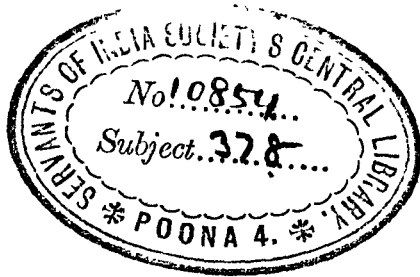


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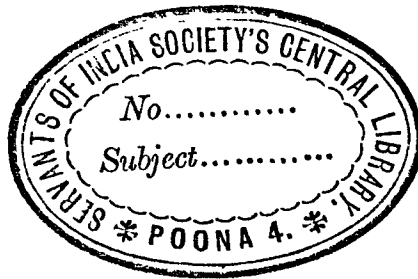
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LANGUAGE, UNIVERSITIES AND
NATIONALISM IN INDIA



Language, Universities and Nationalism in India

BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

H. N. BRAILSFORD



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FOREWORD

IN this short essay Mr Chib has attempted, with an honesty and realism that deserve respect, to face the problem of language in India. Has she among the many tongues of her peninsula one, be it Urdu or Hindi, that can serve as the lingua franca of the future? What ought to be the place of her vernaculars in her educational system? Dare she discard English? On the answer to these questions may depend her hopes of political unity, the health of her intellectual life and her place in the family of nations.

It would be wrong for an outsider, who knows no Indian language, to express an opinion of his own on these questions, or to anticipate the answer that Indians must eventually give. But even a foreigner, who is a sympathetic student of India's problems, may dare to say something about the approach to a decision. The right foundation is such an objective study as Mr Chib has undertaken. It is easy to express one's aspirations, easy to appeal to tradition and history, easier still to rouse patriotic or racial vanity on behalf of one language or another. But in the hot atmosphere of a national struggle to face facts coldly and measure them in *figurès* is difficult, and this Mr Chib has done.

I have seen enough in Greece and Egypt of attempts to revive a classical language, and elsewhere, up and down Europe, of the results of teaching in a foreign tongue, to feel sure that Mr Chib is broadly right in his view of the place of the vernacular in education. One language only holds the key to our emotions; one language only conveys to us, surely and instinctively,

the subtler overtones of suggestion which its words possess. That is the language that we used at our mother's knee; the language of our first prayers and our first spontaneous outbursts of joy or grief. To make any other the vehicle of education is not merely to add immeasurably to the pupil's labours: it is to lame his mind in its freedom of movement.

The other thing that a foreigner who is an internationalist in his beliefs may dare to say concerns English. I could understand and forgive a furious national reaction against its use. But that would be to impoverish unpardonably the intellectual life of India. No language today has a range so wide. It will open the New World no less than our little island. It will give Indians what they never had before in their history, a key to the other great civilization of Asia, for every educated Chinese knows English. And finally, may I say, as a European who has enjoyed the hospitality and learned to appreciate the courtesy of Indians, that while they retain English as a second language, they render easier of access to the rest of mankind their thought and their national personality.

H. N. BRAILSFORD

PREFACE

THE problems discussed in this little book are of fundamental importance, for on them rest larger constitutional issues. Eminent educationists and political leaders have debated upon these problems during the last two decades. They have been the subject of a number of departmental blue-books, and at least three University Commissions have inquired into them since 1902. With all the modesty expected of the author of an essay of this sort I cannot help saying that the real problem of education in India—what should be the media of instruction?—has always been evaded or shelved by officials, too busy with administrative problems concerning huge education departments, and by nationalist leaders, too keen on exalting Hindustani to the status of a *lingua franca* of India. Most of the teachers in schools and colleges who should be the first to feel the serious disability imposed on them and their pupils by a foreign medium of instruction are too much steeped in the routine of their work and possess too little imagination to realize the essential stupidity of the present educational system and the futility of their task.

I make no apology for not treating the subject exhaustively and for making certain tentative proposals, because at this stage all that an essay on languages *qua* media of instruction in India can do is to provoke discussion on right lines. I do not want people to agree or to disagree with me, but I do want them to think seriously about this question of vital importance: How far can English replace our vernaculars?

In the end I have to express my gratitude to Mr Basil

Willey, Fellow, Pembroke College and Lecturer in the Faculty of English at Cambridge and Dr M. D. Taseer, Pembroke College, for reading through the manuscript and making valuable suggestions.

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NOTE

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