a more complicated question – what indeed is "local"? Or what is one's "mother tongue"? In Hyderabad, given its social geography, Urdu is equally local as is Telugu.

Urdu was the medium of instruction for quite some time until the 1956 linguistic reorganisation of states. Urdu implied culture and sophistication, had a "proper" history and culture, and unlike Sanskrit was and is accessible to all. Urdu not only has a cultural history but also has a popular one so evident in cinema from Mumbai: it is Urdu cinema we consume not Hindi as has been pointed out so very often. So then, why not Urdu? What does Sanskrit suggest that Urdu doesn't? Let's forget Urdu for a little while and ask -- what about other local languages that are not considered worthy enough to be included in the 8th schedule and modern enough to be called modern Indian languages? Telangana, where I now live has many such languages pretty much like elsewhere in India. Banjara, Gondi, Konda, Kui, Kuvi, Pengo and Manda are just to name a few. So, if the dominant local in Hyderabad is Urdu and Telugu, the local in Adilabad should be Gondi among others. If children learn best in their mother tongues, why not their own tongue?

I mention these languages because my children do not have a single mother tongue – one is Kodava, a language of Kodagu from Karnataka and another Telugu. Kodava like the above languages mentioned is oral and therefore does not become part of the list of languages desired in modern nation states. Historically, the idea of mother tongue is a recent invention. Sumathy Ramaswamy, Lisa Mitchell and Francesca Orsini have beautifully shown how mother tongues in the cases of Tamil, Telugu and Hindi respectively have been built over a period of time, how the construction of a mother tongue is largely an intellectual enterprise and how the idea of mother tongue is based on certain exclusionary strategies. More importantly I mention these "small" languages because I think there is a need to recover differences, a need to distinguish between lives practiced and imagined histories that have supposedly bound us together. The People's Linguistic Survey of India 2013 mentions that there are over 780 languages in India. Of these 780,

around 210 languages belong to the north east India. How many of us can even name two among these 210 rich, diverse, north eastern Languages? Why should one bother? It is "they" who should know what is "ours", not the other way round. Never in human history has "who has to know what" been naïve and bereft of power. In such a scenario when it would be immensely worthwhile to explore ways to study these languages, why Sanskrit?

Unlike German, Urdu, Hindi, Telugu and indeed English, these languages do not have the factor of "usability" or a writable history. If German is foreign, so is English. What do we do with it now? Stretching a little further, Sanskrit is foreign as well to most Indians. But then, languages grow, die, borrow, give, and evolve constantly. What is somebody else's now like English will become ours now either by direct or indirect forces of power. Aren't we proud of Tamil being one of the official languages of Singapore? Do we not gloat that Hindi, Bangla, Tamil, Sanskrit, etc are taught in America, Canada, Europe and other places? That Hindi / Urdu cinema has an industry of its own in Nigeria is of huge consequence for us not only in terms of profit but also in matters of cultural-pride.

I am sure you are aware that it was not very long ago that Sanskrit as a language, as a carrier of privileged knowledge was denied to a majority of people, even if they wanted to learn it. It is no wonder that a language and knowledge it carried that was so well guarded within the still unbreakable walls of caste practices, died a natural death. Given the contemporary situation where a large percentage of children of "backward" and "lower" castes attend government schools, whose histories have no memory of Sanskrit, isn't it ironical that what was once denied to them is now made mandatory, even when they do not want it? The upper classes/castes to whom Sanskrit can be said to have belonged once choose between French or German or Spanish in their hip private schools.

May be we need to think as to why the recovery of difference from very "local" spaces becomes essential. Because it gives each one of us a space to claim as our own, because only then there is resistance to the merging of histories and spiritual symbols, because only then the indifference to histories of "small" people with small languages can teach us many a thing -- in schools or elsewhere.

I am hoping that you will reverse this decision and will come up with more innovative ideas as to how and what our children learn.

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Hyderabad Medical School :

An Urdu Medium Institution

■ Syed Mustapha Kamal

In the evolution of Urdu as the medium of instruction in Hyderabad, the establishment of the allopathic Medical School in 1846 was the most important event. As the Hyderabadis were introduced to modern knowledge they started shifting it into the Urdu through translations. During the process they came to know about the developments in modern western medicine and cure. Till the beginning of the 19th century the people of Hyderabad State did not have the public facilities of modern western medicine. The Unani System of cure was available for the elites and the commoners whereas the British had their own doctors. The compiler of 'Bustan-e-Asafia' (Urdu) writes about the reason for the establishment of Hyderabad Medical College:

"In the year 1251F (1842) Nawab Naseer ud Daulah (the 4th Nizam) fell ill because of bowel inflammation. The Unani doctors couldn't cure him. One day Mr. Frazer, the British Resident came to the court and found the king ill. On his inquiry the King told him about his disease and said that, 'we heard many praises of the doctor's treatment'. The Resident replied that if the king wishes he can send a doctor. The king said that the doctor should cure his disease without using any medicine, and only by external means, the way Hakeem Alavi Khan treated Nadir Shah of his headache. The resident introduced Dr McLain, the residency surgeon, who then cured the king's disease within three months through the control of his diet... The king was pleased and ordered to establish a madrasa of doctori in the Hyderabad State".

By the order of Naseer ud Daulah the 'Hyderabad Medical School' was established in the year 1846 at Gun foundry (a locality) under the supervision of one Dr Franklin. Here the staff of health department and hospital assistants from Berar were provided preliminary education. As the ability to gain education in English was not available in the State, Urdu was made the medium of instruction. The British already had the experience of establishing a medical school in Urdu in Bengal so they didn't face any difficulties in establishing a similar medical school at Hyderabad. Shamsul Umara II and other nobles

interested in modern education helped in getting students. In the school, the students were first familiarized with English to the extent of reading and understanding the names and properties of the medicines and the diseases. Explanation, lectures, discussion and note-taking took place in Urdu. After a few years the basic knowledge of English was made compulsory to get the admission. The Hyderabad Medical School started publishing a journal from 1851 under the editorship of Dr Smith; Dr Maclain and Dr Mackenzie wrote books in Urdu for the students that were published from the press owned by Shamsul Umara II.

It was claimed that the standard of teaching was high in this school, despite the lack of textbooks. The exams were conducted in six subjects: anatomy, orthopedics, properties of medicines, rules and laws of life, principles of health etc. Dr Mackenzie, Dr Walter, Dr Dickson and Dr Reed were the examiners. After the completion of the course those students who adopted the medical profession permanently were considered important in Hyderabad. The names of the students who passed out in the first eight years were mentioned in Bustan-e Asafia: "Md Yakooob, Mohd Baquar Ali, Ghulam Hussain, Burhan Shareef, Khaja Ashraf, Mohd Hussain, Ghulam Jeelani, Syed Omer, Ghulam Mohd, Ain Khan, Faizullah Khan, Mohd Maulana, Fakheer Sahab, Wazir Ali, Shifai Khan, Mirza Ali, Mohd Ashraf and Shamsuddin". In Hyderabad city the first clinics were established by Mohd Ashraf and Faizullah Khan.

The government conducted the entrance exams for the aspirants to this School. According to an advertisement published in the government journal of January 1870, the students should have proficiency in Persian and Urdu and familiarity with English. According to another advertisement of 1878 the knowledge of English was made compulsory along with Persian and Arabic. In the announcement of 1885 the working knowledge of English, good understanding in history, geography and mathematics, and proficiency in Urdu was stressed. When English education started taking roots in Hyderabad, the medium of instruction of the Medical School was changed to English. It was

strange that in the same year Urdu was declared to be the language of administration by the Nizam Government. Three years later another advertisement announced that selections will be made for the post of twenty doctors and five assistants. The candidates should be English speaking and would have to have the ability to read and write Urdu; the exam would be conducted in history, geography, mathematics and geometry. The knowledge of Persian was preferred.

After a few years the use of Latin was allowed along with Persian to write the answer scripts. Till 1885 the Secunderabad Medical Board used to conduct the exams. After the medium of instruction changed to English, the examination papers started coming from Madras or Bombay. The responsibility for the oral examination was allotted to the Secunderabad Medical Board. The Syllabus of Hyderabad Medical School since 1885 was made in accordance to the syllabus of LM&S (Licentiate in Medicine and Surgery) of Madras.

The Hyderabad Medical School was shifted to Saifabad in 1921 from Residency Hospital at Chaderghat. In the same year it was affiliated to Osmania University and then came to be known as Osmania Medical College.

Beginning of English Education

In Hyderabad English education was initiated by the Christian missionaries. In the year 1825 at Saint John Church Secunderabad, a few children were brought together for the sake of educating them in European sciences and English. Soon it gained the status of a school. In 1846 this school was shifted to Chaderghat. Initially the school was named as Protestant English School, and then it was renamed as Saint George Grammar School. The All Saints School began its educational activities in 1855. In the districts the first school was established in the year 1874 in Aurangabad city, soon after Anglo Vernacular School was opened in Gulbarga. Like wise favorable environment for the English Medium Schools was created.

The language of Arabic and Persian was fighting its last battle of survival as the medium of instruction, whereas Urdu was positioning itself as the strong contender to this claim. With the arrival of English, a new front was opened, and intensified the race of linguistic competitions in the Hyderabad State. A few nobles and jagirdars felt the necessity of English for their children, as the medium or subject for the sake of acquiring modern knowledge and to increase contacts with the British....

From Hyderabad mein Urdu ki Tarraqi..

(The development of Urdu in Hyderabad as educational and administrative language)
Hyderabad: Shagoofa publications, 1990.
Pages 226-229. Translated by MA Moid.

Syed Mustapha Kamal is editor of the journal Shagoofa.

Persian Gives Place To Urdu

■ Tariq Rahman

The sequence of events relating to the transition from Persian to Urdu in Hyderabad state has been described admirably by Syed Mustafa Kamal [who] points out that, notwithstanding the influence of the Hindustani in favour of Urdu, the transition to that language was pioneered by a blue-blooded Hyderabad aristocrat, Bashir ud Daulah Sir Asman Jah (b.1839). He was appointed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Sadr-ul-Maham Adalat) in 1869. In 1871 he proposed that Urdu be used in place of Persian in the courts of law. Prime Minister Sir Salar Jang I conceded only that 'the recording of statements in Urdu, that is, the language in common use, is enough'. However, 'all other writing would have to be in Persian.' Bashir ud Daulah tried to obtain more concessions for Urdu, but this time the Prime Minister rebuffed him in the following words:

But this revival [of the pro-Urdu movement] is not acceptable to His Exalted Highness [...] because many people do not know the skills for writing (standard) Urdu... (ibid.,47, qtd. in Kamal 1990, 101)

Moreover, the Prime Minister clarified that Urdu was merely permitted it was not necessary ...

In 1876 the Prime Minister agreed that the administrators (nazama) and the clerks (munshis) had gained competence in Urdu. It was, however, clarified that their Urdu writing was not meant to exhibit their mastery of difficult Persian words. By 'Urdu,' said the order, a high, literary style was not meant (Urdu-e mu'alla murad nist).

By 1883, it appears that the conservative Salar Jang I was no longer as adamant about

retaining Persian as he had been earlier because he gave more concessions to Urdu two days before his death (ibid.,114), though his orders for the courts were published after his death on 8 February 1883. It appears he reasoned that if Marathi and Telugu were allowed for officials to record their decisions, then those whose mother-tongue was Urdu should be similarly facilitated. The formal shift in the language of the state took place in the time of Mir Laiq Ali Khan Salar Jang II, who was appointed to the prime ministership on 5 February 1884 and resigned from the post in 1887.

The first order, dated 21 February 1884, is about the use of Urdu for all types of work in the courts. First, the Prime Minister complains about the linguistic confusion prevalent in the courts. Officials use both Urdu and Persian as they please. Then, he advances the argument that this state of affairs must be ended by using the most easily understood language namely Urdu. In conclusion, the Urdu order says clearly:

Thus Mada ru'l-Muham is pleased to order that as soon as this order reaches the offices of the court, from that time all the work in those offices will be in Urdu.

Moreover, the officials are asked to write simple rather than ornate and Persianized Urdu. However, rural offices would continue to function in the local languages. The talukdars (landed gentlemen) were ordered to address higher authorities in Urdu. Local languages were to be tolerated, but not in urban areas such as Hyderabad, where only Urdu was to be used. Another symbolic event was a speech delivered by Mahbub Ali Khan to the first meeting of the Council of State

held on 28 February 1884. This is in Urdu and the language is simple and understandable. In 1886 all offices were ordered to work in Urdu.

The summary of the memorandum on this subject (item No.176, June 1886) as presented by the Prime Minister to the Nizam...[s]olicits sanction for the use of Urdu instead of Persian in all official correspondence, and adds that it is the Secretaries to Government who use Persian in official correspondence, whereas Urdu was adopted in all the offices. It also speaks of the advantages and facilities afforded by the use of Urdu language. The Nizam sanctions the introduction of Urdu in all correspondence carried out by the Secretaries to Government.

Urdu and the Royalty

As mentioned earlier, Urdu was taught even when Persian was the official language of the state. The Census of 1871 recorded that "Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani" as well as English are taught. Royalty were also taught Urdu in addition to Persian and English. The Resident, Mr.Saunders, addressed Salar Jang I on 12 January 1871 in 'Hindoostanee,' hoping that it was a language that would 'bear good fruit at Hyderabad...'

The young Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan, was educated under the supervision of an English tutor, but he was taught Urdu and Persian as well as English. The overall in-charge of the young Nizam's education was Captain John Clerk, son of G.R. Clerk, Governor of Bombay. He arrived in Hyderabad in January 1875. Sarwar Jang, the young Nizam's Indian tutor, mentions how the prince was taught by elderly, sycophantic courtiers – certainly not the best way to teach a child. However, at the end of 1879 the prince's 'report card showed he was doing well in Geography, Arithmetic and Urdu'. Sarwar Jang also describes how the teaching of Persian was replaced with that of Urdu, which was taught until four o'clock in the afternoon, and calligraphy in its script was taught for half an hour.

Later, when the question of the education of Mir Osman Ali Khan came up, by this date, at least in British minds, Urdu was important enough to be taught to a major princely ally of the empire. The Resident wrote, '[He should] begin with his own vernacular-Urdu'-but also,

'parri passu, learn English'. Accordingly, both English and Urdu were taught to the future ruler. For Urdu, Syed Husain Bilgrami was appointed tutor to the young prince in 1895. And for English, he had an English tutor – Bryan (later Sir) Egerton. In addition there were Indian tutors (ataliq) who taught Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English.

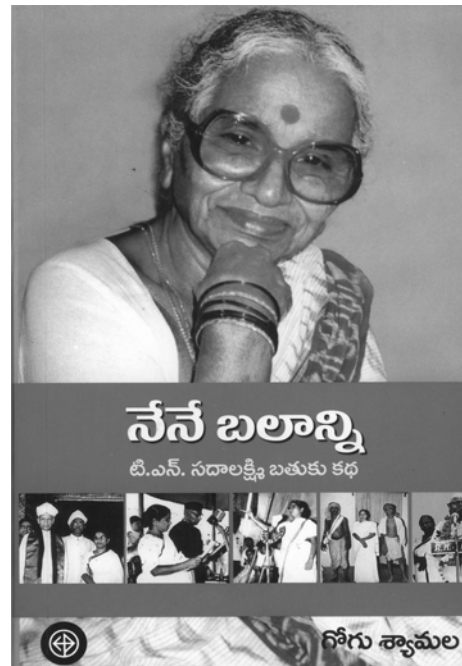
Others in the royal family, such as Osman Ali Khan's daughter-in-law Durrushehwar (d.2006)-mother of Mir Barkat Ali Khan Mukarram Jah (b.1938), the eighth Nizam, who held the title from 1967 until 1971, and daughter of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid of Turkey - learned it from Agha Haidar Hasan Mirza. She became fluent in Urdu in less than a year. Mukarram's education was in Madrasa-i-Aliya to begin with, but then he went to Doon School and Harrow. Even Mukarram Jah's Turkish wife, Esra Birgin, learned to speak Urdu. However, in keeping with the increasing modernization and Anglicization of the Indian elite, the young princes were learning more English than any other languages through their schooling.

The royalty were not the only ones to learn Urdu, of course. The common people, and especially the middle classes, learned it in order to find employment. There were many institutions and people to promote the learning of Urdu. One of the personalities

associated with Urdu, Maulavi Abdul Haq ...wrote two pamphlets on letter writing in Urdu in 1901. In the second, there is a letter from a father to a son exhorting him to take an interest in the mother tongue (Urdu). The son agrees and sets out on this path. These pamphlets were written at the request of Syed Husain Bilgrami, probably in his capacity as the Nizam's tutor. Thus Abdul Haq tried to sow the seed of love for Urdu in the future ruler's breast.

Maulavi Abdul Haq was also one of the pioneers of Osmania University. He presided over the Dar-ul-Tarjuma and invited eminent people from North India: Zafar Ali Khan, Abdul Majid Daryabadi, Abdul Haleem Sharar, Waheed ud Din Saleem, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, Maulana Mirza Mehdi Khan, Ross Masood, and others. Abdul Haq considered Urdu, as he told one of his friends, also called Abdul Haq, that he considered him a 'true Muslim' because one characteristic of a Muslim was 'the love of Urdu'(Urdu ki muhabbat). Thus, while the upper classes were switching to English in response to increasing Anglicization, the middle classes were fully given to education in Urdu.

From Hindi to Urdu: A Social and Political History Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2011 Pages 238-243. Reprinted with kind courtesy of the publisher.



Md. Khadeer Babu

Dargahmetta in southern Nellore is a prosperous town on the bank of a lake. It is surrounded by a large lawn and at its very centre lie 12 revered graves—such is the 'Dargahmetta dargah'! We also call it Barah Shahid Dargah ('Barah' means twelve. 'Shahid' refers to those who sacrifice their lives in war.)

Whenever I looked at Dargahmetta Dargah, I would feel fear and devotion simultaneously. Here whatever you wish for will be realized, my grandmother used to say. There is also a story behind this Dargah that she narrated to me.

Many centuries ago, somewhere, a fierce war was fought to save our religion; twelve great warriors fought for our pride. But the enemies sneaked on them by hiding behind bushes and decapitated the warriors. Yet, our warriors fought on, their headless bodies never leaving the sword till they reached what is today called Metta. It is there that they fell and became martyrs. The public then built tombs for these great warriors and laid the foundation for this Dargah. The place where this Dargah is located has since become 'Dargahmetta.'

The twelve warriors are unknown, the names of their village(s) are unknown, yet people have learnt of their miracles. Hence, Muslims and Hindus, without any religious differences, come in multitudes to the rotte (roti) festival.

(Translated by Navadeep and Pranoo Deshraj)

Md. Khadeer Babu is a writer and literary editor of Sakshi.

Navadeep is an LGBT activist.

Pranoo Deshraj is a PhD student at UoH.

From 'The Dargahmetta Rottula Pandaga' *Dargahmetta Kathalu*, Kavali Publication, 1999.

FROM OU to MANUU

■ M A Moid

The journey of Urdu in the Deccan is an important story from the perspective of language politics in south India.

Many claims are made about the role of Deccan in the journey of Urdu. The theme of this set of writings 'from OU to MANUU' will show us some issues faced by Urdu in its recent journey. The old Urdu medium Osmania University (OU) was established in 1919. After nearly eighty years Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998. The historical and political contexts of both universities are different though some aspects of their purposes were same and some different. The vision of OU was closely related to the concept of 'progress' where as that of MANUU with 'development'. OU was established by a princely state which was on the modernizing mission. MANUU was established by the independent modern Indian state which formulated its visions and policies on the ideas of socialism, democracy, secularism and also of Swaraj. OU wanted to make Urdu a scientific language and make it a part of a linguistic identity of the larger subcontinent. MANUU want to spread the use of Urdu in order to empower and enable its users according to the needs of the market. For OU, the Urdu programme was a means to a higher end of the renaissance of Urdu language and of the Orient as such, whereas for MANUU the development of Urdu language users is a tool for the national development. Despite these differences both universities were established in Hyderabad which shows the city's importance from the various purposes of progress, development and identity.

In order to understand the historical travel of Urdu from OU to MANUU, two interviews

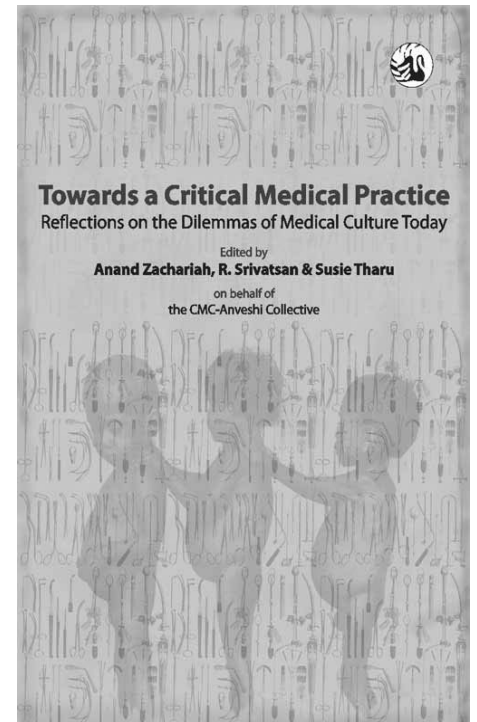
were conducted with two personalities who have different foci as scholars (though both are associated with MANUU). Dr Junaid Zakir, whose focus is on OU, tries to help us understand the detailed processes that it invented and adapted to make Urdu language suitable for scientific discourse and OU into a university capable of teaching modern science in a vernacular. This kind of project was also a major concern for the Indian nationalists who were concerned with the education of the new generations in independent India. Zakir compares these processes and its outcomes with another institution, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL) established by independent India - about which he is not impressed. This leads to the sensitive question about the effectiveness of the institutions established by democratic regimes under the demands of the public or due to some political compulsions.

The second interview regarding MANUU is with Professor Khalid Sayeed whose perspectives and experiences are shaped by Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) based in Mysore, an institution established by the government of modern independent India. Innovative and scientific methods were successfully adapted in this institution in teaching of Indian languages. He has used many of these innovative methods successfully to teach Urdu within the university setup as well as outside. His success raises a counter question (to Zakir's view) about the effectiveness of the government established institutions.

These interviews give two perspectives about the state of Urdu in the Deccan in particular and in India in general and tell us about the Muslims aspirations in a changing

environment in relation to Urdu. Urdu is not the exclusive language of Muslims but the identity politics in the last century has created affiliations between language and community. The Muslims are forced to take up the issue of Urdu as if it is no one else's business. This has created strains among Urdu activists. The demands of 'development' and 'identity' made them vulnerable to various confusions. For example the question of English and the urgencies of opportunities force a kind of pragmatism that is leading to all kinds of compromises. The conflicting pulls and push on the Urdu walas create self doubts: that are they serving the cause of English as they feel that English is more important to them now rather than Urdu itself. Are they followers of Macaulay in vernacular garb? The challenge for them is how to respond to these conflicting demands. The politics of Urdu that emerged as a result of all these pressures has converted the issue of Urdu into a platform from where various related issues are addressed. The platform serves the purpose of internal criticism, mobilizing, resisting majoritarianism and State apathy.

The two interviews that follow are about the state of Urdu in South India. It also raises many questions about the state of other vernaculars as well which may or may not be travelling the same path as that of Urdu, and finally asks what happens to vernaculars under the developmental democratic setup.



Md. Junaid Zakir - Interview

■ M A Moid

Your PhD is considered an important contribution to the process of development of Urdu language. Can you tell us more about it?

My PhD topic was 'A comparative study of terminologies pertaining to humanities and social sciences, translated and coined by the Translation Bureau of Osmania University (OU) and National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL). My concern was the development of Urdu as a scientific language, because Urdu is already rich in arts and literature. In my thesis I have examined and analyzed 12736 terms of Social Sciences and Humanities. As you know every term has a particular conceptual background or meaning. Any language having a high vocabulary is considered a developed language. My research was an attempt to look at the terminologies in different academic disciplines in Urdu coined by the two institutions as mentioned from the perspectives of principles and methodology.

Serious efforts in this direction were made when the 'Translation Bureau' was established in Hyderabad in 1917 with the purpose of translating modern scientific texts into Urdu. As part of the project the bureau had to first translate the scientific terms into Urdu to make the translations successful. In its life of 31 years i.e till 1948, the bureau translated more than one lakh scientific terms belonging to thirty seven disciplines. After independence the Government of India established 'National Council for the Promotion of Urdu Language' in 1969 and as one of its objective published glossaries of terms belonging to twenty disciplines. For my PhD I decided to compare the terms belonging to the disciplines of humanities and social sciences as translated by the two institutions.

What were your findings and conclusions?

The process of translation by NCPUL started after a gap of thirty years (i.e., after the decline

of the activities of Translation Bureau of OU in 1948 immediately after the Operation Polo; and the informal ending of the translation project after the mysterious fire of 1949 practically destroyed the Bureau along with innumerable ready to be printed manuscripts, though the Bureau existed nominally till 1960). The objective of Osmania University's translation was to fulfill the syllabus needs of the university courses, whereas NCPUL did not have such a target. The terminologies coined by NCPUL lacked depth and rigor and were not so advanced even though they coined some new terminologies.

Osmania's work look advance and organized from many parameters even now. I found that NCPUL has taken many English terms without justification and explanation in their glossaries. I also found that many terms that were already existing in Urdu were taken as it is but the English term was also taken, for example 'Accountant' has been taken as MOHASIB but same word accountant was written along side with it in Urdu script. Similarly 'Magna Charta' is taken as it is by NCPUL whereas in Osmania's translation it appeared as MANSHOOR-E AZAM and SANAD-E AZAM. Also some terms are translated differently by OU and NCPUL, for example the term 'Plebiscite' is translated as RAI SHUMARI by NCPUL, whereas it is translated as RAI TALBI by Osmania which is much closer to the original meaning.

What was the reason for the better quality of OUs work?

We need to look at the processes adapted by, and the zeal for the project in OU. The Translation Bureau was established deliberately two years earlier so that the books required for different courses can be translated. It started with the collection of the best English and Urdu knowing individuals from all over India who became famous for

their intellectual achievements. They were given hefty salaries and all facilities. The first year saw thorough discussions and debates about how to go ahead, deciding the standards and parameters and ultimately drafted the guiding principles of translation. They also decided that Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi words will be used to coin Urdu terms. The individual expert in particular disciplines were made in charge of the team of full time and part time translators. These experts were formed into committees. These committees had not only subject experts but also linguists. When the new disciplines were added new committees were formed. These committees, keeping in view the syllabus of best English Universities, decide the text books that need to be adapted and used, and also make a list of the terms to be translated. Secondly the idea of a vernacular university made much Indian nationalist support it throughout India and the political will of the Nizam in its favour made it a widely popular and attractive project.

Then what were the processes adapted by NCPUL?

The NCPUL prepares a list of terms to be translated and then a workshop of a few days with subject experts is conducted. In these workshops terms are coined, approved and changes suggested in the translation. Many times they pick up the terms translated by OU without acknowledging it. The approved translations are printed as glossaries on different subjects. These terms are mostly fit to be used in college level and unfit for higher education and professional purposes.

It is accused that the Urdu was heavily Persianised and Arabized by OU and so became incapable of everyday use. What is your opinion? Secondly how the terms were disseminated and popularized in Hyderabad State.

There are many scientific terms in English belonging to various disciplines that can't even be pronounced properly. These terms are confined to the subject experts as well as its practitioners. Similar was the case with the translations by OU. The subject terminology was as tough as it is of today's English. But the translators were aware of this problem. In their guiding principle one point was specifically about it. It says that the translations should be closer to common language. Also a mechanism was created to check this problem. After the word is finalized it was sent to the Director of religious affairs, whose duty was to judge the translated terms from the religious perspectives that is it

offending to the religious sensibilities or not; then it was sent to the Director of literature whose duty was to look at the terms from aesthetic and every day usage perspectives. The words were then sent to the concerned government departments for its use in their correspondence, meetings, discussions, trainings etc. Likewise the terms belonging to the fields of agriculture, irrigation, education, health, law, civil works and general administration were successfully disseminated among the professionals and general public, and expanded their vocabulary.

Secondly, the Translation Bureau was dealing with a new experiment. It was using trial and error method also. It replaced many old terms with the new ones. Take the example of the first translation of the word thermometer and compare it with the last one, you will easily understand the improvement process.

The intention of the establishment of OU through Urdu medium is seen as causing hindrance in the development of Telugu and Hinduism. How do you look at this?

No. These rumors are deliberately spread by anti Hyderabad and communal forces. Look at the hegemony and popularity of English now. English is more in use now than at the time of British. Is it damaging Telugu or spreading Christianity? Rather, the experiment of OU created new aspirations in Kannada, Marathi and especially among the Telugu speakers and gave birth to a new breed of activists and writers who contributed significantly to it. In reality they were not against Urdu—as they are not against English now—since they knew that an OU graduate will be proficient in Urdu as well as in English and so had better opportunities of employment anywhere in undivided India and also he will be better equipped to go abroad for higher education. They believed the Nizam who promised that if the OU experiment succeeds, his government will establish similar universities in other three languages of the Hyderabad State. But because of impatience and ill will, and with the help of rumors and false perceptions, hatred and fear Urdu was created in order to divide the society and destabilize the Nizam government.

A group of Urdu supporters came to the conclusion that Urdu cannot become the language of science?

In our country there was always a conflict between the supporters of Macaulay's views and that of vernaculars. The languages grow

by adapting and learning from/to higher languages, and of course by serious involvement and hard work it becomes capable of higher purposes as we see in Europe where translations went on for centuries. The OUs experiment is a successful example that disproves the critics, but this experiment was not allowed to continue and abruptly ended in three decades, ironically by the new political authorities who were in favor of vernaculars. The people who accuse Urdu as incapable for scientific purpose are also accusing other Indian languages of the same. They also wanted to be in the good books of the new rulers who are thought to have fewer sympathies for Urdu.

Do you want to say that the loss of Urdu is loss of other Indian languages? How?

Take two parameters of administrative and higher education language. The Indian languages could become the language of administration in respective states after a lot of effort, but English still exists as the parallel and alternative; whereas the Centre can't manage without English at all. From the parameters of higher education, even though few vernacular universities were established after Independence, no vernacular could become the language of higher education in natural and physical science. The quality of its education is also questionable. Now if you look at old Hyderabad State, Urdu was made the language of administration and also the language of higher education in every existing discipline. I believe that if the OUs experiment had continued Urdu could have become an international language. This would have naturally benefitted other Indian languages too especially Hindi and would have easily replaced English. Presently no Indian language is of international status even though its users are quite significant. Not only the OUs experiment abruptly ended but no other Indian language tried to learn from its experiences and replicate it for its development, sadly just because of biases towards Urdu.

Now you are part of MANUU which is an Urdu medium university. Keeping in view pre 1948 OU how do you look at it.

MANUU was established in 1998, i.e., fifty years after the old Urdu medium OU. It will be an injustice to MANUU if we compare it with old OU as it was established in different

times. Urdu was the official language of the Nizam Dominion and it was compulsory subject from kindergarten to post-graduation. Also a net work of Urdu medium schools and colleges existed throughout the Nizam State. MANUU's performance and outcomes are affected by various factors. It responds to the existing socio-political and job market conditions. Its policies are realistic and do the things that are possible. The translation department of MANUU has played a significant role in the development of Urdu by translating nearly 350 books for the graduation and PG levels of its distance education which is the successful and major program of MANUU. The translation department is a full-fledged department and offers MA, M Phil and PhD in translation studies.

What it means to think about the OU experiment now?

Many things can be learnt from it. It can encourage the Urdu-walas in coming out of their self doubts and hopelessness and make them confident about Urdu—that it has many qualities and can play an important role in educating a large section of our countrymen and keeping the country united as it is not fixed to any region. It can teach the language policy makers and academics about how to rejuvenate and improve a language, how higher education can be provided in vernaculars and why they are not succeeding in their present objective. Why are they not learning from OU? Is it because of the mental blocks about Urdu and Muslims? It also tells us the ugly side of communal politics and how the narrow mindedness can damage a language, its speakers and the country in general. It tells us about the success of the Deccan in establishing a university in Urdu and for many other experiments and the many short comings of North India. It can also tell us why it is very important for the educationist and language activists of the new Telangana State. They have to acknowledge that the OU was a unique and successful experiment in which Telangana State can take pride.

The interview was conducted in Urdu on 13 & 14 October 2014 and translated into English by
M.A. Moid.

Md. Junaid Zakhir teaches at Translation Dept MANUU. He is also an Urdu activist.

Khalid Sayeed - Interview

■ M A Moid

Is higher education possible through Urdu' is a recurring question. What is your opinion?

Your question expresses the emotions of those who believe that higher education is not possible through vernaculars. History shows us that whenever this question was raised Urdu has not disappointed its fans whether it is Fort William College, Dilli College, Jamia Osmania or MANUU. The purpose of Fort William College was to train the British administrators and not to serve Urdu, but in spite of that it translated books in five or six disciplines like history, geography, law, administration etc. When Dilli College was established the task before it was to provide modern education to Indians through Urdu. Earlier the Vernacular Society was formed and Lord Macaulay was its important member who said that we need to create Indian babus through new disciplines. Macaulay's intention might be bad but the Delli College translated nearly 120 books on 57 topics. These books were translated into that same language Urdu about which many still have doubts.

In this aspect Hyderabad was special as Madrasa-e- Fakhriya, Jamia Osmania and Manuu were established here. Madrasa-e- Fakhriya was unique because it was a personal project of Nawab Fakhru'l Mulk, only science books on various topics were translated by it in to Urdu and it also established a planetarium to supplement astronomy. Jamia Osmania continued this trend and proved that if there is a will then any vernacular can become capable of dealing with modern sciences. Professor Late Syed Sirajuddin (Head of Department English, OU) had said about OU that 'Knowledge was trapped in unfamiliar languages until OU liberated it, made it easy and popular'. He also said that 'an important contribution of Jamia Osmania is that it created a middle class in Hyderabad society'.

You were associated with Central Indian Institute of Languages (CIIL) Mysore for a long time. What was the agenda of CIIL vis-à-vis Indian languages? What kind of research takes place there?

It was a coincidence that I got associated with

CIIL through a project. The directorate of text books of Karnataka Government wanted to prepare text books for 9th standard with the help of CIIL. I was part of the committee that was in charge of this task. This brought me into contact with CIIL.

CIIL works under ministry of MHRD and creates programs for the development of Indian Languages, for example, how to teach languages, understanding linguistic properties of languages, preparation of primers, text books of different levels with linguistic approach, dictionaries, thesaurus and reference books, determining the areas of languages through practical surveys and conduct various other surveys. It has converted many Indian dialects into languages by providing Devanagari script.

I was associated with CIIL for 10 years and learnt the methods of teaching languages and understood its nature. It enriched me as a teacher for which I am thankful to CIIL in general and its Research Officer Dr. Shyamala Kumari in particular.

Regarding Urdu CIIL produced new text books on request from state governments, audio cassettes as teaching aid, poems, riddles, language games for children etc.

You are teaching Urdu to IAS and IPS trainees, why they are interested in Urdu, what are your experiences of teaching them?

It was a coincidence that my friend and colleague Dr. Fazlur Rahman suggested my name to National Police Academy (NPA) to teach the IPS officers from Jammu cadre. The following year the Marri Chenna Reddy Human Development Institute got my name from NPA to teach IAS trainees. Likewise I got an opportunity to teach both type of officers. I found that in NPA there are two types of Urdu learners. The first belongs to that group that has been posted in Jammu and Kashmir where administrative language is Urdu. The second group wanted to learn out of interest and liking for Urdu.

The IAS trainees want to learn Urdu because of its cultural significance and especially because

of their fondness for Urdu poetry. As a teacher it was a challenge for two reasons. First of all these trainees were highly educated and cannot be treated as college or university students and secondly they are influenced by the aesthetic charm and cultural value of Urdu. I have to take into the account these two factors in teaching them and providing course material. In these two institutions only 20 – 25 classes of forty minutes each were allotted. In such a short time I have to teach a language which is an enormous challenge. Therefore I had to keep to the limited time provided, assess the need and temperament of learner and the pros and cons of Urdu script in view, and design/prepare the course material, pedagogy and methodology of teaching. The CIIL experiences came handy and helped me in my tasks and the students as well. I have collected and published my course material in a book form entitled 'Learn Urdu'.

Your book on the teaching of Urdu language has become popular with the non Urdu speakers. What is your view of the challenges of teaching Urdu to the present generation?

My book 'Learn Urdu' is not only the result of my experience and knowledge that I gained while teaching IPS and IAS officers but also its reward. Of course Urdu can be taught in a short duration through this book. I have divided this book into 12 units and 24 lessons, each deal with a linguistic characteristic or problem. One method used for teaching the sentences was with the help of a few alphabets through writing processes. The learners feel that from the first lesson itself he is writing—this method was not preferred traditionally. Secondly the fact that the students are cognate learners—who already knew the language but cannot read and write was also taken into account. Thirdly all the four skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading were simultaneously used. To help in correct pronunciation Hindi and English were used. The exercises were made interesting.

You have designed a short course on appreciating gazals. Who are your students and why this program is liked. What you do in these classes?

During a workshop for the Urdu teachers of an NGO (Pratham), its Chairman Mr. Chowhan during an informal talk told me that he is fond of listening to gazals but feels that he is not able to understand the meaning completely. 'If somebody designs a course of how to understand and enjoy gazals, I would like to take it'. He also said that he did not have time to learn Urdu and without learning it he want to understand gazals.

This idea motivated me and I prepared a spoken level course as 'Appreciation of Urdu gazals', liked and approved by my university,

MANUU. I am particularly obliged to Mr Mohammed Miyan, the Vice Chancellor for appreciating and supporting this innovative course.

It is a fact that gazals, especially the classical ones, through their emotions sensibility and meaning impress listeners. Many lovers of gazals are those who have heard gazals from the singers. It is important to introduce the sensibility and affect of gazals to them. Keeping in view all these things I prepared the course which is becoming popular in the Urdu and non Urdu speakers and many of the latter are now getting attracted to Urdu.

Children's literature in Urdu is also your interest area and you have made some innovations in it. What is the nature of books for children in Urdu?

My relation with children literature is in two capacities-as a teacher and as a creator. My association with CIIL helped me in writing for children in a scientific way. In CIIL we worked for on programmes to prepare language games, poems, proverbs etc and in individual projects to prepare text books and linguistics exercises according to the interest and nature of children. CIIL designed five programmes for children and made audio cassettes and teaching aid for it.

The difference between the past and today regarding the children's literature is that earlier even the major writers and poets used to write for children. Krishan Chandar, Zafar Payami and Siraj Anwar were well known in prose. In poetry Hamid ullah Afsar, Ismael Meerthi, Shafiuddin Nayar, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan etc were popular. But today's major writers of Urdu are not interested in writing for children. The genre of comics is completely absent in Urdu. Only Gulzar Saab presented the story of Mowgli in a book for his daughter. The reason for this gap is that our writers and artists are not ready to take it up, nor is anybody interested in investing in such projects. Let me say that we Urdu walas are not serious about using modern sources of communication for language and literature. How the children can develop reading habits.

I produced a book 'Khel Kahawat'(Games and Proverbs) in Urdu for children. Actually it was inspired from a CIIL project, "India through proverbs" in which the proverbs were visualized. I used the same technique with their permission to teach children through this book. This is the only book in my publications that was sold out. What I want to say is that if the books are prepared according to the need and disposition of the student in an interesting way and with good quality material, the teaching and learning will be joyful and then it will sell. Today

many facilities are available; if books cannot be published, CDs can be made and sold which is must cheaper.

You belong to Gulbarga town, a place that has made important contributions to the Deccani. Tell us more about Gulbarga's significance for the Deccani. What are the kinds of research being done on Deccani.

The areas I belong to i.e., Gulbarga and Bidar played an important role in Deccani literature. The first elegy 'Kadamrao Padamrao' was written in Bidar. Miraj-ul-Aashiqeen is attributed to Saint Hazarath Khaja Banda Nawaz of Gulbarga and is recognized as the first prose specimen of Deccani literature. These cities were the capitals of the Bahmani kingdom. It was the early phase; the kings were busy in consolidating the kingdom instead of giving attention to literature and poetry. The progress in Deccani literature happened due to religious personalities and non-courtier artists. When Bahmani kingdom broke into five kingdoms, the two biggest of them i.e Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi kingdoms nurtured literature and arts. The North Indians take pride that Urdu was nurtured in the areas of Ganga and Jamuna; we Deccanis are proud that we used this language not only for literature and poetry but also for knowledge and skills.

Thus the first prose, poetry quatrains and elegies were written in Deccan. Our literary historians extended the history of Urdu by 150-200 years by the discovery of Deccani literature. In this regard the role of Hyderabad and OU cannot be ignored. But sadly the scholars of Deccani are declining in dedication and numbers and except one or two nobody seem to be interested. The reason for lack of research on Deccani is lack of interest in old books and manuscripts. The emergence of new disciplines and demands created interest in the new books. I feel still there are possibilities of working on Deccani from new perspectives.

There are some claims that Deccani will always remain disadvantaged as a spoken language under the shadow of North Indian Urdu. What is the truth behind such claims? What can be done about Deccani to bring it out of its existing predicament?

The history of Deccani languages is nearly six hundred years old. In the South it progressed because of the works and efforts of Mohiuddin Quadri Zore, Abdul Haq, Abdul Qader Sarwari, Rafia Sultana, Syeda Jafar, Ghulam Omer Khan, Ashraf Rafi, Naseemuddin Farees, Habeeb Nisar etc., but in North India Deccani literature is not part of the syllabus. It is because of its difficult pronunciation, reading and comprehension. These difficulties could be overcome through new means of

communication for example cassettes can be made about the correct reading of different texts. Audio and video material about the discussion on Deccani can be made to popularize it. It is strange and sad that today Deccani language is used only for humor and comedy whereas earlier high literature was created in it. We need to change our thinking and attitude. Also we need to defend it intellectually from the Hindi speakers and Hindi intelligentsia, particularly from Hindi teachers, critiques, and writers who want to claim it as Hindi because of the presence of Prakrit and Bhasha words in it.

Now Telangana State is formed. A future has to be made for Telangana Telugu and Deccani. How both languages can contribute in each other's development?

When we look at the history of Deccan two things are apparent. One is that area which came under the influence of Urdu in the past and another that did not. Telangana belong to the earlier group.

Alluddin Hasan, the founder of Bahmani kingdom, was the first one to coin and use the term Deccani as a particular identity. He used it as a political strategy to fight the domination of Tughlak family of North India. He also used it to promote a common cultural and civilizational value since he found a close and special culture affinity among different groups of this region.

Apart from this the Sufi saints used the Hindu characters to propagate Islam. Shams ul Ishaq Meeran Ji coined the term Krishan Mohammed, in the elegy 'Behram and Hasan Banu'; gopis' narration were used; Nusrati used Vishnu Chakra; and Hazarath Ameenuddin Aala used the five element and 25 guna philosophy of Vedanta in Sufism. In Islamic Sufism only 4 elements are mentioned but the fifth one of space, void or shunya was adopted from Indian philosophy. All this was cultural give and take and found especially in those areas which were under the Muslim rule.

Now if we look at Telangana movement and its leaders statements, what becomes clear is that Deccani and Urdu played an important role in the formation of its nature. The Telangana people now want to retrieve it. It is the demand for harmonious existence that Telangana Telugu and Deccani should contribute in the progress of the state through mutual and close interaction.

The interview was conducted in Urdu on 30 & 31 October 2014 by M.A. Moid and translated by him into English.

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The English Language at Madrasas

■ Sajida Sultana

The madrasa and its education have been subject matter of major discussions in the media since the attack on the World Trade Centre. However, the discussions ignore the fact that since the time of European Enlightenment, there have been several rich debates and discussions within madrasas on the inclusion of modern subjects as part of their curriculum and these discussions have brought in the conceptual distinction between *din* (religious) and *duniya* (secular) within the domain of madrasa education. It has also been noted that the colonial dichotomy of the public and private spheres exists in the present day madrasas and they safeguard the private sphere of Muslims from the external/state intrusions.

Today, English language teaching at madrasas is part of the modernization programme introduced by the State as an initiative to improve the future prospects of madrasa graduates. The reasons behind the state driven modernization could be political and/or social.

English is increasingly becoming an important component of the madrasa curriculum not only for the purpose of creating more employment opportunities for the students, but also to respond to questions related to Islam, and to demystify religion. Parents want their children to be equipped with the skills required for employment and also gain English language skills in addition to the proper understanding of their religion.

To give a glimpse of the significance of the English language in the education system in some of the madrasas, let us consider two madrasas in Hyderabad, one for girls and the other for boys. These details were obtained

through interviews with the Head of the institutions and their English language teachers.

A madrasa for girls in Hyderabad, since its inception in 2009, provides equal importance to the English language along with religious knowledge. The English language teachers mentioned that some of the students have a strong notion that it is the language of those who colonized us, it is not their mother tongue, and learning the English language may not be useful. However, the girls at this madrasa aspire to speak in English because they know that it is a universal language and, at a personal level, they see their cousins speak in English confidently and fluently. They also want to talk to them in English. The students consider the additional knowledge of English as fun. Also, some of their graduates have moved to other countries after marriage and have communicated to the current students about the ample job opportunities for girls/women with a good knowledge of religion and a fair command over the English language.

The teachers do encourage girls to speak in the English language, not only as a means for better employment or for personal reasons, but to consider everything they do as *ibadat* (in the path of Allah) whether it is eating food or learning a language like English. One of the teachers also said that language is not related to religion. To spread the religion, we need to speak in the language of the other person.

Similarly, in the boys' madrasa, which is established by the alumni of one of the oldest madrasas in Hyderabad, the management has adopted a unique style of teaching English in

the initial levels, i.e., by drawing parallels between English and Arabic grammar. This 'practical concept', as the head of the madrasa calls it, is of recent origin, which has been experimented on only two successful batches. The course is divided into four sessions. The first session is allotted for teaching the Nouns, the second for Verbs, the third for Grammar with explanation, and the final session for memorizing and learning texts by rote.

For the first three months the course is flexible. The students are allowed to use Urdu or Arabic and they are provided inputs in English. After three months, Urdu or Arabic is not used and the learners have to speak in English. It is extensively used and conversations also happen only in English. As part of the teaching, films are screened followed by a discussion for an hour. The students are also encouraged to make presentations. This also helps in building their self-confidence.

We thus see that the English language in the context of madrasa education is viewed as a means to develop and spread the language and culture of Islam through *Dawa* (awareness of the religion); to translate old material published in Arabic and Urdu in to English; to avail employment opportunities; to fulfill societal needs and aspirations; and to pursue further education in other universities. There is a huge demand for English in Arab countries for those who want to go abroad. The English language is included so as to train the madrasa students to understand the recent developments in the world. Deoband madrasa, for instance has an Online Education programme for the foreign nationals to pursue their course in Islam. The entire course is administered in the English language.

The English language is now part of the curriculum in most of the madrasas and some madrasas have established separate English Language departments. This in certain ways marks the paradigm shift in the madrasa education system. The system of education followed at madrasas is carefully planned to ensure that those who graduate from a madrasa are able to face the challenges of the world.

Sajida Sultana is a PhD Student at EFL University.

English question in Urdu University

■ Md. Mujeebuddin

I chose MANUU because I could continue my studies in Urdu... (Sajid, an interviewee from MANUU)

I grew up in a small town near Chittoor. It had 300 Muslim households. My village school was housed in a deeni madrasa building. As there was one building for all classes and students, the classes were sometimes held under the tamarind tree. Teachers were vidya volunteers who came to teach for two or three months in a year, before the exams. We were 150 students and there were two teachers. My parents are daily wage labourers. They learned a little Urdu from local madrasa but we were the first ones to go to school in the family... (Alim, interviewee from MANUU)

Urdu medium students in MANUU are mostly first generation learners. Their parents are daily wage labourers in villages, petty businessmen such as teashop or small retail shop owners, or craftsmen such as carpenters, mechanics or ironsmiths. Some of them also are imams of village mosques. They are mostly from Urdu medium government schools in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and a few from Kashmir. Most North Indian students would have studied Urdu as a language in school and the college while doing the rest of the subjects in Hindi or English medium. South Indian Urdu medium students are much better in Urdu, compared to their North Indian counterparts.

Students get to know MANUU from the lecturers in college as well as from the teachers in the Distance Education contact classes of MANUU. Seniors also guide them to an extent. Many students join MANUU programmes in the distance education mode and then join as regular students at the PG level. MANUU is preferred among the Urdu medium students due to the following reasons: limited option due to Urdu medium education; relatively easy availability of seats

compared to other universities; low fee structure; availability of hostel facilities; and the option to continue education Urdu. Politically, MANUU offers a safer option, given the predominantly Muslim student population. Women students feel that it is a safe place for them.

But then we have to listen to lectures in English. The classes here take place mostly in English and initially I could hardly understand anything. Teachers could not, so they did not translate for us. Since we are the first batch of students, there are no seniors to help us too. The teachers also did not give us any notes. We are five students in class. So, we set about making our own notes for the exams. We divided the course syllabi into five parts. We go to the library, and make notes from the relevant English books with the help of an English-Urdu dictionary. Once we complete the note-making process, we photocopy the entire set for five of us. (Sajida, an interviewee in MANUU)

Going to the library has become a habit for me now. Every day, I spend three hours in the library reading relevant subject books in English. This has changed me as a person and also improved my English. Now, I am in second semester and am able to follow the class lectures. Even though we write exams in Urdu, we intersperse that with English subheadings as many teachers don't understand Urdu. We hope that the teachers at least follow the English sub-headings and mark us accordingly. Some people have suggested that MANUU also should be converted into an English medium university. If that happens, most of the Urdu medium students will suffer. (Zahir, an interviewee in MANUU)

Urdu medium students come with the expectation that they can go through the university system – listen to class room lectures, write their exams, participate in class

discussions, read books – in the language that the university promises to educate them in – Urdu. But, they find that many teachers lecture in English, are not conversant with Urdu and have condescending attitude towards Urdu language and students. Right from the moment they enter the classroom, they are told to learn English and do their class presentations, assignments and write their exams in English. Shocked into compliance, the students embark upon their own English learning programme – through self-learning books, seniors and English speaking classes in the city.

It assumes urgency, as without English, they cannot follow the classroom lecture or prepare for the exams. In addition, they also find that the library stocks only the English language books for their subject. They also cannot find Urdu social science journals in the library. This compels them to take on the task of translation – of English language subject material into Urdu. They get a vague idea of what the lecture is about and build up the notes on the basis of these ideas and the copy of the syllabus in hand, with the help of the available material in the library.

Students have prepared course material for themselves in many courses through their collective effort, which they pass on to their juniors. While the class assignments can be submitted either in Urdu and English, final exams have to be written in Urdu. However, as teachers lack knowledge of Urdu language, the students lean to mix English and Urdu in the answer sheet. There are many cases where students were failed in the exams due to this problem of the teachers. There is no reevaluation or improvement exam, and this is a handicap for the students. For thesis submission, the initial copy will be submitted in English to the supervisor. This again is done with the help of seniors, supervisor and many good Samaritans. After it is approved, it needs to get translated into Urdu as that is the mandate of the University.

While students do not oppose English, they are critical of the insistence on English while the university does not provide any resources and support systems available on the campus to learn the language. They are left to fend for themselves. At least 50 of them travel 25 kms each day to the Ramakrishna Mission campus in the city to attend English classes at 7 AM which are offered free of cost. The students attend these classes skipping breakfast. The students ask: Why can't English classes be held in the university?

Excerpt from Anveshi Short Term Fellowship Report on Problems of Urdu medium and Madrasa Students in MANUU.

Md. Mujeebuddin is a PhD student at UoH.

'Language is infinite':

Interview with Vemula Yellaiah

■ N Manohar Reddy and R Srivatsan

Till you published your work, Dalit writing used standard Telugu, more or less. When you wrote, people often said they didn't understand. So you actually brought a new practice to writing in Telugu. Could you say why you did this?

Yellanna: When I came to academics, I did not find our language in academic subjects. It was to remedy this situation that I began writing—in my language, i.e., the Telangana language, the Telangana madiga language. That is how I began writing.

What is the significance of this writing?

Y: It is through language that community is created. Those roots of community that are now disappearing depend on language. It is for this reason I felt that it is necessary to write.

Didn't the language of dalit literature perform that task?

Y: No. The principles of poetry they followed were dictated by somebody else. It was not their own creation. So they used less of their own language—they did not understand what was necessary. Now, there is Siva Reddy (an important leftist Telugu poet), his disciple was Madduri Nagesh Babu. If you look at even the titles of Madduri's poems, they are very close to Siva Reddy's. Then came Nagappagari Sunderraju, who used the title "Madigodu." Look at Madduri Nagesh Babu's use of words: "One must live like a crow for many years." "Crow" was also used by the pundits. But the term "Madigodu" was used by a madiga, not by the pundits.

What about the language used by Sunderraju?

Y: That was Rayalaseema madiga language. He came after me. I had written Kakka before he came. I was part of the movement. He came from academics—Hyderabad Central University—and the caste politics there. That was the difference.

Don't the malas and madigas speak the same language? In my village, the madiga wada and the mala wada are adjacent to each other. Won't they be speaking approximately the same language?

Y: No. Even within the madigas there are subcastes and differences. There is also the educated madiga and the uneducated madiga. There will be differences. For instance, they don't eat liver so they have no relationship to that word. Whatever we use in our everyday lives we use terms for those. Don't we? malas don't slaughter animals—we do.

If I look at Telugu literature as a whole, more than being a threat to malas, your language is a strong attack on the upper caste language. Do you agree?

Y: Yes. The challenge is more to the latter...

Because till then, the language used in the newspapers and journals was mainly that of upper castes. What were the responses you got when you wrote?

Y: My people are more in number—aren't they? My own people read this writing and gave me inspiration. It is because they inspire me that I continue to write. No compromise on that. Educated people are few -- in hundreds? We are in thousands! I work in the hamalis workers union in the FCI godown...360 people in my union. Now Kalyan Rao wrote Antarani Vasantam as a teacher in a school. There will be 20 people there to read his work. But 360 people of my union read my language. Therefore we create language.

All of them read your writing?

Y: Yes they did. They read it and they also tell us something back, don't they? 'Something is not adequate... something should be better'...etc. They read my work even after it was published. They gave me more feedback than the educated readers—so I am able to write. Otherwise, I can't write. I don't get that kind of help from upper caste people. One well known writer kept the script with her for three months and returned it saying she couldn't understand it. Now, just because some established writers couldn't understand it, I can't keep quiet can I? I asked some people in my village for money. Kalekuri Prasad covered the cost of my paper—three thousand rupees. We were friends. In fact, quite a few Dalits—intellectuals—said that they didn't understand my writing—even

some madigas said the same thing. But the Hamali workers insisted that I write like this. They said: why do you write for ten people, there are so many of us, write like this and we will understand. They have all read up to the sixth or seventh standard in Telugu.

Didn't your education come in your way of writing?

Y: I did my MA at Osmania University in Telugu. I am now doing my PhD. During these years, I have also read Vishwanadha Satyanarayana's Veyi Padagalu (The Thousand Hoods of Vishnu's Cobra). I had no problem understanding him. But his language wasn't related to my work, was it? I made it secondary to my interest. That's why it wasn't difficult to write in my language, just that I needed patience. You have to write a draft and then mark off places where the standard language has come, and correct it in the next draft. You need to write often ten, sometimes twenty drafts. Occasionally you have to tear the thing up!

But, why does your writing have to be so difficult?

Y: I must write what my readers understand. There is a difference between your writing and mine. I can't write for ten people, but I can't not address them either. In addition I have another thousand to address. What is my mistake if I write for them?

Let us put it another way. You have gone through many changes—school, college, university—all these have made you different. A person in your village who hasn't gone to school would be very different from you. There will be a difference between his language and yours. What we are asking is, did you have to undo all this learning to write in his language? Wasn't it difficult for you to make this change?

Y: It wasn't. Now take this person who has come to me from my village—he wants to model himself on me. I have to include him in my project. That way, the language he carries comes back to me, and the language I carry comes to you. That is how language creation occurs—I take it from them and push it forward. Language is never one's own is it? It can't be—as you change, language changes too. A person is never static—as a person moves language moves with him.

People criticize your language as abusive—what is your response?

Y: I don't have one. I have no relation with them.

Some say it is not literature!

Y: They say that of people who write good language too! (laughter) Take Kalyan Rao, who writes good language—Andhra language—other dalit poets ask "What kind of a poet is he?" Now will he stop because of that?

Your main argument is that literature shouldn't remain in the academy—it should be on the streets. Considering the complaint that your language is full of abuses, do you think such language should come into literature? What is your understanding about this?

Y: Yes it must. Only if it comes, will the language become clear. You will then think, 'Why is he talking like this? Why was it necessary to speak that language?' You are a human being and so am I—why am I talking this language—am I happy or angry? You must know.

Only when abusive language is used, will you understand anger? What kind of anger does abuse show?

Y: There will be joy. What else, it is coming out isn't it? In literature. For example, I will say fuck you. You will ask why. I say Fuck you son of a whore. There is something happening there... There is conflict, and there is good too. Without knowing this, you say this is a mean language (Chandalamaina bhasha). How did it become mean? Now, there is cow dung on the road—people say it stinks. We take this, dissolve it in half a bucket of water and sprinkle it on our swept courtyards. Will it stink then? It will be good, clean. You should know that it cleans shouldn't you? We think it is bad, but there will be a hundred good things that happen due to it too... Abuse is language—it is new language, language creation. Just as you think dung is bad, you think abuse is bad too. Good happens due to that and due to this too.

You said that only when you write will people understand. However, many of the readers say that they don't understand your Telugu. How will your purpose be served?

Y: Those who ask me know English. They did not know English earlier. So they learned English, but won't learn my language? They can and should. If you don't learn, why do you blame me?

That means what you are saying as an author is that you must learn about my oppression, and in order to learn, you must learn my language. If you don't, you cannot understand. May be, you don't want to understand. 'I will not come across and learn your language'—that's what you are saying isn't it?

Y: Yes.

That means that your oppression in your own words becomes knowledge.

Y: Yes, you will then come to a conclusion, and you will also be able to argue with a person who doesn't believe that this oppression exists. When we don't write, you won't understand the issue. Those who oppose this exercise are casteists. We are those who want to eliminate caste.

Isn't it true that in Marxism and in standard Dalit writing too there is the narration of oppression? Why should it come in your language?

Y: This is necessary because even in movements, people who die belong to our community. We belong to the lowest cadre, don't we? Now we are progressing and becoming professors—when we begin to speak, we will be able to annihilate caste. There are many of us facing oppression now, and by not letting us speak, you are stopping our progress aren't you? There is an opportunity for such a person to become a covert (informer) because you don't let him speak. That's what happens. When the person is not listened to, that hesitation and indecision provides access to the enemy. This hesitation, double mindedness is created in the cadre. If you don't listen to me and simply order me to work, I will feel bad. There must be some fruit of my effort. Also money is not the only motivator in all this—there are many different motivators.

What do you think about the necessity to change the language in schools?

Y: The stories that deal with our castes and communities must become subject matter. For example, the Chindu language must go [into education].

So the language is carried with the story.

Y: Now the Dakkali will tell the Jambava Puranam, and so will the Chindu. There will be a difference between them. The way the Dakkali tells the story will be from a very oppressed perspective. What the Chindu tells will be closer to us. When they are compared, a beautiful language emerges. If these languages go into education, the school languages will change.

Now the children from the oppressed castes find it difficult to understand the school language. If these languages come, will they find it easier?

Y: Yes they will—they will learn this. Not English.

But if you need a job after school, you need to learn English... What to do then?

Y: The one who gets employment will go to work. But language doesn't stop does it? Language creation always takes place. Our terms will go into English. When that happens, that person too will begin to understand. For example what is a Chindu maddalam—which is called a drum in English. Why is this not seen as employment? All our languages must go into schools.

I accept that school languages must change as per your language. The difficulty with schools is that we are talking about modern employment. You

need to work in factories, write records, that is the reason why they say a standard language is necessary. If that has to be achieved, how should these languages be brought in? Do we not want those standard languages?

Y: Now, a Dalit like me has come to this [educated] level [gestures with his hand showing a high level]. Behind him, comes his brother, bearing his language with him [gestures again with his other hand showing a low level]. When he is carrying his language and coming to study, he is coming to study too. Now for the sake of standardizing for employment, it would be wrong to stop him because he cannot speak the standard language. Dalit language must be there for the younger brother to come in. The moment the younger brother comes, how can the elder lose all sense of humanity and human connection? Is this fellow not a man, is he an animal? There is a language related to animals too... Step by step, sir.

What you are saying is that even in schools, the language must be changed step by step.

Y: Yes. There is a difference in language within each house too. Now I have an MA degree. I have an elder brother, who hasn't. His language will be different. He will come, and his children too. They will follow me. Now employment is at that higher level. Now if you stop the employment for them, how will that work? You should not break the ladder called education. In the name of employability if you break this ladder, they can't make it to a job. Language is unending, limitless isn't it? It changes continuously. We need to bring that language in. If we don't and say instead that that language has no relation to us, what does it mean?

One last question, now with this new kind of writing about your caste and community, its language and culture and so on, the old politics of annihilating caste seems to be replaced by a new kind of affirmation of caste. Now Dalit literature is written to annihilate caste isn't it. So what are your efforts doing? Isn't there a contradiction between your practice and the goals of Dalit politics?

Y: There is no contradiction. Only when we write about ourselves, does everybody know about it. When you hear about this writing, you will understand that these people are suffering and you will want to eliminate caste. If we didn't write or spoke about this, you wouldn't understand would you? We use our language precisely to annihilate caste.

Translated from Telugu by R Srivatsan.

Vemula Yellaiah is a prominent dalit writer from Telangana State. His novels Kakka and Sibdhi have led to a debate on the question of language.

Thinking beyond "standard language"

■ Duggirala Vasanta

Much has been written in the sociolinguistic literature about what constitutes a 'standard' language and what a 'dialect/vernacular'. Much has also been said regarding the processes of standardization and the conflicts around "standard versus dialect" in the West and in North America in particular. With most parts of the world gradually becoming bilingual or multilingual, some of the received notions about 'standard' and 'dialect' are currently being challenged. The focus is slowly shifting from language(s) to language-users and social contexts. I will draw my arguments in this note from existing debates on the so-called standard American English versus African American Vernacular English and the notion called translanguaging used in the context of school education in Europe. I will then conclude with brief comments about the emerging language education possibilities in Telangana.

Standard American English (SAE) versus African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

Standard language is something that is controlled by the dominant community. It is used as a medium of instruction in education. It appears in government policies and in print and electronic media. In order for a language to be recognized as an official language, it must be standardized. This is done through codification. It is only a codified variety of a language that is considered to serve comprehensive communication needs of a speech community. A language gets 'codified' in documents accessible to the speech community, which may be thought of as a community that has either already achieved modernization or desires to achieve it. Academic bodies are given responsibilities to formulate rules about publishing documents by setting up linguistic norms through particular agencies such as for instance, the ministry of education. Codification also takes place through free enterprise in private publishing houses and editorial boards, and through professionals who design

dictionaries, grammar books, style-manuals and so on. The process of standardization considers three different aspects: (1) the structural properties of a given language, (2) the function it performs in a given society, and (3) the attitude it evokes in people. Standardization is either imposed through official recognition of a language (e.g. both French and English in Canada are official languages) or by tradition (in USA, English spoken by White people became the standard language). This process results in 'normalization', that is, only the officially recognized (codified) variety occupies much of the public domain, a point often missed by many linguists. It should be noted that such 'officialization' need not and most often does not symbolize identity for many speech communities residing in a given nation. The debate between American English (SAE) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the context of the United States is one of the most commonly cited examples to illustrate the dichotomy between standard language and dialect in sociolinguistics. However, I concur with a few linguists who have argued that the motives and processes of language standardization, and the projected use of the standard variety of a given language must be examined in contexts larger than purely linguistic ones because, after all, language is the concern of different groups of language users, and not just linguists. Some debates around AAVE discussed below should help elaborate the importance of this point.

In December 1996, the Oakland school board in California issued a statement to the effect that it was going to change educational policy so that the teachers would pay more attention to the home language of many school children. It stated that teachers would be trained to appreciate the merits of the spoken language children use at home and try to bring aspects of it into classrooms. Other recommendations by this board included improving parental/community involvement, increased funding and stepping up efforts to hire teachers who also speak the home language of a majority of children. The

newspapers reportedly ridiculed these recommendations... "They sneered, they frothed, they flamed, they raged, they lived off the story for weeks", was how the media response was described by some scholars. Why did media react that way? Because, the home language the board had in mind was the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) used in Oakland, a poor city on the east side of San Francisco Bay where more than 50% of the population is African-American. Most users of Standard American English (SAE) believe that AAVE is an example of bad English, full of mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. An editorial in the New York Times referred to it as 'Black Slang'! Many commentators were deeply ashamed of the African American speech, and also ignored the most important aspect of California school board's statement about the need for a change in educational policy. They even ignored the evidence demonstrating that college students in Chicago who received instruction concerning contrasts between AAVE and SAE grammar showed improved writing skills in the so-called academic (standard) English. The public opinion was so hostile that by January 15, 1997, the board was forced to revise its earlier statement by dropping the reference to imparting instruction in the home language of many school children even ignoring the fact that some of their teachers also speak AAVE outside the academic context. An earlier, similar case in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1978 had succeeded in the courts but had failed in the classrooms where tests in standardized language continued to fail Black students. Recently in the year 2012, some researchers have reported that as the number of teachers of colour increased in the USA, there has been a slight shift in attitude towards AAVE in a positive direction. They made a recommendation about initiating teacher education programmes that specifically target and challenge teacher language attitudes.

William Labov, a well known sociolinguist who argued for the 'logic of non-standard English' in American courts as far back as early 60's, recently, in 2010 ventured to shift the terms of the debate drastically. The relevant question according to him was not which language was standard and which a dialect or vernacular. He called attention to the fact that AAVE is not an endangered dialect...in fact it is flourishing because of residential segregation combined with increasing poverty and other features of social life in the inner cities of USA. He presented empirical evidence to argue that one can never understand or remedy the problem of (Black) children's failure in learning to read/write

unless one engages with the endangerment of AAVE users (rather than the language they speak!). Labov went on to state: "AAVE has developed its present form in the framework of the most racial segregation that the world has ever known...the progress of the civil rights movement has given large part of the Black population access to education and jobs along with means to move out of the inner cities. If we focus on residential segregation problem, we could expect AAVE to shift towards other dialects...if Philadelphia schools are integrated, maybe we will reach a time when young Black children use elements of the White Vernacular and take part in the radical sound change that will sweep over the White community". Notice his deliberate use of 'White Vernacular', a rare usage in the academic discourse within linguistics. The point also to be noted is that the conflict between two different systems of linguistic values arise between linguistic minorities and majorities (not necessarily numerical), but it is the linguistic minorities who exhibit plural verbal repertoires.

The concept of translanguaging

In the UK and in Europe, linguists and educationists have theorized that in the multilingual context of the globalized world in the 21st century, there is much fuzziness of language boundaries and fluidity in language identities. Some sociolinguists have proposed a notion called translanguaging in the field of education to refer to the use of multiple languages in formal and informal domains. It is a form of flexible bilingualism where neither language is dominant. Translanguaging focuses not on language but on languaging practices. The term describes hybrid language use that is a systematic,

strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process. However this translanguaging facility that many children in multilingual contexts possess is seldom valued by education systems. Translanguaging calls for new educational practices such as having dual language classrooms, mixing children with different language profiles, developing academic language use in more than one variety...practices that might contribute to children developing necessary sociolinguistic security and identity in order to achieve academic success. This would also require planning new kinds of teacher education programmes and multicultural lessons in textbooks.

Conclusion: Need for reflection on languaging in Telangana

The contexts in which SAE and AAVE are debated (institutionalized racism) might not have exact parallels in our context, but I think they might have implications for the language struggles the new state of Telangana is likely to face in the years to come in relation to (1) continued official recognition to "standard" Coastal Telugu and the sidelining of the Telangana "dialect" in social/cultural/ educational contexts, and (2) starting English medium education in primary schools.

Across India "standard English"/"Standard Telugu" (or some such)/"Standard Hindi" etc. have always played a hegemonic role in classrooms, print and electronic media, and official government communication channels. However, offering quality education to our children need not be seen as teaching them to read and write only the so-called "standard" variety of one or two languages. Quality education should involve innovative practices such as new lessons in textbooks and

designing different kind of language test items – practices in which there should be some scope for mixing different varieties of a given language. However, currently, we know very little about the linguistic resources available to members of different communities for use in socially significant interactions in the multilingual context of India. Research should bring out the translanguistic markers that surface in discourses involving two or more languages. One example of a translanguistic marker is that of a Hindi-English bilingual speaker using paDhna to mean 'to study,' and study-karna to mean 'to conduct research'. Such markers tend to occur in the coming together of languages with different status. This also happens in translations involving English and Indian languages. Translanguistic markers play a role in indicating speaker's/writer's identities – whether claimed and emblematic (accepted with pride) or stigmatized. The social meaning of translanguistic markers depend on the context of language practice, and are constantly negotiated and defined. Systematic studies into identification of translanguistic usages in relation to our languages could be one starting point to rewriting textbooks in the new state of Telangana.

Editors Note: The Telangana government has appointed a committee to look into text book production. Members include Sangiseti Srinivas, Nalimela Bhaskar and others who have been saying Telangana Telugu should be used in text books. Small news items have appeared regarding this in Telugu media. This is a step that will counter the sidelining of Telangana language in the textbooks in the new state.

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Keshav Reddy

It was sunset when they reached the harijanwada. In the temple of chants, they played sacred musical instruments and then left for their homes.

Seeing Ramachandra standing under the Sunkeresu tree, Sathanevadu asked, "Which village are you from? I have never seen you before".

Ramachandra responded, "I have come from a kingdom in the east."

Sathanevadu nodded, "I thought so. It is the way you dress, wear your turban. The moment I saw it I guessed you are not from around here." Saying so, he paused and then asked, "What caste are you?"

"Mala" Ramachandra replied.

"That I can see! Would a reddy or brahmin come to sing? What I want to know is, what kind of mala you are" Sathanevadu said.

"In the kingdoms of the east, there are rampas, are there not? I am one of them".

A man from gunniwadu community who has been sitting behind Ramachandra, spoke, "Why are you still standing?" "Sit over here", he said pointing to a stone for Ramachandra to sit. "Seeking what work did you leave the east?" he asked.

"What is so surprising about rampas wandering around kingdoms?", Sathanevadu snidely remarked. "I have yet to hear of rampas dying in the village in which they were born. These people speak to reddy with their head high. If the reddy break their backs, they run around clutching their ears—that is the life of a rampa! With this, he turned to Ramachandra and asked, "What do you say, am I right?"

(Translated by Pranoo Deshraj and Navadeep)

Keshav Reddy is a writer.

From '*Incredible Goddess*' Hyderabad Book Trust, P. 129, 2011.

'Chera': An Unfinished Task*

■ K Srinivas

**This translation of the title does not do justice to the play on words the author was able to achieve in his Telugu original, 'Chera: oka asamaapaka kriya' which can also be read as 'Chera: A non-finite Verb' – Translator.*

On the one hand, we believe that Telugu language is in danger. On the other hand, we also feel that English alone can help us earn our livelihood. We also assert our self-respect by declaring that our Telugu and our idiom are different. We believe that the alphabet and words carry the fragrance of our identity. We say that, for our newspapers, textbooks and everything else, we're going to invent an altogether new standard language. In such a context, how does the permanent loss of a linguist affect Telugu societies? What is our future without such elderly people, whose scientific explanations are capable of clearing 'modern ignorance,' who at the same time pay attention to the new aspirations and also have a commitment to progress?

Chekuri Ramarao (Chera) was a well known linguist and Telugu literary critic. He researched the intricacies of Telugu sentence construction/structure. Besides this, he also worked extensively on other related areas of language which required direct field work and had immediate social relevance. He worked towards creating the necessary tools and institutions required to transform and strengthen Telugu (as with other languages in developed countries) into a language that could ably meet the requirements of a modern society. From serving as a 'collector of words' for dictionaries of different dialects/occupations to developing specialist dictionaries for Telugu print media; from writing lessons in linguistics for distance education courses to offering useful tips to trainees in journalism... his services were many and varied. Chera was a keen observer of anything to do with language use—its requirements, its methods, its experiments, its platforms, its media, and its people—and in the process not only changed himself, but also brought in changes and invented new

principles. Being a student of literature, he studied the allegoric and grammatical traditions of Telugu and Sanskrit. By making a thorough use of linguistics for the purposes of old and modern literary criticism, he introduced a new mode of literary critical thinking. He brought in literary examples and references into his usual essays on linguistics. He participated in debates democratically and made valuable contributions. By rejecting modern misconceptions about language, he continually showed how one should have a rational and scientific attitude towards language. In practice, through his own writings, he demonstrated how the prose in scientific writings should be. Outside the field of linguistics, no effort has been made to grasp his contributions to linguistics and enter into a dialogue with him at some level. Although his predominant contribution to critical thinking in the field of literature brought him laurels and popularity, the literary world neither adopted his style of criticism nor could it grasp his awareness with the right attitude or the understanding they required. The new ideas he introduced, or the ones he left for others and the future to resolve— are by no means ordinary.

Chera was one person who had a serious engagement with the idea of how to construct a Telugu sentence... In fact one can say he was the first student who chose 'Telugu sentence' as a research topic. Embeddings of one sentence as a noun phrase in another sentence (nominalization) was the focus of his doctoral research undertaken during 1955 to 1968. He also studied aspects of sound structure (phonology) word structure (morphology) during that period. Soon after completing his PhD thesis in America, he wanted to share his findings with the Telugu readers. Therefore, he published a series of articles on nominalization in the Telugu magazine,

'Bharati'. Not only did he pay attention to the special features of Telugu sentence, but he also examined similarities and differences in sentence structures of other Dravidian languages and common features of languages of the world. He was perhaps influenced by Chomsky's theories on universal grammar that focused on identifying commonalities across all human languages. One of Chera's articles in English published as early as 1967 dealt with direct and indirect speech in Telugu. In that he argued that direct and indirect speech are universal features because all languages have them. The function of different sentences with verb forms (e.g. perfective participle, non-finite verbs indicating past), the function of quotative marker ani 'say' in Telugu, the structure of speech sounds in Telugu to mention a few examples, Chera made important observations on all these and other issues. His proposals about poetry relating to rhythm and meter can be said to be extensions of his knowledge of linguistics. His comments on these topics at first seem very ordinary but each one opens out new ways of thinking. Chera was one of the early researchers who had made an attempt to identify scientific principles underlying various dialects of Telugu. However, he was also aware of the limitations of and obstacles facing modernization & standardization of Telugu language. The responsibility of overcoming those limitations now lies on future generations. Chera created the foundation for developing a comprehensive Telugu grammar that will incorporate all special features of the language. In one of the public speeches, he hesitantly remarked thus: "My field of research grew gradually in line with the qualitative developments in linguistic theories and ever changing methodologies associated with those theories".

I do not know to what extent the Telugu world is aware of Chera's contributions I have mentioned so far... may be a little is known, but I am sure that many people have not made an attempt to learn from his contributions. With the exception of students and experts of linguistics and literature, and a few others interested in language issues, I doubt if anyone really benefitted from his proposals, intellectual ideas and understandings. I feel our society, maybe I should say societies because I am referring not just to people in linguistic or literary circles, but to governments, policy makers, influential people and groups who make up the larger

society. I know this larger society is not concerned with pure linguistics as such, but they should surely know something about the societal usefulness of linguistics. During the initial years after India gained independence, various newly founded institutions either had the foresight or were truly concerned with issues relating to history, language and culture, or they were also committed to achieving institutional autonomy over knowledge in general, and educational issues in particular, whatever the reasons could be, they were responsible for starting linguistics departments in many universities. They created an atmosphere that was conducive to researching on language related issues. There was a recognition that those language related issues, particularly some of the applied fields belonged to the society, even if this understanding was limited to the pure linguists and linguistics researchers. Projects such as compiling of occupational terms across different dialects received research funding. Gradually however, decline set in as it happened in most other fields, it became evident in the negative attitude on the part of the government; indifference to societal issues. As a result, a lack of foresight and myopia about the importance of applying knowledge for societal good developed. Of course, official language committees were constituted, but to put it in Chera's words, "a linguist was never appointed to head such committees". It was true that language politics were responsible for many radical protests and discussions in the country, but, the awareness that language can actually be a tool for development completely lacked. There was a steep rise in the political class (rulers) who mistakenly assumed that value lies only with disciplines that can demonstrate immediate benefits and that all others are totally useless. Even ordinary people began to view Arts and Humanities as useless disciplines. Of course even in its heyday, the question of usefulness of pursuing linguistics existed and Chera too was troubled by that question. In one of his public talks, Chera tried to literally spell out the material uses of the field of linguistics: from designing glossaries to offering therapy to people with speech and language disabilities to offering counseling towards dispute resolution, he listed many uses. Actually, aside from such palpable immediate uses, linguistics in my opinion has more foundational long-term

uses, but who wants them? I suppose that is why one has to beg people to recognize this field and its uses.

Even as he recognized the equality of all languages and language users, Chera had a special feeling for Telugu language and Telugu people. He wanted it to receive all markers of modernity. Doesn't loving a language mean loving the users of that language?. The rise and fall of a language after all depends on the rise and fall of people who use that language. The governments engrossed in doing daily development-mantras, are failing to recognize the fact that development of a language at the national or even at the regional level can be an indicator of that very development. How can we induct Telugu into all scientific and knowledge domains without making available some tools to pursue research on important questions? What are those tools? Dictionaries, glossaries, being able to use machines to translate languages, compiling glossaries are all examples of essential tools for modernizing a language. Today, Telugu lacks guidelines for using systematic spellings of words. There are hardly any stable glossaries. Why are we in this state? The reasons according to Chera are partly institutional, partly also arise out of many misconceptions and misunderstanding we all harbor. He did not hesitate to add that such mistaken views exist even in progressive camps.

According to Chera, a serious study of modern Telugu began with Gidugu Ramamurthi. However, he does not agree with all the historically assigned attributes to colloquial speech. In fact, according to him colloquialism has brought about more destruction than constructive ideas. It might have been a historical necessity, but Telugu society should have taken those arguments further. Instead, we have settled for the ideas that colloquial everyday variety is sacred. He stated that there will always be differences in spoken and written varieties of any language because they have vastly different uses. He gave many examples in support of this argument. Old coinages not in use in spoken varieties may still appear in writing and writers draw not just on current language resources but also garner some old ones hidden in their minds. He used to say that it is not enough to recognize the usefulness of a modern language, one must be aware of its

limitations as well... one must never settle for one and only one variety. He was vexed with the mistaken ideas people expressed, whether they belonged to modern or progressive camps one should never be prescriptive about language pointing with rulers which use is right and which wrong. The political superiority peoples' movements attribute to specific dialects will not receive support from the scientific discipline of linguistics. Those ideas might work in the arts and literature but nowhere else he said. When we engage in academic writing, it may not be possible or even desirable to stay close to the colloquial variety. We should not romanticize language in knowledge texts... nor should we deploy irony. He stuck to these principles in his own writing. He demonstrated how one can state an idea in a straightforward manner without losing its depth. Even when one chooses to write in third person one can use clear and modest diction without resorting to high sentimentality he argued. Chera's own prose exemplifies these views. Perhaps we can call it democratic prose ... there are a few others who also use such a style.

Chera insisted that only when one is ready to defy prescribed rules will language develop; only when we stop worrying about 'wrong' uses of language, will it flourish. But in his own prose writing he was constrained by his own principles and rules. While he believed that there is nothing wrong in switching from one language's words to another, in his own use of Telugu, he hardly ever mixed English. Even the most difficult ideas he could express in Telugu. His own 'glossaries' are so specialized that however scientific the terms are in a given language, with their help one should be able to convey the intended meanings.

That the Telugu used in Telangana should be referred to as the Telangana language was a feeling that took root and expressed strongly during the recent agitation for a separate state of Telangana. Even after the new State of Telangana has been formed, there are proposals to replace the standard Telugu in the print media with Telangana Telugu. The truth is, there is no 'stable' standard version of Telugu today. It doesn't look as though that is going to happen in the near future either. There is no attempt to standardize the spellings of written words; there is no clarity on what meaning one can attribute to a given

word... not even the words relating to modern political and social issues and dealings. This is not to say that someone should determine the meanings and that once that is done they will be carved on a permanent head-stone for eternity. We need to identify currently used spoken and written expressions in Telugu and Telangana Telugu and attempt to codify them so that they are standardized. Unless we do that, the journey of standardizing Telangana Telugu will not get off the ground. Without a written version how can we ever achieve a standard language? Colloquial language lacks force and depth. It is not scientific to depend only on spoken version of a language. If we want to marry the aspirations of people's struggles to the field of linguistics, we must first correct our misperceptions about language.

Chera did not approve of resorting to direct translation from English in creating technical terms in our languages or even in deciding synonyms. Quick translation is the method of choice opted by print media which is oblivious to the damage it creates to comprehensibility of intended meaning by the readers. Such quick translations sound completely empty. Chera's argument was that we must attempt to create in our translations, words filled with meaning, if needed by resorting to detailed descriptions and begin to list such (expanded) meanings also in our dictionaries. This proposal was implemented in the very first print of the press academy's dictionary that Chera was involved in designing. A comprehensive Telugu dictionary or even English-Telugu standard dictionary are still in the making although these are some of the most essential tools for achieving standardization of Telugu. These dictionaries should provide detailed explanations in addition to meanings of primary lexemes.

Chera made a great contribution to analysis of prose or poetry by providing us several linguistic tools. He approved of all kinds of poetry, but concentrated more on simple fantasy oriented poetry. In a friendly manner, he suggested to poets the importance of a generous attitude and offered them the vocabulary with several shades of meanings of words. His style was well received by women poets and perhaps that was the reason why he often cited examples from feminist poetry. Through his Cheraatalu column, he became a 'star' in the world of poetry. He


received much acclaim as well as equal amount of criticism. Because his writings under 'Cheraatalu' appeared in one of the mainstream dailies, and were received very well by the reading public, it also led to some unexpected problems. Although Chera stuck to his own special method in his writings he felt various pressures and their influence having a negative effect on him... leaving him gasping for breath. In the public sphere, there was more discussion on the topics he chose to comment on in his column rather than the content. His good ideas did not come to fruition. There is a need for us to revisit them now... not just the stylistic differences he noted in prose or poetry, but his style of writing in general. Chera's 'Stylistics' is a special kind of road to critique.

Chera's interests and ideological depth are not limited to the field of linguistics alone. Clarity, elegance and progressive outlook merged with his disciplined study of literature seem to have contributed to his creativity in using language and his struggle to share his knowledge with the outside world in as democratic a way as possible. Of course, in all this the logic he derived from linguistics and his constant attempts to critically examine his own proposals (about sentence construction) drawing on ideas belonging to other disciplines... all these are revealed in the many layers of his complex personality. He surely has put in enormous effort into many issues; future researchers have many opportunities to expand on them. There are many other proposals that Chera provided a principled account of... identifying and elaborating them is an unfinished task left for the future. There are many tasks Chera proposed for the good of Telugu people. Intellectuals and policy-makers should take them up and complete them. If we can make an attempt to grasp and collate his intellectual ideas and ways of writing meaningfully, both linguistics and literary words will certainly flourish. It is for this reason we must revisit Chera's writings again and again with a new outlook. What we have ignored or failed to grasp in his lifetime, we must now gather. This task need not be limited to Chera alone, but many others and their ideas as well. If we ignore them today, we will be forced to take them up later with much regret.

Translated by Duggirala Vasanta


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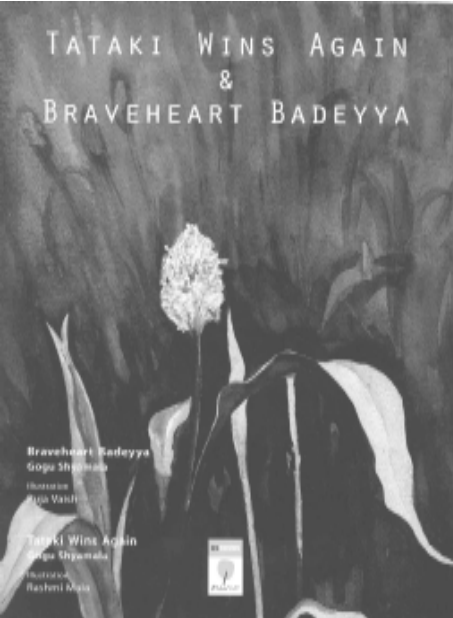


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TATAKI WINS AGAIN
&
BRAVEHEART BADEYYA



Braveheart Badeyya
Gogu Shyamala
Illustrated
by Vahid

Tatki Wins Again
Gogu Shyamala
Illustrated
by Vahid

Language, the political commons

■ M Madhava Prasad

What is the relation between language and the nation-state form? A recent essay on a somewhat unrelated topic includes this passing remark about European history:

A very long time ago, the elite spoke Latin, and the vulgar, the rest of the people, spoke other languages: English, French, and German. The elite ignored the masses. The masses ignored the elite.

How does the Indian situation compare with this? The elite speaking one language and the rest of the people speaking others is for us not a feature of the distant past but of the immediate present. The language of the elite is one, while the languages of the rest can be and are multiple. English is the language of the elite today. In the past Sanskrit and Persian have occupied this position of the language of the ruling elite that was reserved for Latin in Europe. And what were known as the 'prakrits' or 'desabhashas' were many and constantly changing, and are today known as 'modern Indian languages', 'vernaculars' or 'bhashas'. So far the facts of the Indian present seem to match those of the European past. Next we come to the relations between the two sections of society. Here there is a striking difference. Unlike what the above author says, neither the elite nor the masses can afford to ignore the other in our current set-up.

What happened in Europe 'a very long time ago' was quite similar to what happened in India a very long time ago. But what is happening in India today is only partially similar to what happened a very long time ago. In Europe, between that time long ago and the present, something intervened which made it impossible for the elite and the masses within one country to speak two different languages. After the revolutions of the late 18th and 19th centuries, it was established as a universal rule that the

national language(s) would be the language(s) of all the citizens of the respective countries. As we know, these revolutions did not abolish the differences in wealth and status between different social classes. But they established a common ground of political equality and abolished all privileges that were justified by reference to long established tradition or custom and divine sanction. Everywhere that this revolution took hold, a side-effect ensued as if automatically: the two-tier language order was smashed and a single language became the language of the nation-state. What we need to understand is why this must be so, what is the necessity that finds expression in this change in the order of language from a structural bilingualism (that is, a structurally salient linguistic hierarchy) to a monolingual polity.

The idea of the commons, known in India by various names – eg. oorottu in Kannada, oorummati in Telugu – has seen a revival in the wake of globalisation, in such terms as 'the creative commons', 'reclaiming the commons' etc. There are those who believe that the restitution of the commons will fix all the problems of capitalism. It is often said that the commons has been redefined culturally in the present-day world to refer not so much, or not only, to economic resources held in common by a group, such as land or water, but also to the culture of such a group, say a type of music. Yet water and music are both material resources, 'separable from a human community', whereas there is another idea of the commons which is relevant to the time of capitalism we live in, as it is to all societies marked by inequality (note that the idea of the commons only makes sense in an unequal society). Language, the medium in which alone community interests and values become available for sharing, is the foundational commons, which ensures commonality of interests and values in the context of the new kind of social inequality, brought into being

by capitalism. Not just economic or cultural but political meaning may thus be recovered for the commons. In modern nation-states, unity of language seems to be the foundation without which ideologies cannot perform their function. In these states, moreover, new structurally invisible but socially effective forms of inequality replace older symbolically sanctioned forms. What secures their unity and ensures the existence of a society, or the society-effect, is in the end a common language. The 'commons' dimension of this common language comes sharply into view only in exceptional situations, such as in India where a constitutional democracy, against universally acknowledged common sense, continues to operate in a minority language, instead of locating them in the commons where participation of all is assured. Conducting the affairs of a democratic state in a minority language is like shifting the panchayat meeting from its traditional venue under the peepal tree to the interior of the local landlord's home where entry is restricted.

The necessity of a common language is a result of the change in the definition of sovereignty (political authority) which finds theoretical expression in what is known as social contract theory. In summary this theory is based on the idea that all the members of a society agree among themselves to establish a new order of governance. In the first place this means that all these members, that is the people in that society, sign the contract as equals. Sovereignty or political authority belongs to all of them in equal measure. This marks an end to all previous forms of political sovereignty in which the king derived his authority from a power higher than himself (authenticated by the priest). In a contractual society, it is still necessary to delegate authority to someone for the maintenance of law and order and other necessary duties. This is done by different types of delegation or representation, the crucial difference being that the authority of such a person is only for a fixed period of time, after which s/he must vacate the seat of power for the next person who is elected. This is why it is said in political philosophy that in modern democracies, 'the seat of power is empty'. Another fact to be noted here is that in reality it is impossible for all the members of a society to gather in one place and actually put their signatures to a contract. The most common form of the contract is the Constitution, such as the one we have in India, and this is usually drawn up and passed into

law by a small group of people, who may be the leaders who led the movement for change. But even though everybody in the society does not sign the contract, it is assumed that it is agreed upon by all, including future generations. This is why it is called 'fictive'. Once it is established, it becomes the law and every member of the society, present and future, is assumed to have agreed to and signed the contract.

Contract theory is thus a fictive construct which nevertheless captures the essence of the great shift in political power brought about by the revolutions of the 18th century. One problem with it is the impression it conveys of an absolutely new beginning. It is as if a new contractual society comes into being out of nothing, without any relation to anything that existed before. This is of course impossible. The philosopher Hegel penetrated to the heart of the matter when he asked a simple but absolutely fundamental question: in what language is the contract drawn up? The question immediately reveals the fact that only those who speak a common language can draw up and sign such a deed. In other words, the society that is constituted as a post-monarchic state based on popular sovereignty, must already exist in the form of a linguistically unified community. This shows the ineluctable, constitutive link between democracy and the common language. Theories of nationalism suggest that claims to national identity are usually based on one or other of a set of criteria like race, religion, language. This is misleading insofar as a common language is a necessity regardless of what other criteria might have been invoked in claiming national identity. As long as the claim to national identity remains cultural, language might seem like one of the criteria, but as soon as the claim is extended to statehood, language detaches itself to become the means of attainment of political existence. In a nation-state, language is no longer an ethnic attribute but is sublimated into a political commons which the ethnic can no longer claim as its own inviolable property.

But when communities fail to achieve contractual reconstitution in the modern world where it has become the norm, they become pathologized in governmental discourse as ethnicities. Language in such a situation remains an ethnic attribute. In recent years, all Indian 'vernaculars' have begun to attract this definition because they have ceased to be politically salient. To take Telugu as an example, one sees efforts being made by all

kinds of institutions and individuals to 'protect and preserve' the Telugu language. The World Telugu conference that was held in Tirupathi a few years ago is a case in point: these protectors, whether they are in government or associated with private initiatives, treat Telugu as a part of the state's 'cultural heritage'. Thus they speak of Telugu festivals, Telugu cuisine, Tirupathi laddu, Kuchipudi and Telugu language as if they were all the same sort of thing, all aspects of Telugu cultural heritage which must be protected and preserved! This is an indication that the political argument for the people's language as a medium of political enablement and authorization is no longer taken seriously by anyone in positions of power and influence. And in the absence of popular sovereignty which can only be ensured by a language functioning as political commons, it is not surprising that social scientists report the proliferation of all kinds of substitute sovereign figures who claim divine or other sanction for their exceptional status: politicians, sadhus, film stars and so on. Attempts at religious unification are also encouraged by the suppression of vital necessities of a healthy democratic society.

The twentieth century has been the century of the universalization of the nation-state form. In the 19th century there were only some nation-states, mostly confined to Europe, and many of them were also imperial powers. They ruled territories that were scattered all over the globe which they possessed as colonies. When independence movements in these colonies led to the withdrawal of European rulers and the formation of independent states, the force of the idea of the nation-state was such that all of them either on their own or by the compulsion of historical circumstances came to be defined as nation states. This is where the gap between the European norm and the postcolonial actuality in these new states begins to acquire importance. Many of these postcolonial nation-states were internally divided into many communities -- tribal, religious, racial, ethnic -- and they each spoke their own separate languages. This situation gives rise to what is commonly referred to as the problem of 'national unity' but is in fact about the integrity of the state. The unity of the postcolonial state is being misrepresented as a problem of national unity. It is as if every state, regardless of its history and territorial and social character, must compulsorily proclaim itself a nation. As a direct consequence of this compulsion, actually or

potentially existing nations are forced to regress to the pathological status of ethnicities because they cannot help themselves to the sublimating powers of a constitution drawn up in their own languages. The contemporary world state system discourages and pathologizes nationalism as a means to the achievement of human freedom. It is as if the question of freedom is now obsolete and shelved forever. Meanwhile ethnicities fester and periodically erupt in irrational violence.

These questions of political enablement are not unrelated to the question of language in education which is currently a hot topic of debate in India. Education in India has evolved into an anarchic system combining government schools teaching in the vernaculars and private schools offering 'English-medium' education, mostly of dubious quality. Quality English education is available to a very small elite while the rest are forced to choose between a vernacular education which is widely (and not always with reason) deemed worthless and an 'English-medium' education that is presumed to ensure employability and access to exclusive privileges. (In the debris left after the accident in which more than 20 school children were killed in Medak, a text book of 'Mathmetics' [sic] stood out.) In fact the fees paid to English medium schools is nothing but an aspiration tax which goes directly into the pockets of unscrupulous entrepreneurs. Having actively colluded to bring about this situation, and let it worsen apparently beyond remedy, the state now provides, instead of education, the 'right to education'! The central governments' creeping intrusion into the education sector, designed to protect the colonial class's interests, has managed to turn English into the precious object that all aspire to, the pie in the sky which holds the masses in thrall and ensures the perpetuation of this form of exploitation and deception. For it is a matter of course today for all countries of the world to teach English alongside their own languages, in order to equip their citizens to function effectively in a globalizing world. There is no reason to deny the Indian child the same access to English that children in most countries of the world today enjoy. But in India English has remained the property of a class and the envy of the excluded. The social effectivity of English prevents its wider availability as a useful skill, a situation that cannot be changed without reviving the suppressed question of language and democracy.

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Vemana and Joshua

■ Katti Padma Rao

Vemana's language is one of social revolution, it is the agitation of a philosophical life, the all consuming flame of a courageous conversation, the fire of people's rage, a reflection of historical reality, a great living struggle of humanity. Vemana has been and continues to provide language, inspiration, consciousness, thought, concern, illumination, confrontation, fullness—to innumerable social revolutionaries. His language expresses the life world of the Telugu people. Vemana spontaneous words mark him out as the First Telugu Poet (adi kavi).

*Why would an idol need a colourful garb?
Would a god ask for temples, spires, pots
Food and clothing?
Beloved of the Bounteous, Vema, listen!*

In this poem he has used the (Telugu) words, 'stone', 'toy', 'why', 'colour', 'ful', 'garb', 'temples', 'spires', 'pots', 'food', 'clothing', 'he', 'ask', 'god', 'bounteous', 'beloved', 'listen', 'Vema'. The ability to use so many words in such a short poem marks his genius.

The essence of the poem is 'why does an idol require colored clothes, temples and spires?' 'Would god ask for food and clothes?'. His idiom combines the power of the word with the power of the imagination. A great poet is one who challenges contemporary society. A poet must without fail have a philosophical frame of mind. That philosophy must awaken a man's mind. A tiny word must be able to evoke a great meaning. It should roll mellifluously on the tongue. We call a poet with such qualities a great poet. From a philosophical perspective, Vemana is a materialist (lokayat). His poems bear great challenges. He interrogates contemporary society. He embodies a beautiful Telugu dictionary. We learn Telugu alongside his poetry. Through his poems we understand social change and economic life.

The Brahmin class which obstructed the spread of Vemana

CP Brown of St. George College published Vemana's poems in 1829. The printing of Vemana's work which was a trenchant yet humorous critique of Brahmins was disliked in those days.

The College Board printed 500 copies of this book. They gave 50 copies to Brown sahib. Though the remaining copies had to be distributed across the country, it seems as if they didn't make it out of the godown. These published pages were crumpled and thrown into the dustbin. It's clear whose handiwork it was. Abbe Dubois has commented about the classes who did not allow the work of Vemana and others like it to see the light of day.

Dr. Pope who transcribed Dubois' book clearly described the latter's views. He is known to have said that Brahmins refused to recite Vemana's poems; not only were they opposed to him, they also expressed that opposition openly.

Vemana the people's poet

Vemana's poetry is extremely popular among the Telugu public, but this fame is limited to the Sudras. Even among these, those who revered Hinduism have no doubt looked down upon Vemana. When his poems were included in government school text books, this opposition was stark. Teachers and students tried their best to evade the government's orders. The inclusion of Vemana's texts was postponed several times under various pretexts. Even after their inclusion teachers would not teach specific verses saying that their criticism of Hinduism was distasteful. The reasons the Brahmins gave for their hatred of Vemana's poetry was his gramya (lower caste linguistic) style and obscenity (Prajakavi Vemana p 274). We can

understand the extent to which Brahmins went to prevent the entry of Vemana's verses into the curriculum.

Vemana lived a movement. Narla, who recognized him as a philosopher, stated his opinions clearly as he established Vemana's character. One who does not try to fight contemporary social ills, one who cannot fight superstition, can never be a great poet. Society naturally rejects those who love to rebel. It creates several hurdles for them. It constrains them all the time. Vemana exposed the nature of religious and philosophical oppression in his time. He acted as an advocate of justice.

[...]

Not only do Vemana's verses dance off the tongues of intellectuals and ordinary people, there is also a depth of meaning in them. He has given all of them an opportunity to render these meanings at their own level. Vemana made us understand that a poet should possess not only knowledge of example and analogy, but also analytical and rational thought. He nourished contemporary nouns, phrases and verbs. This alone is the inspiration for today's Telugu dictionary. In the economic life of those days, the coins kasu, veesam, dammidi, taaramu, roka were in circulation. He constantly used all these terms.

[...]

Joshua who spoke of caste agony

When a man is accused on the basis of his color, region or language, a poet can express his agony powerfully... Joshua spoke not only of caste discrimination but also of caste agony.

*In Vyasa's divine discourse
That gave birth to the four Vedas,
Can Madigas be found?
Alas, untouchables in
Flesh and blood are primitives it seems!
From a black heart needles
Pierce their way out,
How do you bear it O my sister?*

Vemana taught poem the question. Joshua brought it strength. Although philosophical interrogation of everyday issues that confront a people existed before Vemana, it was he who brought to it the thickness of Telugu language. Joshua's asking if Madigas are present in the discourse of Vyasa who created

the Vedas, and also asserting a history where Malas and Madigas are original inhabitants of the nation, shows us Vemana's legacy in him. In his Kaandiseekudu (A Refugee) he asserts that the nation prospers only when caste and religious differences vanish.

*Till the world readies itself for a relentless struggle
Toward the sense of equality,
Till the divisive disease of extreme untouchability
Disappears in all its forms,
Till the overweening pride in ones community,
place and nation
Is brought to nullity,
Till the light of universal brotherhood spreads the
sense of one community
To ends of earth,
Unless uniform access to knowledge, religion and
society is made available
To one and all,
The well being and supreme happiness of the India-
to-be
Cannot come!
And never will cool the hecatombs of war'.*

The poet says that lack of uniform access to knowledge, and social and religious freedom to all, is bad for the nation. From this we can understand how much agony the poet experienced as a result of social oppression. The language is of social revolution. Joshua's formulation that extreme untouchability is a disease is the pulse of a beating heart. Such language should find its way on to the student's tongue – and into people's speech. This will create an atmosphere in which social reform will occur. This will carry forth Vemana's language of social revolution.

*After
Hierarchies of tradition, oppressive religious
structures,
High and low Varnas, untouchability
Bring forth the world's millennial flood,
Why grieve?
Will you learn to halt
This drivel and drama of deceit?*

The language of social revolution has not been accorded the importance that has been given to traditional language in Telugu. If we disseminate the language of social revolution, it will lead to the death of caste and religion and the birth of a united Telugu nation. This was said by the well known writer Bhoopati Narayanamurthy in his Telugu jati – Telugu jatiyata (Telugu community – Telugu nationality).

A language is like the pulse of a nation's existence. Language is the instrument for the progress of a people, and for the development of their literature, history and culture. Each man who is born has a nationality. There is a language that is spoken by that nation. There is a land for that nation to stir and grow. A nation without language cannot survive. As with each nation, the Telugu nation has a language. This is our national language. This language is the reflection of our nation's literary life. Pundits say that literature is the great Upanishad (secret doctrine) of Man's cultural life. In the modern world, the boundaries between communities and their cultures are changing every day. Even so, a language spoken by a community is treated as an emblem that marks the identity of that community. Whichever region or country they are in, those whose mother tongue is

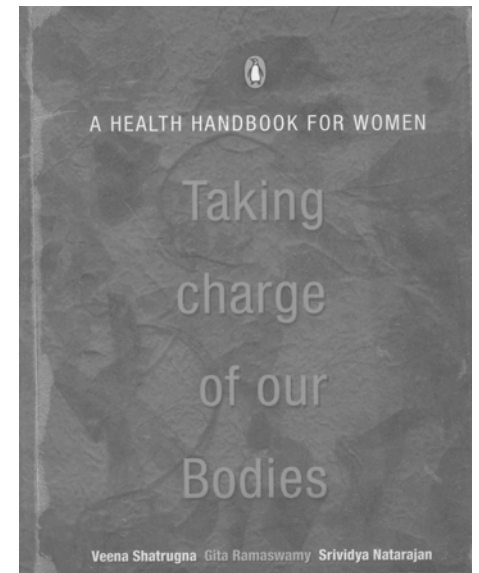
Telugu are treated as part of a single nationality. Though there are castes and religions in a nation, the language spoken by its people helps the unification of that community.

Note: 1. Translators: This verse could be read as a critical rejoinder to the famous poem "Where the mind is without fear..." from Tagore's Gitanjali, which had been translated into Telugu by at least four people including GV Chalam. While Tagore's poem calls upon the Father to awaken his country in the dream land, Joshua's poem plants any social transformation squarely in the realm of critical human action.

Excerpted from "Nadustunna Charitra"
(Contemporary History) February, 2006.

Translated by N. Manohar Reddy and R. Srivatsan.

*Katti Padma Rao is a poet, activist, and leader of
Dalit Mahasabha.*



Shajahana Begum

Selle, although I am poor, I would even borrow to care for a guest as I would my own life. Send Munni over at least this summer vacation. I have no daughter; I will shower her with whatever I have for a few days and send her back..." Then she said, "But then this is my foolishness, why would rich kids like yours visit poor homes like ours...never mind, sister I will leave now...I don't know when I will see you again." ... Karim bi adjusted the flowers braided in her hair, sneezed, cleaned her nose with the corner of her sari and looked back repeatedly with reddened eyes— and left.

After graduating, I have until now only visited relatives on my father's side, none on my mother's. I had gone long ago but I remember nothing. This summer vacation I have decided that I will visit Karim badi amma's house one way or another. I have thought of taking my younger brother with me since older girls are not allowed to go alone. I said as much to my mother and her face bloomed like marigold in a backyard garden.

(Translated by Pranoo Deshraj and Navadeep)

From *Silsila* from 'watan' muslim stories, Nasal Kitab ghar, Nalgonda, 2004.

Language Flow in Modern Telugu Dalit Poetry

■ Gogu Shyamala

Historically, dalits have constantly waged a battle against the false epics, literary and art forms and propaganda of Manuvaada. In another direction, dalit literature has continually exposed Brahminism's vile lust for dalit blood. In addition, this literature has immediately unmasked Manuvaada in various theories and political practices. Dalit literature works in society by constantly interrogating the dominant ideology with a new consciousness, and thus with its own renaissance, drives society in more egalitarian directions. Finally, Dalit literature stands as the foremost among equals representing bahujan society as an alternate force to Brahminical Hinduism's patriarchy and its literature.

In modern Telugu literature, dalit poets express the daily diversity of ideological, linguistic forms from their own world view. That is why, we may observe that if one literary world describes this as native, indigenous or bahujan (peoples') literature, the hegemonic literary world calls it velivaada (outcaste ghetto), marginalized, lower caste, under class, or untouchable literature.

Dalit Literature and Language

Dalit poetry is full of diversity. In studying this poetry it is necessary to focus on language. These poets have given priority to their respective regions, land, water, biodiversity and specificity, production, natural resources, occupational implements, community and family. They have used, and continue to use language which reflects this priority. Dalit poets, in their literary forms, have included the perspectives of social, economic, cultural identities of their waadas (locality specific to communities such as Maala, Maadiga, Begari, Baidla, Chindu, Dakkali, Manyam, Nethakani, Pambala, Budugajangalu, Maasti), and family, as themes in the composition of their poetry. We could say that the specific idiom of these lived practices flows into their poetry. Importantly, the poet's world view reflects the idiom of the

families whose lives simmer in waadas branded by untouchability and oppression, and thus questions the ideology of the agrahara in literature from a fundamentally different perspective.

In this broad context, we can now look at the philosophy, use and expression of language in the following example. Endluri Sudhakar writes "Poetry is the secret skin of my community's occupation/I cannot touch only a single object/I cannot stitch only one kind of shoe/Oh you bat, to your feet and my poetry I fit a new pair", and brings his poem "New Bat" into a new flow.

In the process of dalit literary formation, it must be said that language plays a key role. We also see dalit poets use specific names for their literary use of language. As part of this, they call it variously "language of mud", "black language", "crow language", "earth language", "language of the tanning tank", "language crackling underfoot", etc. Thus, it is necessary to do a comparative study between language and literature of aboriginal people, and caste Hindu language. The most important thing to mark is that recent research has uncovered oral literature as the basis for modern dalit language, literature and expression. It is necessary to conduct research on the following aspects of dalit literary language.

Rejecting Hindu principles

If we examine dalit literature, we observe that all these poets, reject Brahminical cultural principles and standards. This is the reason why Pydee Teresh Babu, referring to the outpouring of Dalit agony in the grip of the Hindu caste system, says, "the alphabet were purified as they fell in the fire that burns in our stomachs". "With a leather knife, will I write an epic poem on hide", swore Madduri Nagesh Babu. In his "Panchama Vedam", Satish Chander challenged the Hindu bhasha praveens (advanced scholars of language), "That the four verses shall not mingle was yesterday's grammar/Words that touched the fifth tongue were never written/Trampling on

the verb, Manu became the greatest poet/Fear not, O non-scholars of language/Lines that elope kick away the grammatical families you have built/They migrate to waadas without caste boundaries".

The difference between Dalit and caste Hindu language, or the structure of criticism of the Puranic figures and legends, are clearly seen in Sivasagar's "History as it Moves". "With a smile on his lips, Shambuka/Kills Rama/Ekalavya chops off Drona's thumb with an axe/Bali, with his small feet/stamps Vamana into hell/Manu stabs needles into his eyes/Cuts off his tongue/Pours lead into his ears/Rolls on the cremation ground. What is happening now is the great Chandala (subaltern) history".

Dalit history and hegemonic history

If we examine the history of language, as part rewriting the language of power, as part questioning this language, at the same time as part reconstructing dalit history, we see that both in the past and in contemporary times, language plays a major role. Just as "As time flows, new rhythms follow new paths", language took fresh steps. Mothkuri Johnson's play Maatanga Emperor Veerabaahu, is a living proof of this process.

Johnson's play is set in the context of the kingdoms under the rule of the Maatanga kings, which have been written about in the Puranas. Samrat Veerabaahu is one such Matanga king. Harishchandra (Translator: the mythical king who was hailed as the paragon of truth) was in debt-bondage to the sage Vishwamitra. In order to free him, Veerabaahu pays the necessary money to Vishwamitra and purchases Harishchandra. In the context of this slave purchase, there develops an interesting conversation between Harishchandra and Veerabaahu and his courtiers. One of Veerabaahu's ministers asks Harishchandra:

Minister: Wouldn't it have been possible to rule the people as one unit, rather than separate them into castes?

Harishchandra: Oh great minister, it is a matter of survival. We may defeat you with plan, plot, timing, strategy, fraud or modern weapons, but we can't with our power and the strength of our people, can we oh my lord? What is our strength against your people's strength?

In Vidheeshaka's retort to this, "As lumps of clay in heaps of grain!", we must examine specially the language of analogy. It implies

that Vidheeshaka, belonging to the ruling elite as a Maatanga, retained touch with the common language and metaphor of agriculture, because he retained contact with agriculture as an occupation.

Before buying Harishchandra as a slave in order to free him from bondage, the Maatanga King Veerabaahu, his queen, courtiers, ministers, poets and the advisor Videeshaka put him in the dock with their questions. Answering these questions, Harishchandra, on his own, reveals and describes the many lies he had told, and his reasons for telling them, and in effect confesses to them too. As a result of this, the poet Mothukuri Johnson retelling the tale of the Harishchandra the True, turns history we know upside down, and shows him up as Harishchandra the Liar.

Crow poets and Koel poets

When we study examples of the contrasts between poets who write with brahminical ideology, and those who write with a dalit perspective, the Hindu poet will describe a tall man as a 'temple pillar', while the Dalit poet will describe him as a 'toddy palm' or a 'date

palm'. In another example, a loafer will be described by the dalit poet, as 'one who roams without labour or lyric (pani paata lekunda tirugevaadu)' while the Hindu poet will describe him as 'one who roams without studies or salutations (chaduvu sandhya lekunda tirugevaadu). Dalit literature is full of such differences in language, if we search for them. It is also necessary to speak here about, Johnson's poem "Crow". In this poem the poet describes and delineates the main difference between the crow and the koel.

What O poet is the koel's nature?
Giving birth to their young, flinging them at
the nursemaid's face
Sikhandish women who crawl pubs coolly
sans motherhood
Throwing into my nest eggs they cannot
hatch.
The warmth within my feathers,
Breathing life into new generations on the
path into light
Is this my nature, or the koel's?

What O poet is nature?
Ignorant of the field
Unacquainted with hardship
Collecting the crop grown by ten others

Into her bag, as rich lords do
Coming only in springtime
To gobble up the tenderest shoots
Puffing with arrogance, the discordant shrieks
of the koel's songs,
Become poems for your pen.

Looked at as language or as choice of theme, or as the difference between the crow and the koel, Johnson gives us an inescapable analysis, through which the crow that was once an object of meanness and disgust for many people now commands increased respect. Beyond this, poets in cine and literary fields differentiated themselves into 'crow' poets and 'koel' poets. This expression of their difference is no small matter.

Dalit writers have created a language which rejects untouchability and slavery, and are putting it to use. They are exploring this language in their writing and speech. They are using this language specially in all villages including in Telangana, because exclusion, untouchability, bondage and atrocities have been perennial in history and continue in new forms today.

Translated by Gogu Shyamala and R Srivatsan

How English language becomes as a tool of discrimination in the University

Mirapa Madhavi

In Central Universities like the University of Hyderabad, English as the medium of instruction becomes imperative as there are students from different regions in the country as well as international students. It is the only link language that enables them to connect.

Dalit students face several problems due to their inability to speak in English: inability to mingle with other students; to interact with teachers in the class room, take notes or follow the lectures. However when the ability to communicate in English is taken as a measure of the academic ability of the students many Dalit students end up facing serious problems in their career. Their knowledge of the subject in their native tongue or the ability to articulate responses in the same are hardly considered worthwhile. Often lack of English bars them from articulating their positions. This reinforces the general perception that the Dalit students are without merit, ignorant and unfit for the University. That they could not have reached without 'reservations'. 'English complex' in the academia fosters a phobia about university education among Dalit students. Taking this as the excuse, upper caste teachers continue to treat them with prejudice and even insult them. Such attitudes have infected some Dalit faculty also in the recent times.

Even though the UGC mandated remedial classes are run for the students from non-English medium backgrounds, there is a mismatch between the expectation of the students and what is being offered. While the students want the 'remedial English' to help them understand the classroom lectures, remedial classes are oriented towards teaching them 'language'. Students say that these two forms of English are quite different. Further the fear of being 'identified' as Dalits in the campus also prevents students from attending them.

Dalit students adopt various strategies to learn English: interacting with only such people who speak in English; reading English newspapers and news channels; using dictionaries, taking classes from seniors. Some take learning English as a challenge while some see it as a problem. The former seem to fare better compared to the latter.

From the Short Term Fellowship report of M Madhavi on problems faced by Dalit students in the University of Hyderabad. Excerpted and translated by A Suneetha.

Mirapa Madhavi is PhD Student at UoH.

Mother Tongue in Disguise

■ Prasen

Which language, which idiom,
whether classical or colloquial,
I have now no doubts!

As I stammered with elastic words
and stumbled through alien speech,
unpronounceable terms
have cauterized my tongue, haven't they!
You have re-scripted my words,
in your language with a ring
tied to a sacred thread
on a bed of rice, haven't you!

Letters written in oil convey nothing.
I don't know why
the Pedda Bala Siksha
is not in my language,
nor do I know why
my mother tongue has
become a distant relative.

It's true
my speech cannot differentiate
geminates, dentals and alveolars,
stress and syllable collapse in our idiom,
a sentence does not break where it is
supposed to.
Wearing its gaps as symbols of wounds.

Mine is a mother tongue that
does not score marks.
What letter to trace,
what dialect to learn by heart,
what answer to produce,
I have no doubt.

This alien tongue of Teluguized Sanskrit,
The language of god brought down
to earth forced on my childhood.
My initiation to letters is a

descent into meaningless silence.
My tongue doesn't twist it's true.

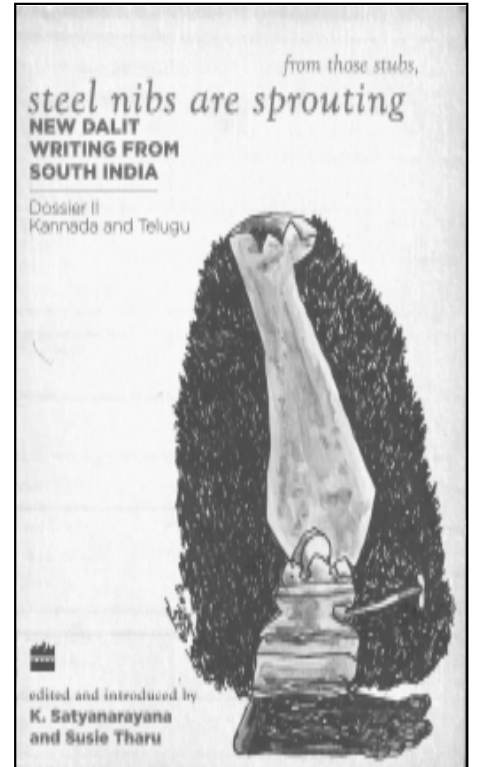
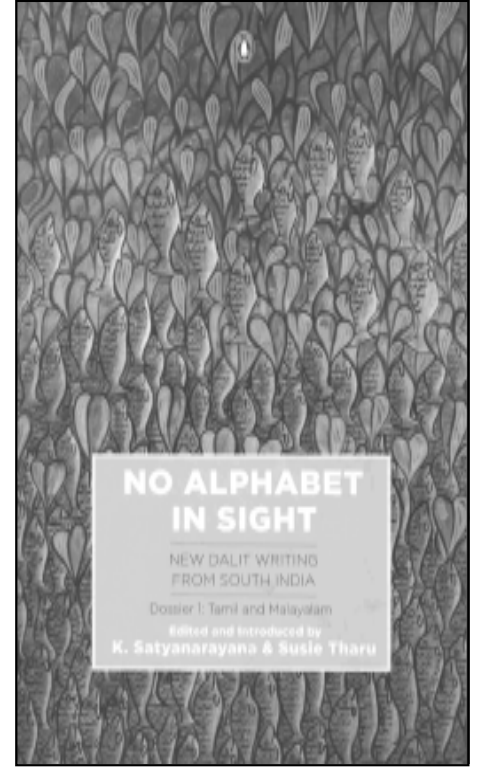
Five-six-seven letters roll out as speech sounds.
This new dialect
the non-letter that mutters meaning,
both answer and question.
What language to speak,
what idiom to write,
what rhyme to sing,
there's not an atom of doubt
I remember being taught to pronounce
"My last rites".
"Feed crows – my ancestral spirits"
clearly,
I also remember
mispronouncing, and
my outstretched palm
Turning into a bloody flower.
Wall sits,
welts on my back,
the pandit's barbarous
signature on my cheek,
my broken teeth hailing
from between my jaws
all these stand out in memory.
I now don't care for let'ers and forms
My quarrel is with meaning, isn't it?
A barrel full of errors
I muttered
wrote
utter'd
feeling good...

(With apologies to the Marathi Dalit Poet, Arun Kamble)

From "Maatru Bhaasha Maaruvesham",
Chikkanvutunna Paata Kavivam Prachuranalu,
1995 pp 151-153

Translated by Manohar and Srivatsan

Prasen works as Journalist with TV5 in khammam.



Language and Lifeworlds

■ Deepa Srinivas

This article draws on my experience of working with Anveshi for a project titled *Different Tales*. Popularly known as the ‘stories project’, it entailed a search for children’s stories from marginalized communities—stories that one rarely sees in print. It was a long journey for those of us in the project—often filled with doubts and difficult questions, yet greatly enriching and opening out ways of engaging non-mainstream childhoods. The project led to the collection and publication of a set of 15 stories for older children in a series named *Different Tales*. Written in Telugu and Malayalam originally, these stories were translated across the two languages as well as into English.

The initiative took shape within a larger critique of dominant representations of childhood in children’s literature, textbooks, consumer culture and popular media as a period of innocence, neatly separated from adult anxieties and responsibilities. A survey of standard reading material produced in India since independence reveals that narratives are routinely built around the everyday lives, economic resources, familial bonds, beliefs, food habits and emotions of children from middle class backgrounds. Children from non-mainstream settings do sometimes appear in these stories but they must strive to establish their exceptionality in order to be accepted.

This article is a brief discussion of the relationship between language and life worlds, a question that emerged as central in *Different Tales*. We found out early enough that the search for different childhoods in stories also called for the search for a new register. The conventional language of children’s stories was tied up to the dominant idea of childhood. This meant that the language of a story had to be as simple as the ‘simple’ minds and hearts of children. It had to be direct, uncomplicated and transparent. However, a close look at the language of

mainstream children’s stories uncovered its ideological assumptions; its ‘innocence’ was mediated by an upper caste middle class point of view. For example, a typical narrative for young children might go something like this: ‘Here is Ramu. Ramu is a carpenter. See that lovely table at the centre of your living room? Ramu makes tables like those....On most days Ramu has to work very hard. But he loves his craft and always has a smile on his face!’ The apparent simplicity of language oversimplifies Ramu, reducing him to the service he renders for a privileged class of people. Yet another story, drawing from Hindu mythology, narrates how Shurpanakha, Ravana’s sister, is smitten by Rama. Lakshmana must cut off her nose and ears in order to restrain her and send her back to Lanka. Strangely enough, while children’s literature must ideally be free of violence, there is no attempt to camouflage the violence of Lakshmana’s action by moderating the choice of words—they are direct and brutal. The story is meant to evoke two kinds of emotions in children: awe at Lakshmana’s masculine prowess and mirth at the demon-woman’s incongruous and illegitimate desire for the blue-blooded Aryan male—Rama.

Writers from dalit and other marginalized communities break away from the language embedded in dominant children’s literature. Let me try to elaborate this point by recalling one of my many conversations with Gogu Shyamala, a well known dalit feminist and writer. Two of Shyamala’s stories, ‘Tataki’ and ‘Madiga Badeyya’ have been published in *Different Tales*. For Shyamala, writing in the local register of the Madiga community of Telangana that she belongs to, is also an act of retrieval of the history of that community. As she puts it, “The stories I wrote are about my childhood; about the occupations and productive labour of my family and community. When I wrote as an adult, I myself had become distanced from that language. Sometimes I would call up my sister

and ask, ‘What is that word?’ If she too didn’t remember, I would ask her mother-in-law.”

Shyamala’s concern is reflected in the use of certain words, such as *landha* in ‘Madiga Badeyya.’ *Landha* refers to the pit or tank, traditionally used by the Madiga community to make leather. Walled off by rocks, this pit would contain water, lime, tangedu leaves and the leather under process. Shyamala admits that many people, including some from her own community, might not be familiar with the word today. Modern methods of leather-making have made the *landha* obsolete. Yet for Shyamala, the word resonates with the occupational and cultural history of her community. She recalls how people from all communities would come and pay their respects to the *landha* in a village. The leather made in the *landha* would become part of the potter’s or the ironsmith’s tools, indicating the interdependence between productive castes.

In ‘Head Curry’, a Telugu story written by Mohammed Khadeer Babu, a Muslim writer from Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh, the language foregrounds the connections between food culture and community life. This story is woven around his childhood memory of the cooking of the ram’s head at his home, considered a delicacy in his region and community. It describes a pleasure rarely represented in children’s literature which is located firmly within the normative vegetarian culture. The descriptions are from the child-protagonist’s point of view—from the time he procures the coveted ram’s head on a Sunday from the butcher Maabbasha to the time when the intricate dish is cooked to perfection and the family hurriedly sits down to an eagerly awaited, mouth watering meal. Khadeer Babu’s words capture the taste, textures and pleasures of the dish: ‘Sitting around in a circle, eating the head curry—so full of fat that it sticks to the hand, the small black pieces tasting heavenly—mixing it with hot rice, with brain fry as a side dish...all the headache that plagued us till then disappears, leaving us with a feeling that the world is a blessed place.’ The language is simple yet it slips in images and smells and tastes that are unfamiliar in children’s stories. Some critics have found the language of ‘Head Curry’ to be too gory for a children’s story. Their sense of shock is clearly tied to the normative perception of minority meat eating practices as savage and deviant.

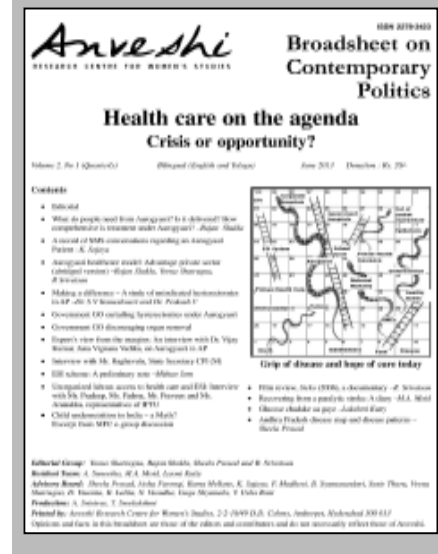
The sanitization of language in children's stories implies a refusal to engage with the difficulties of childhood. Different Tales grapples with the truth that the lives of children—especially of those from marginalized communities—are not without violence. Shyamala's 'Tataki' is about eleven-year old Bamma who gets up at the crack of dawn so she can channel the freshly released canal water into her family's tiny plot. But in doing so she inadvertently violates an incontrovertible rule—the land-owning, upper caste karnam's plots must be watered before anyone else's. Outraged at this transgression, he calls her lanjamunda (whore/bitch) and attempts to rape her. The story deviates from standard children's reading in two major ways. First, it depicts sexual violence which is considered a taboo. Second, it uses words of abuse that are unacceptable in children's stories. Shyamala believes that it is important to retain the abuse word. Words such as lanjamunda are routinely used by the upper castes to humiliate dalit women including young dalit girls. Bamma's childhood does not mitigate her transgression of the caste hierarchy. Shyamala's language reflects the realities of Bamma's life but the story does not get locked into violence and victimhood. It moves

on to speak of how Bamma draws on the wisdom of the women in her community to get out of a difficult situation. The story deals with sexual violence but also focuses on the resilience of the child and her relationship with the community.

The stories of Different Tales may be enabling for children from marginalized communities because they mirror and validate their lives, work, families, relationships and negotiations. Does this mean they have nothing to offer middle class children? I do believe that standard children's literature restricts the imagination of middle class children as well. Stories from non-mainstream contexts open up new perceptions and enjoyments for all children, beyond the clichéd models of 'We are all Indian' or 'Unity in Diversity.'

This is by no means an exhaustive account of the complexity of the language question as it emerged through Different Tales. I only hope it signals how the language of stories from marginal cultures is not determined by a pre-existing ideal of childhood, but is shaped by lives and contexts. For a children's literature aspiring to represent plural childhoods, these stories hold rich possibilities.

Deepa Srinivas teaches at Centre for Women's Studies, Hyderabad University.



Namini Subramanyam Naidu

Illamanthu Naidu doesn't belong to this village. This is Meturu, his mother-in-law's village. His native village is Rangampeta. Where is Meturu and where is Rangampeta? To reach Rangampeta you need to cross Tirupati, then Chandragiri and finally, the Kalyani dam. Rangampeta is an area of extreme drought. The cultivation is tank-based. The soil is sandy. Only if the tank fills up do you get a crop.

[...]

This land is as barren as a widow. Illamanthu has no land here, not even the measure of a bare loincloth. He has dragged his family so far somehow, eating shit or picking cow dung cakes. Now, the children have grown. The family cannot cope with the increasing cost of food and has collapsed.

Illamanthu's brother-in-law's village is also Meturu. One day Gurappa Naidu came to Rangampeta and said "This village has done you no good. No matter how you persevere it is like throwing scented water into ashes. It simply flows out instead of remaining within. Come to my village. Whatever you do here, you can do there. We can take care of each other and lead our lives."

Illamanthu did not accept this proposal. He said "In your village, we have no value. Why should we lose the little respect we get at our in-law's place? We will labour daily there as we do here. Why take this trouble? Even if we need to live on water alone, it is better to live here."

(Translated by Navadeep and Pranoo Deshraj)

Namini Subramanyam Naidu is a writer.

From 'Munnikanadi's Sedhyam', Navodaya Publications, Vijayawada, 1990.

The swearword is not the last word in Dalit poetry

■ Jilukara Srinivas

Can profanity be poetry? True, all critics agree that only impassioned poetry has the power to move the reader. There are many instances where the use of intemperate language has been justified as righteous anger. What is righteous anger? Which caste can rightfully express it? When Sri Sri wrote 'donga-lanja-kodukulu-asale-mesile (sons of whores) they said it was righteous anger. When a Dalit poet wrote those same words, they challenged it asking, "How can you use such language and call it poetry?"

There are many ways of expressing anger. Anger can be expressed through violence, it can also be embodied in a swear word. Why does one feel anger? A person feels anger when she realises she has suffered injustice. On the other hand, she can be unaware of injustice and still be angry. The intensity of the anger depends on the context and moment in which the realisation occurs – the realisation of an injustice against one or one's society. The poet searches for words and signification that capture the intensity of such anger, but words that can convey these emotions with sophistication are hard to find. The poet then draws on her cultural background and chooses 'swear words' to aptly express her anger.

Ferdinand de Saussure said that 'signs' are cultural constructs. Hegemonic culture has imposed several 'signs' on Dalits, placing the Dalit body at the centre of these constructs. Swear words are also cultural constructs, and are often anchored on the human body, particularly the female body. Classical poetry comprises of descriptions of the female body. Descriptions of sexual bodies in Dalit poetry are considered vulgar, profane. The written language of the 'cultured' is the only acceptable language for poetry. It is the unwritten edict that the language of poetry must be the language of the upper castes. Many Dalit poets have demonstrated the unparalleled beauty of the Dalit language. The 'Nishani' poets, Madduri Nagesh Babu, Paidi Teresh Babu, and Khaja have fittingly responded to upper caste critiques of Dalit poetry. Telangana Madiga writer Vemula Yellaiah, who has used 'swear words' in creative ways in his novels 'Kakka' and 'Siddhi', is continuing the same tradition.

Whites have committed several atrocities on the Blacks. They have erased all Black culture. Language is the symbol for culture and civilization. Franz Fanon has famously argued that by forcefully classifying Blacks as 'uncivilised', White culture ensured that Black language would always be different. The difference was marked by the humility, fear, hesitation, lowered-tone and stammer of the Black voice. Black language spoken amongst fellow Blacks takes on a different tone and content, drawing heavily on the 'swear words' of their cultural background. These 'swear words' are omnipresent in Black poetry. You never see a Black character in a Hollywood film who doesn't cuss or swear. White heroes on the other hand speak sophisticated, 'conceptual', language. In most films, it is common for Black voices to be loud and White voices mellow. We see the same representation of upper castes and depressed communities in literature here.

Dalit politics has rejected classical literary principles and poetic devices. This Dalit movement cannot be contained within the classical aesthetic framework. Dalit poetry cannot use the poetics of Manu to achieve their goal. Brahminical language can never represent Dalit life. If life experiences define language, Dalit experience alone can define Dalit language. This is why Dalits have drawn on their own tone and tenor. The limits imposed by classical literary standards have been abandoned by Dalit poetics, which desires freedom and self-determination. Critics have been unable to understand this shift. Can the language of poetry use 'swear words'? Dalit poets have skilfully foregrounded the dilemma of whether profanity can be instrumental in impacting the reader's understanding, and bringing about social change.

What is the language of poetry? In the middle-ages Sanskrit became the language of poetry, and the official language of the Brahmin community. It was also the device of 'cultured' people, used solely by Brahmin priests. What came to be identified as Telugu was a Sanskritized language created by the Brahmins. The Brahminical idiom has dominated language from the time of the Mahabharatam to the present. The

Brahminical language of the prabandha era literature presents obscenity in the form of erotica. Prabandha descriptions of nayikas are appallingly obscene. Critics have been very broad-minded in their reading of these works, while dismissing jaanu-telugu and achha-telugu (people's Telugu) as lesser languages. Even the metred couplets of the Telangana poet Palkuriki Somanath have only been considered as inferior literature. Whether a language is respected or humiliated depends on who speaks it and the grammar that guides it. Literature was evaluated not only on the basis of the language, but also on the subject of the text, and the caste class status of the hero-heroine. The respect a written work received was based on the caste of the author. The world of Telugu literature was directed and ordered by the aesthetics of Manu. These dictatorial principles of literature were challenged by Dalit politics, and a new aesthetics were presented through its poetry. Dalit politics has thrust the Brahminical language of literature aside and brought to light its own similes, metaphors and symbolisms.

The beginnings of Dalit poetry focussed on attacking the enemy, targeting the upper caste reader. The Dalit poet had decided that there could be no camaraderie with the (upper caste) reader. It is an absolute wrong to want to write poetry in the language of the respectable – in the language of your pindakudu Brahminism – after knowing that the upper castes murdered Kanchikacharla Koteswari, that they tortured and paraded Mahadevamma naked for the sake of 5 rupees, when they butchered Dalits like sacrificial animals in Karamchedu and Tsundur. Upper caste society has enjoyed filling Dalit lives with violence and verbal abuse. When the abuse was forcefully shot back at them, they were stunned and launched a counter attack – "profanity is not poetry". They claimed that the Dalit poet's only goal is to abuse upper caste society. No Dalit poet has claimed that society can change only through abuse. Dalit poetry has moved beyond its early content, and has acquired a mature perspective. It has presented the world of Telugu literature with new values. Dalit poetry has broken the shackles of classical aesthetics, foregrounded several ideological issues and created a new craft of poetry. The refusal of Manuvadi critics to engage with the hidden implications of this new craft, or the aesthetic contributions of Dalit poetry, amounts to a blatant conspiracy. This Manuvadi perspective cannot contribute to literary democracy.

Translated by Diia Rajan

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Melissa Mohr

Holy Shit: A Brief History of Swearing

Book Review

■ R Srivatsan

Eulale, may you enjoy good health with your wife Vera, and good fucking.”

(Graffito found on a Roman wall around the first century Christian Era. Varone, A 2002. Erotica Pompeiana. Rome: <Le'erma > di Bretschneider)

Holy Shit is a fun filled, erudite and perceptive history of swearing in the West from Roman times to the twenty first century. Given the vast time period covered, it may be expected that the book will be somewhat superficial in its treatment of different aspects of the subject, but it is surprisingly deep in some of its observations.

Mohr's work brings out the relationship between the sacred (the holy) and the profane (shit) in the use of English language in Western history. The holy element of swearing comes from the sin of using god's name in vain – a peculiarly Christian idea: e.g., “Good God”, “Jesus H Christ”, etc. Perhaps this is enough to tell us that swearing doesn't have the same history in India, since we don't have the holy in it at all. Somehow, “He Bhagwan” or “Devuda” or “Kadavale” don't work in the same way. The profane element is there in common between the West and in Indian languages– ‘motherfucker’ almost equated by ‘maderchod’ in Hindi; plus sundry other everyday usages.

What are the different theories of swearing? Mohr outlines the physiological, the linguistic and the historical. Physiologically, she argues that swear words actually have a different action on our brain and body which can be objectively measured. On the other hand, she describes physiological research that explains

how disease can result in the propensity to be abusive: e.g., Tourette's syndrome where people with a specific disorder tend to be obscene in their speech or gestures.

Linguistically, Mohr argues that swear words tend to hijack meaning – moving away from the exact meaning (denotation) to its connotation. “This tastes fucking good!” has nothing to do with intercourse – it has to do with how good something tastes (There is no specific equivalent of this structure of obscenity in Indian languages). In other words, swearing is a non literal use of a word that has a specific undesirable, yet very powerful meaning. And yet, what is a ‘powerful meaning’?

Historically Mohr suggests that swear words derive their extreme power from the opposite of connotation – they are directly and evocatively connected to what they refer to, far more than any other words are. Hence the exclamation “Shit!” (here too there isn't an equivalent in Indian languages) is powerful because however connotatively it is used, it remains attached almost physically to what it describes – here, the smelly, repulsive mass of visceral expulsion.

Swearing, Mohr argues has a very different flavour in different periods. For example, in the Roman Empire two thousand years ago, swearing was directed at men, describing them as individuals who had sex in a particular way. Sometimes it was in praise, For example, when Caesar returned from a conquest in 46 BC, he was among other things called a ‘pedicator’ (butt-fucker) to both protect him against envy and also show his virile prowess in war. On the other hand, a

man who took the feminine position in sex (regardless of whether the partner was a man, a boy or a woman) – e.g., used his mouth to provide sexual favours, was cursed with a language of special venom.

In the Middle ages (very approximately 2nd Century AD to 1300 AD), use of god's name, speaking of heaven out of place, calling to Christ in trivial speech were all sins which carried serious punishment. These were because taking god's name was a sacred act and using it without that sacredness at heart was a supreme offence. Later on in the Middle Ages, it was a sin to speak of (God)'s blood (related to the current word ‘bloody’), or (God)'s wounds (later secularized in the English speaking West to ‘zounds’). These forms of swearing were related to the spread of Christianity.

In describing the situation after the Middle Ages, Mohr generally agrees with the historical sociologist Norbert Elias' thesis on the emergence of the concept of civility. In other words, the birth of a recognizably modern society gives rise to a set of cultural restraints on what a person may or may not do in public view – and in parallel what a person may or may not say in respectable company. Over the centuries, this becomes something that is codified by the excesses of Victorian morality so that by the nineteenth, it becomes unacceptable to even say the word ‘legs’ or ‘trousers’ in public. However, colourfully obscene language flourishes alongside as a cottage industry, as witnessed by much literature in the nineteenth century.

This period and the early twentieth century are also obsessed with the appearance of slang, obscenity and vulgarity in literature – as evidenced by the legal proceedings against DH Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover and James Joyce's Ulysses.

On the whole, evidence does not permit Mohr to follow the linear path of historical progress and say that swearing is a thing of the past, and that in a civilized world, there is no need for swearing! On the contrary, abusive, powerful language is alive and well, expressing the inexpressible and shocking the civil norms of speech and writing today.

Reading Mohr's book, I was struck by the absence of a concept that would have explanatory value for many of the effects of swearing she describes – shock that seems to be an invariable effect of hearing obscene

language, discomfort in hearing swear words, bodily response (skin transconductance changes) when swear words are heard. While she uses the term connotation to describe the excessive effects of the swear word, the concept of connotation remains in the realm of meaning and significance. The effects she describes are bodily, physically experienced, effects –Gilles Deleuze called such words ‘order words’, i.e., those words that affect physically rather than communicate meaning. The absence of this concept is somewhat striking in an otherwise sophisticated study.

Another important issue is the context the swear word is used in and why: in other words, the act being performed in the use of the word. What is the difference between swearing in one’s active speech and reporting its use in speech or writing? How does one think about the literary reproduction of obscene language – either in a novel or in a theoretical exposition like Mohr’s? In absence of this theoretical anchor, Mohr is unable to differentiate between swearing in everyday language and swearing as it appears in literature.

Third, I was struck by the fact that Mohr has not dealt with the problem of intersecting domains in which verbal obscenity is interpreted – in the domain of gender and that of race or class. While her analysis is able to handle the social class and race domains with some sophistication, she has very little to say (except that it makes her more or less uncomfortable) about how abusive language affects (both in meaning, and in its power effects) a gendered response. Put differently is there a response to swearing that differentiates men and women as targets, respondents and speakers in a given culture and at a specific point in history? In making this differentiation it is not necessary to propose that women are universally victimized by swear words and other forms of obscenity, only that there are likely to be specific historical differences in the reception and expression of obscenity that need to be taken into consideration in a theoretical discourse¹.

Finally, I began to think about how we would study the history of abuse in India – what is the equivalent of racial abuse? For example ‘nigger’ is a classically troublesome example dealt with in detail by Mohr. What are the parallels in India? Would it be the use of a caste name as an abuse? E.g., what is intended when a member of the dominant elite abuses someone by the term ‘Madiga’? How are verbal caste slurs related to caste-based abuse in general? Further, what is the relationship that emerges between caste-based abuse and the new notion of a verbal atrocity which is punishable under the SC/ST Atrocities Act? How does one then think of obscene language that is used by the productive castes? Is this a ‘vulgar’ way to repudiate the superior claims of upper caste society and standard language with the proliferation of terms like ‘dengu’, ‘modda’ etc.? How indeed is the language used to describe sexual elements (‘mithun’, ‘yoni’, ‘lingam’) in sacred Hindu texts constructed as ‘polite’ and acceptable? What are the intersectional effects of these language practices on women?

Note: 1. In keeping to these limits I am skirting the debate between Judith Butler and Catharine Mackinnon on the illocutionary effects of pornography. See the section titled ‘Anti-pornography paradigm’ in Judith Butler, 1994. “Against Proper Objects. Introduction” in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.2+3 (1994); 1-26.

Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition, 2013.

Abuse in Gurujada’s Kanyasulkam:

- Page 27 - The jealous fucker must have told
- Page 28 - Our people are just good for nothing.
- Page 30 - If he doesn’t give it by the next morning, the mala’s son is a dead bastard!
- Page 30 - I am at my wit’s end trying to get rid of this demon!
- Page 32 - This Girisham is a cunning scoundrel.
 - Brother, the son of a bitch has come at an inappropriate time!
 - She has devised a strategy so he can’t sleep with her.
- Page 33 - Oh my God! Maybe this bitch would expose me.
 - For the first time. I am hearing of a widow’s fidelity.
 - With you here, how can she be a widow?
- Page 34 - Don’t take her in! That howling mad widow bites men
 - Thieving whore! She has hidden her lover under the bed
 - If you had asked me, I would’ve given 20 such whores in marriage to you
 - Brother, never believe this whore
- Page 35 - I have no husband dead or alive! What have I got to earn by hiding?
 - Hey you aggressive bitch! Why are you hitting me?
 - That fool is also under the bed
 - Your slut, I will see how she stops me!
 - Why won’t this bitch come out from under the bed?
- Page 38 - Every asshole says I have sold my daughter.
- Page 40 - You want me to discuss with bloody women!
- Page 41 - Just a foolish motherfucker.
- Page 42 - This son of a bitch has kissed her I believe.
- Page 43 - These days who needs to study Sanskrit. Only the wretched will learn it.
- Page 44 - Brahminism has gone to the dogs thanks to this damned English curriculum.
- Page 45 - The rascal is mute.
 - I delivered a two hour lecture on National Congress to the bullock cart driver. Then, the asshole asked me when Congress would transfer the village constable!
 - I am happy that the scoundrel Kartaka Shastrulu has left ...
 - That shameless bitch is ranting! Here I am discussing the matter with important people and she has to cut in with her nonsense. Why did you call me!

(Selected by T Srilakshmi, Translated by Navadeep, Pranoo Deshraj and A Suneetha)

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Assault of the Grantha Gaze on Dalit Bahujan Gramya Language

■ N Manohar Reddy

When dalit literature emerged with full force in the 1980s and 90s, many upper caste intellectuals, starting from orthodox brahmin pundits to revolutionaries, attacked it for its “obscene” use of language. Jilukara Srinivas’ article in this broadsheet discusses that controversy. However, contempt and disgust for the language of dalits is not new. When Gidugu Ramamurthy led the Vyavaharikodyamam (Spoken Telugu movement) in the early twentieth century, upper caste pundits protested against it as they believed that gramyam—the language of malas, madigas, shepherds, dhobhis, barbers and so on—was trying to infiltrate education and literature in the name of vyavaharikam. Also, serious criticism was leveled against the Telugu spoken in the Telangana region, which was denounced as Taurakyandhramu or Turaka Telugu Bhasha.

Treating the language of dalit bahujans with contempt seems to have existed almost a thousand years ago during Nannaya’s time. Nannaya, who translated Mahabharat into Telugu and known as adikavi or the first poet (of Telugu literature), in his poetical treatise of grammar wrote that words such as Vastadu, Testadu, Potadu—the language of the illiterate—were ungrammatical and thus unsuitable for literary creation (Andhra Sabda Chintamani, p. 20). In the successive centuries, writer after writer such as Appakavi, Ketana, Chinnaya Suri and many more well known upper caste scholars, grammarians and writers endorsed Nannaya’s position on language. Ketana declared that Telugu people would not

accept gramyam, and described it as the language of abuse, or the language used to abuse others (Andhra Bhasha Bhushanam, p.8). Appakavi, who stated that only brahmins were qualified to write poetry and is known for his high brahminical conservatism, ruled that words such as Vastandi, Testandi, Chustandi, Istandi, which were understandably spoken by the subaltern classes, were apabhramasas (abnormal) and were morphologically defective. He further stated that such words were not only unsuitable for literary production, but any Kavyas which employed those words would be treated as uncivilized/uncultured (Appakaviyam, p.41). Both Ketana and Appakavi belonged to the premodern period and we do not know if they were contested on this issue. However, what we do know is that writers such as Palkuriki Somanadhudu, Vemana, Potuluri Veerabrahmam, Molla and others broke the rules set by the orthodox brahmin pundits.

One would be surprised to know that the rules set by Nannaya and others were endorsed by Chinnaya Suri and Kandukuri Veeresalingam, who included them in their grammar books written for school children in the Madras Presidency in the 19th and 20th centuries. Chinnaya Suri was the foremost pundit of his time, and Kandukuri is considered the father of Telugu prose. As late as in the early twentieth century, gramyam was banished from classrooms and the literary domain. One of the leading members of the influential Andhra Sahitya Parishat, Jayanthi Ramayya Pantulu, went so far as to state that “including

gramya language in literary works and, worse, prescribing such texts as study material for school children would be a disaster” (Andhra Sahitya Parishadvruttantamu, p.5).

In addition to grammar books, pundits used dictionaries to define the term gramyam in demeaning ways and thereby contain it. For instance, Sankaranarayana’s Telugu-English dictionary defined gramyam as ‘pertaining to the lower nature in man.’ G.N. Reddy went two steps further and described it as a language of ‘asleelamu’ (obscene), ‘asabhyamagu mata’ (vulgar speech), ‘telivilenidi’ (nonsense) and ‘nagarikata lenidi’ (uncultured), (www.andhrabharati.com). Bahujanapalli Sitaramaiah did not even find it worthy of mentioning it in his Andhra Sabda Manjari.

While, prior to 19th century, gramyam was defined as the language of ‘pamarulu’ (illiterate people) or ‘grama janulu’ (village folk), interestingly, in the modern period, specific caste names came to be associated with the term. Jayanthi Ramayya Pantulu, who led the pundit group against Gidugu’s Spoken Telugu movement, stated that “brahmins and other educated people’s spoken language is different from the spoken language of uneducated masses.’ He further added, “while classical Telugu is like a stream of filtered water, gramyam is like the polluted water collected due to repeated rainfall,” and “while the classical language is disciplined and flows steadily between the two ridges, gramyam moves crazily and loses its way,” and if literature is produced in the latter, “language loses its hygiene, sounds get corrupt and thus such literary works should not be used in schools (Adhunikandhra Vangmaya Vikasa Vaikhari, pp.169-199). Similarly, Vedam Venkataraya Sastri argued that producing literary works in the language of saakalollu (washer folk) and mangalollu (barbers) would be like driving away the sacred cow and fetching a drove of donkeys in its place.

There were strong reasons why brahmin pundits prohibited/banished the language of dalit bahujans in education and literature. We know that brahmins had a monopoly over these two fields. Thus the fear of losing their privileged institutional positions seems to one

of the reasons for their opposition to gramyam, because gramyam would facilitate the entry of people of other castes into these arenas. One of the pundits called Suri Sastri vehemently opposed Gidugu's Spoken Telugu movement and argued that "empowering gramyam would mean unseating the pundits from their jobs, and besthalu (fishermen), eedigalu (toddy tappers), drunkards, yaanadis (ST), sabarulu (ST) are conspiring to occupy these positions (Gramyagramya Vivada Peetika, 1913).

The fear that Christianity would annihilate Hinduism seems to be another important reason for the pundits' vehement opposition to gramyam. It should be noted that in the nineteenth century various Christian missionaries established schools in the Madras presidency, and one of the significant efforts was the establishment of panchama schools for the untouchables. One of the main problems that the missionaries faced was the sanskritized Telugu used in the text books, which the missionaries felt was the main impediment in imparting education to the children coming from the untouchable castes. Thus the missionaries established vernacular societies and printing presses and brought out books in the language spoken by the students at home. Similar efforts were made in case of Bible translation. Thus conversion was very much in the pundits' mind when they opposed gramyam. Vedam Venkataraya Sastri wrote "many people were under the illusion that Spoken Telugu movement was an attack only on language. It is not true. This is an attack on Hindu religion. It is a movement that is aimed at destroying our religion completely by destroying the languages of our country just the robbers take off brick by brick and make a hole in the wall of the house and rob the entire wealth." He further argued that if gramyam developed, it would dethrone grandhikam (classical Telugu), which will result in a situation where no one would have the skills to understand puranas. Not just that. The missionaries are forcing students to read Bible by force (Gramyadesa Nirasanamu, pp. 43-45).

Thus it is clear that the people I have mentioned until this point, who were opposed to gramyam were orthodox brahmins. They were determined to save the caste system and

the Hindu religion. However, we know that Gidugu and Gurajada were secularists. They dreamt of a modern society where all class and caste differences would disappear. They wanted pundits and common people to live together. They believed in equality. They aimed at raising the status of the oppressed by imparting knowledge and using simple language to achieve that goal. Their integrity cannot be questioned in this matter. However, when it came to the question of the language of modern Telugu literature and education, or the standard language, they proposed sishta vyavaharikam (the spoken language of the upper castes) as the most appropriate. They argued that the pundits mistook their proposal for sishta vyavaharikam for gramyam and tried to persuade the pundits that sishta vyavaharikam and gramyam were different things. For instance, Gurajada argued that it was improper on the part of pundits to say that the language spoken by the shistas day and night was gramyam. "Thus hereafter it would be proper for the pundits not to consider the polite/cultured language of the brahmins as gramyam." Thus he was disheartened when pundits abused sishta vyavaharikam as gramyam, or 'the language of the children of whores' (Gurajadalu, pp.555-562).

Similarly, Gidugu Ramamurthy argued that, "spoken Telugu means...the language spoken in everyday life and used in the written communication such as letters by the cultured Telugu people (vaishyas, telagas, blacksmiths, kapus, kshatriyas, brahmins and others)...this is pure Telugu. Why isn't this a good language? Is it the language of malas and madigas to be called gramyam? (Telugu Translation of the Savara Reader. Part 1 (P.iii)." In the same vein, in his last speech given in the office of the journal Prajmitra, run by Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, on 15-01-1940, Gidugu made the following plea: "Our elders still hang on to the misconception that vyavaharikam is gramyam...I would like to once again insist that they must not do that. Estheticians of Sanskrit literature consider the language of shepherds and other such illiterate people as gramyam. Judged by whatever parameters, vyavaharika bhasha cannot be labeled as gramyam because the language I have been campaigning for the last three decades is the language of sishtajana vyavaharika bhasha and not the language of

shepherds and other illiterate people... Sarvesa Ramesam garu, Andhra University College president Vissa Apparao garu, the well known pundit and poet, Challapilla Venkata Sastri garu, Veturi Prabhakara Sastri garu, Viswanatha Satyanarayana garu, and many other elders have delivered radio speeches. All of them are sishtas. Their language is sishta jana vyavaharika bhasha" ("Tudi Vinnapamu" in Pratibha, pp. 206-207).

In Telanagana, most people remember Suravaram Pratapa Reddy as the father of Telanagana language. However, Suravaram remarked that "There are boyilu (people belonging to boya community, a scheduled tribe) in Karimnagar district. Their language is the worst. It is incapable of producing the 'va' sound. They say 'ankaya,' 'anta,' 'acchinanu'." Similarly, Suravaram was ashamed that the language of the Telanagana people was badly corrupted by Kannada, Marathi and Urdu. He believed that the language of Warangal, which has northern Circars (Andhra) as its border, was a little better (Golkonda Patrika Sampadakiyalu, Vol.2. 1936-1945. pp. 178-180).

It was perhaps to protest against the upper caste attitude towards the language of dalits, that Gurram Joshua, the famous first generation dalit poet, wrote an article titled "Tirlika" in the journal Bharati in its August 1936 issue. In a debate that had happened earlier in Bharati, Sripada Lakshmi pada Sastri had argued that the word "tillika" was not a pure Telugu word but it was a corrupt form of the Tamil word 'Tirvalishu.' However, Joshua protested and argued that the word "Tillika" was known even to the children of his region. Not only this word, but many other words which could not be found in dictionaries and unknown to pundits, were in use, he wrote. He made it clear that just because some words were unknown to great pundits, they would not die. He further argued that "only those who personally observed the life and the cultural practices of people in villages could understand the usage of Telugu language in different parts of Andhra country. But, how can the pundits, who don't even know the difference between malas and madigas, understand?" (Bharati, August, 1936).

Language of Silence: Interview with K Lalita

■ Gogu Shyamala and A Suneetha

Was there a discussion about Telangana idiom when the book was first released?

The book was published in 1985. It must be said that all the criticism was about the limitations in perspectives and understanding of the editors. The debate centered largely on the limitations of understanding oral history of women as 'history', about the problems faced in making them worthy of publication, and about the overall failure of Stree Shakti Sanghatana's effort. We may examine typical criticisms that came up in the dailies and a few monthlies like Arunataru.

Balagopal dismissed the effort in Arunataru as follows: "I don't think that many people will understand all these interviews. This is not a problem of language (Telangana language or women's language). If spoken words are transcribed as they are, even those spoken by a person versed in writing will not be understood—even less would the speech of people like Palakurti Ailamma, and Dudala Salamma". He thought that there was no question of readers understanding the oral histories which are there in the book. He considered some of the linguistic issues as technical ones, "the editors balked at submitting the women's spoken word to the sentence structure of masculine written prose and left it as it is. Because of this, a situation arose in which even those who are familiar with Telangana language and the idiom of women, could not understand the interviews."

There was some definite praise for the book and its language use—this was not absent. Vakati Panduranga Rao (Newstime, 11 January, 1987) while discussing Palakurti Ailamma's life story had this to say, "There is the smell of fresh earth in the language of this book... it is the living everyday language of people, a language that is not handcuffed to grammar, a language that is free of unnecessary ornament; this language fresh from green fields intoxicates". However, what we see here is his romanticism. Chekuri Rama Rao commented thus about the language, "Bringing out the role of women, who hold up half the horizon of our desires, in their own words is a priceless gift to language researchers". He didn't say anything more.

Volga's comment was close to our understanding (Eenadu, "Silent Music"

Column), "We read women's words as they are. We powerfully experience their thoughts, their mode of thinking, their method of understanding and articulating issues, their identity that is reflected in that method.

It becomes clear when we examine these comments that there was no context or environment for a discussion of the issues of language that were raised in the book.

You have launched a radical critique of left movements on the basis of women's experiences in the book. How far did the voice of the women you interviewed contribute to that critique, and what was the role played by language in that voice?

Many of us came from the background of left movements. We had extensive discussions on women in revolutionary movements; on the role of women in history from Paris Commune to the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, and on the feminist movements in the West. We had a context where innumerable women took upon themselves a variety of responsibilities and duties in the historic Telangana Armed Struggle. Our main objective was to write, with the help of our acquaintances who saw the Armed Struggle at first hand, 'our women's history' which was not recognized in any recorded history hitherto. It was not our primary objective to launch a radical critique of the left movement. Some of these things become clear when we examine a few of the oral histories of women and their voices. We need to examine what Dudala Salamma had to say about the knowledge, strengths and capabilities that she acquired from the struggle, "I wonder how wisdom came to me from all this.... You are lettered. I have lived tending to buffaloes. All these details are at the tip of my tongue" (We Were Making History, p 261). At the same time, it is important to mention Priyamvada's criticism of the party, "They (women) felt that if they came to the Party where men and women worked together freely, their lives would change for the better. They could not say all this very clearly, but they felt that they could experience another life, live as they chose to. But the party could not support them as it did not have a clear idea of how to tackle the problem of women who left their husbands and came away. They were also not sure whether it was the correct thing to take such women away from their husbands" (ibid. p 263). We must see

Kamalamma's suffering and maternal grief as she became pregnant and bore children while underground. "I was pregnant, but I traveled with them. It was time for the child to be born—we had no protection there. No hope of getting a midwife. The Party leaders threatened me, 'you have to decide to give him away or live somewhere else with him... If you return your body will be slashed with knives and they will stuff chilli powder in the cuts. You will be raped and killed. It is your decision – think about it.'" When she asked that her husband be called and the baby shown to him, she was told "This is not the correct proletarian consciousness, my dear". Kamalamma says, "My head spun. Did I deserve to be told all this? I didn't come into the struggle to make a living. My body wasn't in my control. My mind wasn't in my control. And my tears flowed in an unending stream." (p 265-266 – translation modified).

If we have to say how understand the role language played in their voice, we need to look at Priyamvada's comment: "After the parliamentary elections and the Police Action, our dreams were smashed. Crushed like an egg. What a blow it was. After the elections, do you know where we were? Like the proverbial rug... lying exactly where it was thrown." (p 272-273). Let us look at how Kondapalli Koteswaramma described the difficulties of understanding politics, "It seemed as if Avakaya (a hot mustardy mango pickle) was given to a child first being introduced to solid food. They would expound arcane political concepts. They were like iron pellets – indigestible".

You have reproduced the language of someone like Ailamma directly. However, there are many differences between her social context and yours (caste, class and education). Not only this, intellectually it seems as if you have applied Western feminism which has nothing to do with the realities of Indian society. How did you resolve these various differences? What kinds of discussion took place in your group regarding these issues?

There are many parts to this question. If this question is to be answered, in is important to understand the reasons behind this initiative. To explore our history as a feminist group was the first one. To work with women who had participated in the Telangana armed struggle was the second. After the sexual assault on Rameeza Bee, we had an opportunity to work with some of them (women of the armed struggle) and the idea of understand their past experiences arose in that context. If in our group some of us came from families which took part in movements, others had studied struggles of women in other countries. For example, the book Sandino's Daughters, about the women in the Nicaraguan Revolution came out in 1981. At about the same time in 1983, the Hyderabad Book Trust brought the life story of a Latin American woman, Domitila Barrios de Chungara, called Maa Katha (Let Me Speak). It is a story of Bolivian

women in struggle. We read the English version in the group. We read many books on women's history in that context. We understood that across the world there were new attempts to reproduce women's life stories as they were told. This understanding inspired us to undertake this project. We got the idea to record women's stories in their own language and idiom. Different voices may be heard to echo in this book on oral history. In these echoes, you can hear middle class women, rural women, literate and illiterate women, women who spoke in the Telangana idiom, women who spoke a pure Brahminical language. Our attempt in this book is to present before the reader these all of women's emotions, language, passion, suffering and political knowledge!

As far as I remember we didn't give place to considerations such as which is a great language, which a common language, which should be corrected and which should be omitted. Our first interview was with Ailamma. We met her in her house in Palakurti village and spoke to her. As we recorded her words we felt the weave of her poetry and the melody of her speech. However to write it was a herculean effort. Stubbornly putting down on paper her exact words as she spoke them through repeated hearing, repeated editing—that was our objective.

Our primary aim was to present their voices to the readers. We only gave second place to the Telangana language and the politics behind it. Even though we recognized the issue, it did not assume priority. For example, it is possible to look at what we have said about Telangana language at the end of the book: "At one time, it was difficult even to write in Telangana language. However, it too gradually acquired status as a regional language. We want to bring the language spoken by one subsection of this region to light—women's language and issues." (p 284—translation modified).

To say that we drew on "Feminism" intellectually implies that we were influenced by the West, which is incorrect. What influenced our group in this effort were the two books on Latin American women's struggles alone. However, the medium in which these books became accessible to us was the English language. When looked at thus, the bridge between two underdeveloped nations is English.

Whether it was an unfamiliar idiom or an odd pronunciation, everybody—the members of the group, those who read the draft and the composers in the printing press tried to correct it. It took all our talents and more to bring each of the life stories into shape and to preserve their integrity. We were told that we did not write the letters and words correctly or properly, or that the sentence structure was wrong, and that our editing was wrong. What exactly is standard language? Is it the Telugu

of the Guntur-Krishna districts—how was this principle arrived at?

As mentioned in our foreword, public histories are written in a standard language and idiom that has universal consent. It is a rule bound authoritative language and sentence structure. We faced so many obstacles in writing about women whose lives and experiences were hidden behind the borders of mainstream history and written language. We had heated discussions even within our group. When we wanted to understand oppression under feudal landlordism, we heard instead of man-woman relationships, lives of women underground, their responsibilities and their mental agony. It was a problem to transcribe the tapes exactly. While there were two or three people who knew Telangana Telugu, those who had the patience to write were scarce indeed. Uma Maheshwari worked hard to reproduce Telangana Telugu precisely in writing. We faced the danger of relapsing into standard language time and again.

It must be said that we did not represent women's life stories in this book. We wanted to make heard women's experiences in their voice. The main issue was not their answers to our questions. The important thing was that they spoke; we listened and wrote down exactly what we heard. This was not as easy as we thought it would be. As difficult as it was to say things that remained unarticulated in any language, and to present the depths of those women's experiences which had not been plumbed by anybody until then, it was equally difficult to find a language suited to that task. It was not only a matter of finding a language but of stretching it to its limits. This is the 'language of silence' mentioned by oral historians. However, it is necessary to cite the comment of an intellectual who did not understand this, "These oral histories demonstrate the wrong understanding of Stree Shakti Sanghatana about women's movements and women's history. The end result of the book—*We Were Making History*—is their unscientific perspective which names some words as 'language of silence' and reads non-existent meanings into them, without comprehending the real truth" (Sudhir, Prajashakti 14th December 1986).

In hindsight, could you say some more about the differences between Ailamma's language and the language of the public discourse of those times—intellectual, journalistic, and in books?

We Were Making History was printed in Telugu in 1985. We could say that in the 1980s, the writings in Telangana language were few indeed. In 1985-6, Namini Subramaniam Nayudu was writing *Tattoo* as my witness (Pachha Naku Sakshiga) in Rayalaseema idiom. Pasham Yadagiri and Devulapalli Amar were writing in Telangana idiom. Telidevara Bhanumurti also wrote a column with the title "Chalne do Balkishan" in Udayam newspaper (Telugu). After 1990,

Mallepalli Lakshmayya wrote about the oral narratives based on everyday lives of ordinary people in a column titled "A hand writing for the spoken word". However, while these came on the edit or literary pages, there was and is no instance of an entire newspaper being written in Telangana idiom then or now. Even in a daily like *Namaste Telangana*, the Telangana idiom is used in some columns only. The reason for this may be that the language must be accessible to everybody.

We need not even discuss textbooks. There is no question of their being in Telangana idiom. It is not that there were no books written in this idiom. Vattikota Alwarswamy's writings came out in the 1940s followed by writings of Dasarathi Rangacharya and Kaloji. Yashoda Reddy and Mudigonda Sujata Reddy were women writers from that period. After the 1980s, Kalava Mallayya and Allam Rajayya were important writers of short stories and novels in Telangana idiom. Readers would be familiar with the wonderful shorts stories and novellas of Gogu Shyamala, Joopaka Subhadra, Jajula Gowri and Jwalita. It is my opinion that despite all this writing, it is only in the context of the success of the Telangana movement that such literary works were owned and taken to new heights. These works assumed importance in the effort of the new Telangana movement to counter the humiliation and insult suffered by the Telangana region in relation to language.

*We may say that *We Were Making History* is one of the important books that articulated the Telangana idiom. How would you look at the importance of the book in the context of the recent Telangana movement?*

This question deals only with language. The answer to this question is evident in all the issues discussed so far. Language is one of the many issues raised by *We Were Making History*. We can see written language, spoken language, language of literates, language of illiterates, women's language, caste based language, hegemonic Telugu language (Krishna-Guntur) in this book. This book has foregrounded many issues related to language. Not only this, it is possible to see many issues raised by this book as relevant to the character of the new Telangana state. Among these, issues related to women, especially to women who played various roles in different movements are important. We need not reiterate the fact that thousands of women played major roles in several articulations of the Telangana movement over the last decade. However, where are such women in today's political world? What are the reasons for their absence in legislatures, leadership and government structures? Is history repeating itself? It is time to ask ourselves these questions again.

Translated by A Suneetha and R Srivatsan
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World, force and concept

Three aspects of translation

(A broadsheet team discussion)

■ A Suneetha, M A Moid and R Srivatsan

What do you mean by the idea of 'translating worlds'?

Suneetha: When one writes, one is addressing existing debate; one is trying to write in that particular domain, context and discourse. These determine the shape of one's writing, its content and its tone. On one level, there is the hierarchy between English and regional languages and on the other, each language has its own public sphere related to its own history, context and politics. The debate in each language is characterized by both these factors. To give an example, Urdu debate has a pan-national context which also includes Arabic, Persian and Islamic worlds. Academic debates in English would address multi-national readerships. With a linguistic state and an identity that was established over 50 years, Telugu debates have a profile that responds more to the political debates within the state. There is very little attempt to speak to an audience which is not Telugu speaking. So when we try to translate from English to Telugu or Urdu to Telugu one needs to be aware of these plural linguistic worlds.

For instance in the first broadsheet we encountered a problem in trying to translate the issues of Hyderabad Muslims. The term has a meaning because Hyderabad Muslims have an identity that is located in the history of the debate that occurred about Hyderabad, both in English and in Urdu. In Telugu this resonance is absent. The concept of the Hyderabad Muslim does not have any meaning beyond that of 'minority'. The sense of history, the sense of culture is not there, so how does one translate across this division.

Srivats: In fact what I found resonance with, in the SEZ broadsheet, was the essay which was translated by K. Sandhya, on the Chinese SEZ. The problem was not translating a Chinese

world into a Telugu world but it is being able to translate a world which comes from the domain of academic writing, accurately to the Telugu by keeping it comprehensive. There is actually a world of academic writing also as opposed to the world of cultural writing, of a different complexity, and I felt that there was a precision in her translation of the argument about the Chinese SEZ into Telugu. I would also like to add a little bit to this notion of the world. The world we mean here is not the earth -- the world is the large horizon that surrounds an individual; it links individual actions to a context, direction, purpose, meaning, broadly speaking, to a project. A person writing responds to that project -- what a special economic zone is, how it would relate to Chinese modernization, how this process is to be described analytically, etc. It is responding to not to an inanimate context, but to a set of questions, a debate in that domain. If we want to translate this work to a Telugu general readership, we are trying to communicate the sense of that world or domain that determines his project. To make it clear, the individual's purpose is determined by the world around him, by political and social context where that person is actually having a problem... so a person is writing, intervening in a particular way, for example, in an academic point on the China. Specifically, it is about the relationship between special economic zones and industrial development there. By translating it for a Telugu general readership one should be able to convey the sense of the community in which the writer is placed. Similarly while translating a story or poem from Telugu to English, you have to be aware of these negotiations, this project and this struggle of this person writing in Telugu, the debates and battles being fought, and try to evoke it in English.

Moid: I think that the world is nothing but the world view. The view we have of the world is the world for us -- and it is rooted in the experiences around us. What I feel challenging and interesting is we have so many world views in the space of our own country and therefore so many languages because each language is supposed to express a particular kind of cultural experience, landscape and the particular world view which speakers of it have. Then we get something common as well as something not common, for example Telangana Telugu and Andhra Telugu. The problem is how to translate from one language to the other... translating culture, translating concepts, translating experiences, thoughts, emotions and all those things.

Suneetha: I think it is important to stress on what you both said i.e., language-worlds are not self contained but are connected by world-views. And these connections that cut across political issues, academic writings or cultural writing are what facilitate translation.

Moid: I think our understanding has been improved because of our effort to keep it bilingual. If it were kept only in English, we wouldn't have faced these problems and we wouldn't have understood all this.

What did you mean by the idea of force in translation?

Srivats: I would like to counter pose the concept of the world for translation with the force of the sentence in the first language. It seems to me while the world suggests an over-all picture of translation, the notion of force is actually exerted at the level of finest detail of the word or sentence. In an academic translation from English to Telugu, force will be its precision and the way it relates to terms around it. If you take a poetry translation from Telugu to English, force will have different meaning altogether, what the sentence means, how each sentence is stated assume importance. In order to grasp the world it is necessary to capture and convey the force of the statement with rigor and precision involved in it. And the rigor and precision comes, not simply from an exact use of a word in English because the connotation would be entirely different, but from an attempt to find

a very precise equivalent for that in the language into which you are translating... so to establish that force it means the translator has to judge the kind of force that person being translated is exerting in her world, and try to figure out what the equivalent should be in English in order to convey that to the English reader. The Telugu reader reads directly the force within the world shared with the original writer whereas in the reader in translation has to be educated to the world in which the text was originally written. So the translator should be able to convey this. The person who is reading the translation is often opening a window on to the other world and so the ability to convey force is what actually gives the translation its life. So if you take a text, for a nominal example (and this is not a comment on the existing translation!), Antarani Vasantam and translate it without any life or force in English, it will read as sentences which are somewhat like close to what that person says—not idiomatically, but clumsily; whereas if we are able to translate it with verve, with rigor, a certain force, that text comes alive in the English.

Suneetha: Yes, there is a certain economy of words which doesn't mean simply stringing them together. In some instances certain phrases require two or three additional sentences to convey what the author means but there are certain phrases in which I have actually resisted from using additional words or sentences because I wanted the reader to feel the tension. I wanted the reader to go to the additional effort of finding what the author has meant, to think more, and so in those contexts I have actually kept the translation to a minimum. Conveying force therefore requires different strategies.

Moid: Force is such a crucial thing, especially if you want to convey specific kind of emotions and feelings. In translating a scientific text, a very technical text this problem perhaps doesn't arise. Accuracy is more important there. When you translate cultural material, such as experiences, I think force becomes very important. I think there is a classical problem here is...do you need to be loyal to text or to the meaning? What do you choose? And it's a difficult choice. If one is loyal to the text you may lose the grip of the meaning and if you want to be loyal to the meaning your translation will not be loyal to source text.

Shrivats : Each has to be calibrated ...

Suneetha: Yes, calibrated...

Shrivats: At the level of the sentence and sometimes at the level of the word: the better the translation the finer its calibration.

Moid : There is also this technical view that a good translation becomes possible only if you are an expert in the subject, in the source language and in the target language. It would be easier if one is expert in both the languages but if you don't know the subject the decision will take some more time – it will not be very automatic, spontaneous ...

Shrivats : It is very difficult to meet this demand for double expertise if you also take subject also to be occupation, say agriculture – if you are translating from the Telugu Dalit text to English, and I am speaking from my experience. To know the subject means to know the agricultural vocabulary and very few people are going to have command over English and command over Telugu and command over the agricultural vocabulary and even the translator is always going to be a mismatch to the demand on many occasions.

Suneetha : to expand both your points, translating and conveying the force of the argument, of the language and of the project of the person, is not the matter of the expertise. I think it's the matter of trust. And it is like a craft. Each time it would be different and not a mechanized kind enterprise. Of course, you do have Google translation but it will be only a Google translation. So, it is going to be imperfect ... it is not going to be perfect.

Moid : There is a machine translation and what we do is a specific translation, you can't compare both!

Shrivats: The third issue under discussion is one of translating concepts.

Suneetha : Yeah! Concepts bring back the world again actually in a much more concrete manner. I think we have faced issues in rendering some concept or the other in each of the broadsheets, haven't we? Right from finding words like 'sphurana' for connotation, for eminent domain, public purpose in the SEZ broadsheet, various terms in the Aarogyasri and sexual harassment broadsheets. We had to coin new words

especially from English to Telugu. Even in the SEZ broadsheet we had to address this, especially when we were trying to translate eminent domain or public purpose. The term public is translated as people or belonging to a people in Telugu. But public is a domain that is not borne out of collective action alone nor does it belong to all people equally. It is a product of modernity that has possibilities for universal belonging but is not reducible to people.

Moid: I think we have been successful in dealing with these concepts.

Suneetha: I am not very sure.

Shrivats : Yes, the concept inhabits its own discourse. It has a set of supporting terms which give it meaning ... it works in relation with these terms and somebody who has thought of this concept has elaborated those relationships and shows how the concept lifts something out from the buzz of everyday life—but to do that in the translation, means to find out what is the equivalent labor there for that person who has not facing it as the original reader but is trying to figure out what the labor of the concept is in the original.

Moid : The reason why I said we were successful in the concepts is that I have seen translations in Urdu journals, some postmodern texts being translated to Urdu.. I often get lost in trying to figure out what is being said. Whereas my experience with the broadsheet is that I don't feel lost -- I understand what is being said...

Shrivats : Deleuze argues that to manufacture a concept is to lift something out of the flow. The reason why I am saying this is..the translation is actually bringing into the target language something new – you have to lift something out in the flow of the target language in order to reflect the problematic in the source language... you are trying to show the person the reflection of what is happening there ... so you actually need to set up the reflection of the concept as a mirror.

Moid: That was the original intention of the broadsheet, wasn't it? We put together each issue with a focus in a related contextual and conceptual field. In each broadsheet we try to provide a broad spectrum of perspectives and related concepts. Not all are politically correct but they all provide the frame of reference for the argument in the target language. The idea is to convey what's happening.

Disciplines, inter-disciplines and languages

■ Prathama Banerjee

[...]

The third set of questions I have in mind relates to language. The issue of language has most commonly been raised in India in contexts of teaching. Here, language is seen primarily as a matter of communicability of content, presumed to be already and sufficiently available in English. Connected to this is the question of availability of reading materials in Indian languages. As of now, in teaching contexts, language thus comes up primarily as a translatability question. Hence, the recent governmental initiative of the National Translation Mission, which however seems defunct even before take-off.

To my mind, the problem here is that we have failed to establish translation itself as a worthwhile academic act – based on research, offering employment at par within academic institutions and bringing formal credit to students specializing in it. Also, in contexts of research, the language question is barely ever raised. It is presumed that high-end research would happen by default in English. Indian languages will of course figure in such research if they are social sciences, but only as primary materials (drawn from archives, fieldwork, interviews etc.), subsequently cooked in English before being served as knowledge, as it were. Finished products of research then would be translated back into the vernaculars for purpose of dissemination.

It is important to note here that since the 1950s, translation of 'regional' literature into English, especially under the aegis of the Sahitya Akademi, has been central to our cultural imaginary. More recently, translations of feminist and dalit writings from the bhashas into English have further reinforced this centrality of translation and

have impacted social sciences positively. Yet, what this has also done, paradoxically, is create an image of the Indian languages as primarily 'literary', i.e. structurally resistant to academic articulation – and this, despite the large volume of intellection that goes on routinely in vernacular domains, often outside enclosed academic institutions and in the larger public sphere of essays, journals and little magazines. In this context, I think it is useful to draw in the language question within the purview of our thoughts on interdisciplinarity.

First of all, we could consider if it is worthwhile setting up 'translation studies', within or outside universities, in the shape of an interdisciplinary field – rather than simply presume that translation is either a matter of individual multilingual skill or a subsidiary field to language and literary studies. We must admit that different disciplines have evolved different languages of thought, and academic translation requires a simultaneous engagement with these distinctive conceptual languages. The question of academic language thus is tied to but not reducible to the question of English versus vernacular or spoken versus literary. We must ask then if social sciences share the same conceptual language irrespective of whether they are carried on in English or Bengali or Malayalam?

If not, which is most likely, then the interface between vernacular social science domains and the formal, academic domain is not merely that of translatability but also of interdisciplinarity. That is, the language question here is embedded in the larger question of the relationship between distinct bodies of knowledge with different norms, forms, protocols and textual genres. In other words, translation studies must open unto the

interdisciplinarity question – because in the context of social sciences, translation is a matter of both conceptual and linguistic translation, of transactions both across disciplines and across language domains.

Second, we can also reverse the above question. That is, we can ask if interdisciplinarity itself should be seen through the prism of the language question. In other words, when we put two disciplines such as history and economics face to face, are we actually also looking at two languages of articulation, which can only speak to each other through translation or through the mediation of an altogether different third language, which gets produced out of the event of coming face-to-face? In other words, do we get any further purchase in thinking interdisciplinarity by seeing disciplines as different languages seeking to access a common or a shared object of knowledge, rather than by seeing disciplines as primarily constituted by incommensurably different objects of knowledge and different methods?

Finally, we can also consider setting up in our academic institutions centres of 'regional studies' – somewhat similar to, yet distinct from, the 'area studies' model of US universities. What this does is to subsume, yet critically foreground, the language and translation question within a larger problematic of what is today being called the 'vernacular domain'. These centres, of say Tamil studies or Bengal studies or North East studies, would call upon all social science disciplines (including economics, film studies and environmental studies) to simultaneously engage with the 'region' in India. It will be within this larger framework, then, that we address simultaneously the question of language, of vernacular social science, and of translation. Needless to say, this would require a critical rethinking of what it is to mark out regions, without simply validating the political boundaries of the Indian federal space.

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