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In the following article written more than 75 years ago, Gandhiji, has expressed his sincere and earnest thoughts on the issue of whether to adopt our own Indian languages or English, our erstwhile rulers' language, as the medium of education in India. This dilemma was exactly the same as that which was once faced by the Englishmen themselves in their own country. However, just by dint of self esteem and determination, they managed to get over the problem although with a great difficulty.

The world studies the discoveries made by the German, Russian, Hungarian, Swedish, Japanese and French scientists, not in the language of the scientist, but in their own native tongues. The Japanese scientists who won Nobel prizes in Quantum Physics and Chemistry hardly knew any English. However, in India, even after 60 years of independence, we are unable to get over our psychological inferiority complex and a sense of slavery towards our erstwhile rulers, their language and their culture. And the result is that a country of India's size has hardly produced any scientists of world repute, not to speak of any Nobel laureates, in the last 60 years since independence.

Just read Gandhiji's article given below. Try to understand the deeper meaning of every sentence and see how it is relevant even today, or perhaps more relevant today, than it was 75 years ago.

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Mahatma Gandhi's Thoughts on Medium of Education

*(This article is taken from the book "The Selected Works of Gandhi"
Vol. 6 - The Voice of Truth)*

We seem to have come to think that no one can hope to be like Bose unless he knows English. I cannot conceive a grosser superstition than this. No Japanese feels so helpless as we seem to do....

The cancer has so eaten into the society that in many cases the only meaning of education is 'Knowledge of English'. All these are for me, signs of our slavery and degradation. It is unbearable to me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been.

I find daily proof of the increasing & continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-Indianising education.

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

Education through a foreign Language entails a certain degree of strain, and our boys have to pay dearly for it. To a large extent, they lose the capacity of shouldering any other burden afterwards, for they become a useless lot who are weak of body, without any zest for work and imitators of the West. **They have little interest in original research or deep thinking, and the qualities of courage, perseverance, bravery and fearlessness are lacking. That is why we are unable to make new plans or carry our projects to meet our problems.** In case we make them, we to fail to implement them. A few who do show promise usually die young.

We, the English educated people alone are unable to assess the great loss that this factor has caused. Some idea of its immensity would be had if we could estimate how little we have influenced the general mass of our people.

The school must be an extension of home; there must be concordance between the impressions which a child gathers at home and at school, if the best results are to be obtained. Education through the medium of strange tongue breaks the concordance which should exist. **Those who break this relationship are enemies of the people even though their motives may be honest. To be a voluntary victim of this system of education is as good as the betrayal of our duty towards our mothers.** The harm done by this alien type of education does not stop here; it goes much further. It has produced a gulf between the educated classes and the masses. The people look on us as beings apart from them.

It is my considered opinion that English education in the manner it has been given has emasculated the English educated Indian, it has put a severe strain upon the Indian students' nervous energy **and has made of us imitators.** The process of displacing the vernaculars has been one of the saddest chapters in the British connection. **Ram Mohan Rai would have been a greater reformer, and Lokmanya Tilak would have been a greater scholar, if they had not to start with the handicap of having to think in English and transmit their thoughts chiefly in English.** Their effect on their own people, marvellous as it was, would have been greater if they would have been brought under a less unnatural system. No doubt, they both gained from their knowledge of the rich treasures of English literature. **But these should have been accessible to them through their own vernaculars. No country can become a nation by producing a race of imitators.**

English is today studied because of its commercial and so called political value. Our boys think and rightly so in the present circumstances, that without English they cannot get **Government service.** Girls are taught English as a passport to marriage. I know several instances of women wanting to learn English so that they may be able to talk in English. I know families in which English is made a mother tongue. Hundreds of youth believe that without the Knowledge of English, freedom of India is practically impossible. **The cancer has so eaten into the society that in many cases the only meaning of education is Knowledge of English. All these are for me, signs of our slavery and degradation.** It is unbearable to me that the vernaculars should be crushed and starved as they have been. I cannot tolerate the idea of

parents writing to their children, or husbands writing to their wives, not in their own vernaculars but in English.

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

Among the many evils of foreign rule, this blighting imposition of a foreign medium upon the youth of the country will be counted by history as one of the greatest. It has sapped the energy of the nation, it has estranged them from the masses, it has made education unnecessarily expensive. **If this process is still persisted in, it bids fair to rob the nation of its soul.** The sooner, therefore educated India shakes itself free from the hypnotic spell of the foreign medium, the better it would be for them and the people.

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You will be able to appreciate Gandhiji's viewpoint better if you also read the following articles which provide the historical background to the entire issue of language of education.

Article in English:

{Lord Macaulay's Psychology: The Root Cause behind British India's Baneful Education System} → <http://wp.me/pzBjo-uH>

Article in Marathi:

{इंग्रजी भाषेचा विजय (The Triumph of the English Language)} → <http://wp.me/pzBjo-8x>

