

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 26:3 March 2026
ISSN 1930-2940

Editors:

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.
B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.
A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.
G. Baskaran, Ph.D.
T. Deivasigamani, Ph.D.
Pammi Pavan Kumar, Ph.D.
Soibam Rebika Devi, M.Sc., Ph.D.

Managing Co-Editors & Publishers:

Selvi M. Bunce, M.A., Ed.D. Candidate
Nathan Mulder Bunce, M.A., Ph.D.

Published Monthly in Honor of M.S. Thirumalai, Ph.D. (1940-2025)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com is an open access journal. *Language in India* www.languageinindia.com does not charge readers or their institutions for access.

We have agreements with several database organizations such as *EBSCOHost* database, *MLA International Bibliography* and the *Directory of Periodicals*, and *Gale Research* (Cengage Learning) for indexing articles and books published in *Language in India*. The journal is included in the *Cabell's Directory*, a leading directory in the USA.

Articles published in *Language in India* are peer-reviewed by one or more members of the Board of Editors or an outside scholar who is a specialist in the related field. Since the dissertations are already reviewed by the University-appointed examiners, dissertations accepted for publication in *Language in India* are not reviewed again.

The next issue (the issue of April 2026) will be uploaded by the fourth week of April 2026 or earlier.

Contents

Prof. B. Mallikarjun Language Policy of Karnataka Historical Evolution and Contemporary Challenges <i>Dedicated to my teacher Prof. M.S.Thirumalai</i>	1-46
Srividya S., PhD. Teaching English in a Multilingual Setting: A Case for Translanguaging	47-53
Dr. Sunanda M. Shinde Reimagining Classical Languages: From Cultural Heritage to Digital Hypertext	54-61
Mehnaz Rashid, Ph.D. Morphology of Pronominals of Sheikha Gal: A Descriptive Study	62-68
Dr. Ravindra Goswami Ecological Consciousness in English Literature: Environmental Perspectives and Sustainable Solutions	69-81
Ms. M. Suriyaa and Dr. R. Kumara Sethupathi Living With Absence: The Psychological Effects of Disappearance in <i>Then She Was Gone</i>	82-85
Ayesha Siddique, Research Scholar Negotiating Meaning Across Cultures: A Corpus-Based Study of English-Hindi Idiomatic Expressions	86-98
Mr. Ch.MaheswaraRao and Dr. M.Koteswar Rao Resistance and Redefining 'Chandal' Identity in <i>Interrogating My Chandal Life</i>	99-111
Swatilekha Kar, M.Phil. Breaking the Silence: Emergence of Rational and Rebellious Dalit Women in <i>Karukku, Sangati and Harum Scarum Saar and other stories</i>	112-123

Language Policy of Karnataka
Historical Evolution and Contemporary Challenges
(Dedicated to my teacher Prof. M.S.Thirumalai)

Prof. B. Mallikarjun

Reader cum Research Officer (Retired),
Central Institute of Indian Languages
Mysuru-570006, INDIA

and

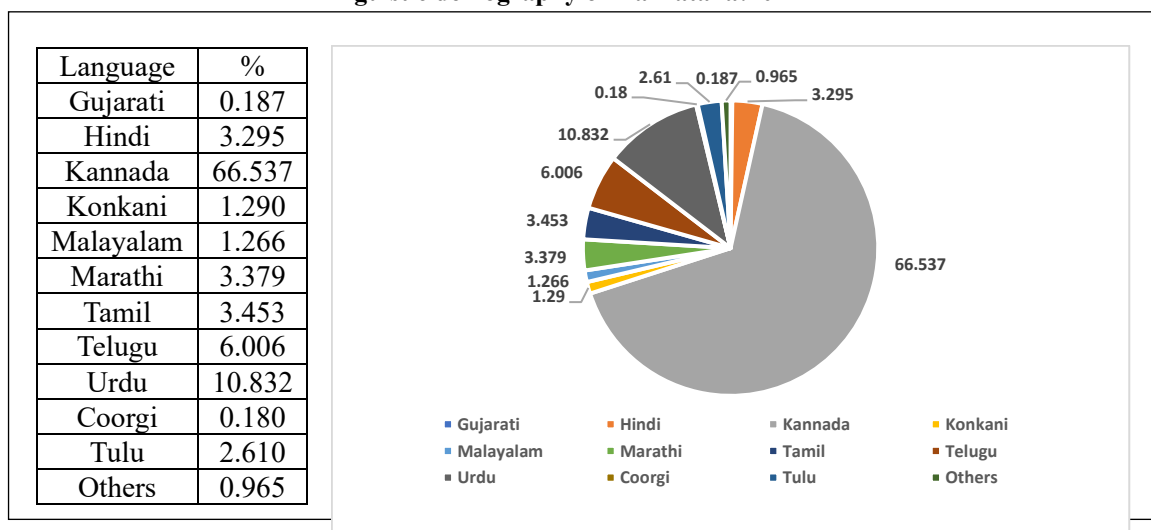
Former Director, Centre for Classical Kannada,
Central University of Karnataka,
Kadaganchi, Kalburgi District – 585311, Karnataka, INDIA
mallikarjun56@gmail.com

Introduction

Linguistic landscape of Karnataka

Karnataka is one of the states positioned in the southern parts of the Union of India. It came into existence in the present form because of the reorganization of the states on the linguistic lines, by the unification of 20 Kannada speaking geographical administrative units of the British on Nov 1, 1956, based on the language used by majority of speakers and geographic contiguity. Like India, Karnataka also is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual pluralistic state. The linguistic demography of Karnataka presents a rainbow combination of mother tongues, and it is one of the most multilingual states in the country. As far as multilingualism is concerned there is no parallel to Karnataka in India, so are the issues of language use in education, administration, judiciary, mass communication etc., in the state. This multilingualism is unique not only because of coexistence of many languages but also because more people are having competence to use more languages other than their mother tongue. The Census of India 1971 recorded 166 mother tongues in Karnataka. The Census of India 2001 provides a list of 146 mother tongues along with their population. According to 2011 Census (since no census is conducted in 2021) of the number of speakers of the 18 languages in the state are: Kannada-4,06,51,090; Urdu-66,18,324; Telugu-35,69,400; Marathi-20,64,906; Tamil-21,10,128; Tulu-15,95,038; Konkani-7,88,294; Malayalam-7,74,057; Hindi-20,13,364; Kodava / Coorgi-1,10,508; Gujarati-1,14,616; Bengali-87,963; Tibetan-27,544; English-23,227; Odia-64,119; Nepali-19274; Punjabi-25981; Sindhi- 16,954 and 4 mother tongues are Lamani/Lambadi-9,74,622; Marwari-1,00,214; Banjari-25,373; Yerava-26536. First three of them are part of Hindi language and the last one is chunk of the Malayalam language as per the census records.

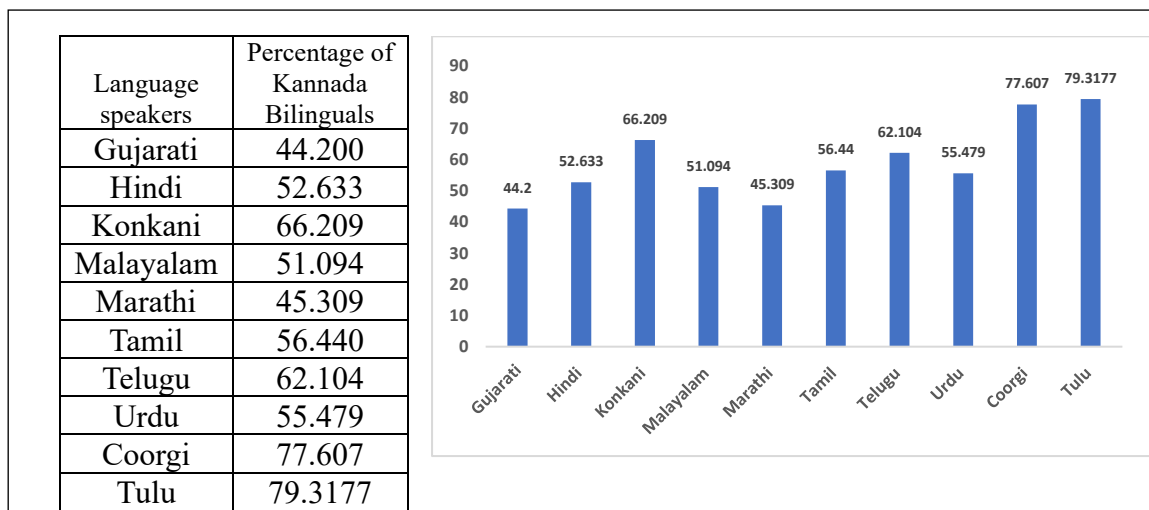
Table:1
Linguistic demography of Karnataka:2011



*Others also include: Arebhashe, Byari, Koraga, Jenu Kuruba, Soliga etc

In India 26.01% of the population are bilinguals (Mallikarjun:2019). Whereas in Karnataka bilingualism is widespread, 39.696% of the population are bilinguals much above the national average and 23.103% of Kannada speakers are bilingual. More than fifty percent of many language speakers are bilingual in Kannada. The table -2 and the chart illustrate Kannada bilingualism.

Table:2
Bilinguals in Kannada-2011



Karnataka has common borders with the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Maharashtra, and Kerala where Telugu, Tamil, Konkani, Marathi, and Malayalam are the Official Languages respectively. The bordering districts of these states have many bilingual populations. The socio-economic survey of the Government of Karnataka (2015) indicates its interest and concern towards language issues in policy formulation. It elicits information from its population about the following mother tongues: Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Malayalam, English, Kodava, Konkani, Tulu, Byari, Arebhashe and Others (not named). Interesting additions are English a non-scheduled language, Arebhashe and Byari and exclusion of Lamani / Lambadi, Yerava, Marwari, Gujarati, Bengali, Tibetan

which have a greater number of speakers than English in Karnataka. The inclusion of English reminds us of the attempt of the British to know the number of people who know 'to read and write English' in 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 through decennial Census in India as part of colonial administration. Now inclusion of English indicates the increasing influence of English on society and the state government in socio-economic-educational and language policy formulation. [A new socio-economic survey has started in Karnataka from August 2025.)

Language policy

While discussing the language policy of a multilingual society, a distinction between official language and the language(s) used in administration must be made. Many times, the language policy discussions treat official language, language(s) used in administration as synonyms. However, they perform different functions in this kind of a society. Precisely speaking, official language is *a language used in the business of government, legislative, executive and judiciary*. Languages used in administration are *the languages in which rulers and the civilians communicate with each other on matters relating to the governance*. Both occupy the central place in the context of language use in society. The official language(s) and the school language(s) *as subject and as medium of instruction* are interconnected.

Historically, before the reorganization, language policy of Karnataka was unwritten (in today's sense of language planning and policy) and it has evolved mostly through the instructions of the rulers and participation of the people. Before entering the phase of formal formulation and declaration of language policy after independence of India and reorganization of Karnataka, the evolution of unwritten language policy is briefly decoded here through the available historical records.

Before the independence of India

The history of the geographic entity *Karnataka* and the language *Kannada* is more than two thousand years old. Concurrently it is a modern as well as a classical language. The earliest reference to the name Karnataka is in Mahabharata. The first available record of presence of Kannada language is the '*halmiDi*' inscription of 450 AD. The first literary work, a work of poetics is '*kaviraajamaarga*' of 850 AD by Srivijaya. He was in the court of the Rasthtrakuta king Nripathunga (814-877AD). The first literary work in prose is '*vaDDaaraadhane*' of the 9th Century AD. The '*kaviraajamaarga*' speaks about the geographic spread of Karnataka from ('*kaaveeriyinda goodaavarivaremirda naaDadaa kannaDadoL*') the land between the river Kaveri (in the South) to the river Godavari (in the North) is accepted as the land of Kannada. Also, it records '*adaroLagam kisuvoLalaa vidita mahaa koaNa nagaradaa puligereyaasadabhistu tamapponkundada naDuvaNa naadee kannaDada tiruL*' that Kannada spoken by the people in and around Kishuvolalu (paTTAdakallu), Puligere (lakkShmeShwara) Koppana (koppaLa) and Omkumda as the standard Kannada language. Santvarma's inscription of 450 AD specifies Banavasi as the heart of Karnataka. Kadambas of Banavasi ruled northern part for nearly 215 years (325 AD to 540 AD). They are recognized as the first Kannadiga rulers of Karnataka. This was the period of transition from Prakrit to Sanskrit. Old inscriptions are in Sanskrit but the information to be communicated to the common people is in Kannada. They used language of the people in the inscriptions. Kannada had due representation at this time.

The southern part was ruled by Gangas of Talakad for nearly 674 years (350 AD to 999 AD). They were also Kannadiga kings. All the information needed for their people was communicated by them in Kannada language and script. After Kadambas, Chalukyas of Badami ruled for nearly 257 years (500 AD to 757 AD). They also used Kannada language and script more in the inscriptions. During their regime, for the first time all the Kannada speaking people came under one administration. In the history of Kannada language and literature Amoghavarsha Nrupathunga of Rashtrakutas of Malakhed (735AD to 973AD) is remembered

for 'kaviraajamaarga', the earliest Kannada work authored by Srivijaya during his time. During the period of descendants of Badami Chalukyas, the Chalukyas of Kalyana (973AD to 1198AD) *vacana* literature, a new literary genre blossomed. Their inscriptions are in Kannada. Sevunas of Devagiri ruled from 850 AD to 1318 AD and there are nearly 600 inscriptions of them in present Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh. Most of them are in Kannada language and script. The Vijayanagar empire: Sangama dynasty 1336-1485, Saluva 1485-1505, Tuluva 1505-1572 ruled Karnataka for more than two centuries. Out of 5350 inscriptions of the history of this dynasty 2500 are in Kannada. Some other dynasties (all not mentioned) that ruled Karnataka are Hoysalas 1000-1346, Aravidu -1669, Nayakas of Keladi 1499-1757, Wodeyars of Mysore 1399-1831 etc. At different times in the history of Karnataka *maThas*, *paaThashaalaas*, *agrahaaras* functioned and in the village schools education was imparted at elementary/primary level in Kannada. In the institutions of higher learning *ghaTikasthanas*, *brahmapuris* learning at higher level was in Sanskrit. Since beginning Kannada has remained as the language of creative writing and communication among the common folk. Thousands of Kannada inscriptions found in the state and neighboring states bear witness to the fact that the rulers communicated in Kannada with the people whom they administered.

Some parts of northern Karnataka had come under the influence of Marathi from the thirteenth to eighteenth century because of Maratha's rule. Islamic kingdoms Bahamanis 1347-1538 AD and Adilshahis 1489-1686 AD administered parts of Karnataka in the North and Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (1761-1799 AD) in the South. Adilshahis used Kannada and Marathi for administration. The administrative and justice structure of these rulers almost replaced the system existed till then and their language Arabic/Persian occupied the prime place. Teaching Arabic, Persian was initiated. Knowledge of Arabic became essential for persons in administration. Thus, now Kannada has abundant vocabulary from these languages used in administration and judiciary. Most of the inscriptions of Bahamanis are in Arabic and Persian, some of them bi-lingual use Kannada, Marathi, and Telugu, since their subjects happened to be speaking these languages.

The Mumbai Karnataka from thirteenth century was under the influence of Maratha people and their language. This was manifest in administration and education by 1830 AD. At that time Marathi was the language of administration and had priority in the government schools. Though Kannada was the language of people, Marathi was taught in the schools instead of mother tongue. There was a dearth of schoolbooks, students, and teachers to teach Kannada. The people from the upper strata of the society had love towards Marathi but the common people had liking for Kannada. More Kannada speakers were in the rural areas and a smaller number of them in the urban areas. One Kannada school was opened in Dharwad in 1830 and another one in Hubli in 1833. Since the public opinion was in favour of Kannada, Kannada schools were opened in the taluka centres. Due to the efforts of the activists and the readiness of the government this trend continued, and more Kannada schools were opened in the region. The British East India Company (1603 AD) had started the business in the west and east coast of India. By gradually exploiting the social and political condition that existed in the country it acquired the reins of administration and started ruling since 1835. The British started to show keen interest in administering the parts of Karnataka from 1843 onwards.

Peculiar situation existed in the Hyderabad Karnataka ruled by Hyderabad Nizams. In this region during the rule of Adilshahis and Peshwas, Persian and Marathi had the prime position in administration. Persons in business were learning Marathi. Kannada remained as a spoken language used in the villages, at home, at market etc. A *unique language policy framing activity* that took place at this time is important to be recorded here. In 1860 the British took over Surpur. The subedar got reports from the taluk officers from each district about languages used in administration and based on them reported to the higher authorities. Summary is: (1) in the Kalburgi district in two talukas Telugu is used and it is correct. In other taluks using

Marathi is not proper since people are speaking Kannada, so the records of the taluka and villagers should be kept in Kannada. If the village officials are not knowing Kannada, they should be given one year time to learn Kannada. (2) in the Raichur district using Kannada in four talukas is appropriate. Using Telugu in one Taluka is also correct. In another one taluka though people are using Kannada, there is no reason for not keeping records in Kannada and since earlier times the records are kept in Marathi and village officials are familiar with Marathi cannot be the reasons. (3) in the Lingasuguru district in all talukas except in two talukas records are kept in Kannada. The officials in these two talukas may be given one year time to learn Kannada and keep the records in Kannada.

The authorities considered the recommendations and gave three years to the officials to learn Kannada. It is worthy to note that taluk was considered as a unit to choose the language to be used in administration. Other than Mysore region, the rulers of other regions were Marathas, Urdu speakers etc. Naturally their language was the official language but to reach out to the public they used Kannada in administration. ‘Though the Nizam and Marathas tried to impose Urdu and Marathi respectively, in the territories of Karnataka under their control, they did not lose sight of the importance of Kannada (Kamath S U: 1982)’. In Hyderabad Karnataka region Kannada had remained mostly as a spoken language, teaching and learning Kannada did not find meaningful place in education. In Coorg, Kannada was a school language as well as a language of administration. After Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar the Mysore region was administered by the British from 1831 to 1881 through their commissioners. The British did not impose English in administration but conducted it in the language of the people. In the Mysore region Kannada was the medium of instruction in 1842. One of the Commissioners recommended to divide the districts into hoblis and open Kannada schools and teach subjects in the Kannada medium in 1868 and teach all the subjects in the Kannada medium only. They recognized the multilingual nature of the region, administered and communicated with the people in the local languages. For this purpose, to understand these languages necessary academic set-up needed was created by them through publications, translation, and training. As an unwritten language policy, historically Kannada had remained as a language of administration in Karnataka though rulers belonged to Marathi, Urdu, English etc. In the earlier periods law was not written. In the domain of judiciary Kannada, the language of the people prevailed. The kings communicated many of their decisions through the inscriptions using Kannada and sometimes multilingually. The written Mohammedan law of Islamic rulers and Evidence Act, Penal Code of the British were translated into Kannada and used to help in the delivery of justice.

While ruling a vast multilingual country like India the British used local languages in administration but needed an official language for their convenience, it was English which consequently became the medium of instruction also. Since the official language and the language of education are interrelated, English emerged as an important school language and as the medium of instruction during the British. It became a language of prestige. Jayathirtha Rajapurohit (1985) sums up result thus ‘This led to the disappearance of Kannada from the field of administration and education, and the local people lost interest in pursuing the language;’

After the independence of India

The Constitution of India adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, came into effect from January 26, 1950. It has codified provisions on languages for the union and the states. For the *official purposes* the state legislatures were constitutionally empowered to adopt any one or more languages used in the state or Hindi as the language/s used for official and other purposes in the states. Hence, most of the states have provisions for use of multiple

languages in administration though they declare one language which is normally a language of majority of people as the official language in their Official Language Act. Correspondence between the union and the states and vice versa and between the states is an important factor. Article 346 makes provision for use of the official language of the union for communication between the union and states and between two states. At the same time, if there is an agreement between two states, they can use Hindi for inter-state communication. In the *legislature* representatives of the people have different mother tongues and they need not necessarily know or be conversant with the official language of the union or languages of administration. Hence, in the state legislature, though the official business is transacted in the Official language, there is a provision the Speaker will permit the member to address the house in his or her mother tongue under Article 210. It must be noted that in India all languages are mother tongues, but all mother tongues are not languages (Mallikarjun:2025). For redressing *grievances* there is an inbuilt mechanism. For this purpose, under Article 350 the citizens of India have a provision to submit their representation to the union or the state in any language used in the state or the union.

The *judiciary* has three important levels of structure: The lowest at the sub-divisional and/or at district level, the High Court at state level and the Supreme Court at the highest level. English is the language to be used for 'all proceedings in the Supreme Court, High Court, authoritative texts of all Bills to be introduced or amendments moved in either House of Parliament or in either House of the Legislature of a State Article 348(1) (i); all Acts passed by Parliament or the Legislature of a State Article 348(1) (ii); and all Ordinances promulgated by the President or the Governor of a State, and all orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws issued under the Constitution or under any law made by Parliament or the Legislature of a State' Article 348(1) (iii); In the instances where the 'State has prescribed any language other than the English language for use in Bills, Acts, Ordinances a translation of the same in the English language be published under the authority shall be deemed to be the authoritative text in English language.' Article 348(3); Whereas the 'official language shall be the language of all Courts of Sessions, Judicial Magistrates, Civil Courts subordinate to the High Court in the State'. But English shall also continue to be the language of the said courts. Any presiding officer whose mother tongue is not the official language of the state may continue to record the evidence in English. One may make use of such English words and phrases as he/she may think necessary to exactly bring out the purport and meaning of any expression. As far as the Judiciary is concerned though the official language of the state and the union have an important role, English text is used as authority since the legal system has heavily borrowed from the English system.

After more than two years of adoption of the Constitution an attempt to frame language policy before reorganization of the states, the Chief Minister of the Mysore constituted a Committee for Educational Reform in Mysore with J.B. Mallaradhya as the Member Secretary on September 10, 1952 apart from other issues '*To examine the advisability and feasibility of further extending the Kannada medium and to consider generally the language policy of the state.*' The committee recommended that the curriculum for primary schools should comprise (a) Language, (Mother tongue) (b) An introduction to Samskrita, (c) Kannada for non-Kannada pupils from 3rd year primary class, (d) English, to be introduced from 5th Year. '

After the reorganization of the states

The integration of the geographical units that had Kannada as the dominant language was expected to help the people to work united for faster economic development and help wider participation of common people in the developmental activities initiated by the State. It was also expected to help develop Kannada as a fit vehicle of communication, administration, education, mass communication etc., to meet the modern needs. So, after the linguistic re-

unification of Karnataka on Nov 1, 1956, the State Government appointed a committee in 1958 to make recommendations regarding the adoption of Kannada as the official language.

Part- I **Administration**

On the recommendation of the Committee and as per the Article 345 of the Constitution of India the Karnataka Official Language Act, 1963, (Act No. 26 of 1963) which received the assent of the Governor on Oct 5, 1963, and was published in the Gazette on October 10, 1963, declared Kannada as the Official language of the State. [In the context of the contemporary history of language policy in India it is necessary to record that the Tamil Nadu enacted Madras Official Language Act in 1956 (Madras Act XXXIX of 1956) published in the Gazette in Jan 1957.] This Act allowed continuation of English to be used for all the official purposes for which it was used before the commencement of the Act. Important language policy of Karnataka that this Act and later amendments to the same could be summarized as (i). The State Government may, from time to time, by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that Kannada shall be used in respect of such official purposes and in such areas as may be specified in the notification. (ii). Kannada Language may also be used (a) in any Bill to be introduced or in amendments thereto to be moved in, or in any Act passed by, the Karnataka State Legislature; or (b) in any Ordinance promulgated by the Governor of the State of Karnataka; or (c) in any order, rule, regulation or bye-law issued by the State Government under the Constitution or under any law made by the Parliament or the Karnataka State Legislature. (iii) (a) A translation in Kannada Language published under the authority of the Governor in the Official Gazette of any Central Act or Ordinance promulgated by the President with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List III of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution or of any State Act or of any Ordinance made by the Governor, shall be deemed to be authoritative text thereof in Kannada language. (b) A translation in Kannada Language published under the authority of the State Government in the Official Gazette of any rules, regulations, bye-laws, scheme, order etc., issued by the State Government under the Constitution or under any Central Act or any State Act or any other law in force in the State, shall be deemed to be the authoritative text thereof in Kannada language. By exercising the powers of this Act, in order to protect the rights of the linguistic minorities the government on March 12, 1968 notified that from April 1, 1968 ‘...if the population of any Linguistic minority in any Taluk is not less than fifteen percent :-petitions shall continue to be in the minority language concerned and replays given in that language as far as possible; handouts and publicity material shall continue to be given in such minority language; Government Notices shall continue to be published in such minority language’. Thus, in Karnataka, Kannada is the Official Language and along with that English and other minority languages are languages of administration.

Policy implementation

In fulfilment of this Act, Kannada was introduced as the official language at taluk level from April 1, 1968. This helped in the conduct of official correspondence at village and taluk level. Before the introduction of it at the sub-divisional Level from Nov 1, 1970, a committee with K. Narayana Swamy former Chief Secretary of the state as Chairman was constituted on Aug 5, 1970, to study and recommend further steps in the direction of extending the use of Kannada at sub-divisional and other higher levels of administration. The committee received the suggestions from the officials and the public from all over the state. An interim report was submitted on Oct 26, 1970, to meet the deadline of implementation at the subdivision level. The final report was submitted on March 31, 1971. This report made several recommendations. Some of them are 1 (a) Immediately Kannada should become the administrative language, along with subdivision level, at the district and state level from the administration point of

view. (b) Kannada should be taught compulsorily along with other languages at all levels of education in all schools including convents and other language schools. (c) Kannada should become court language up to the district level courts with the cooperation of the high court. 2 (a) Kannada reference materials like glossaries, manuals, model correspondence, Acts, rule books, forms, registers etc., needed for administration are to be made available to the officials/offices. (b) Since all the books relating to administration are in English only, they need to be translated into Kannada, suitable human resources needed for the same must be created. 3 (a) Kannada typewriters, stenographers must be made available to all the offices. (b) Arrangements may be made to train the present English stenographers in Kannada stenography. (c) Name plates, rubber stamps in the offices should be in Kannada. 4 (a) Records relating to land reforms are in English. All related documents should be in Kannada. (b) If suitable Kannada word is not found, English word itself can be transliterated into Kannada and used. 5 (a) Orders from the secretariat, department heads should be in Kannada. (b) All communications from the offices to the public should be in Kannada. 6. (a) Kannada should be taught to the officials who do not know Kannada. (b) Training programs should be conducted in administrative Kannada for the officials. (c) Incentives may be given to the officials for using Kannada in administration. (d) Officials should sign in Kannada and speak in Kannada with the public. 7 (a) While implementing these recommendations, safeguards given to the minorities must be kept in mind. (b) Kannada language advisory committee must be constituted *for a few years* to oversee the progress of implementation and give advice regarding use of Kannada in administration.

Subsequently the government directed that Kannada should be used in all communications in all government offices at district level from Aug 15, 1972, within the district and not beyond it. Finally, from Nov 1, 1979, at the state level and orders facilitated all official correspondence at village, taluk, subdivision, district, and state level in Kannada. At the same time English was permitted to be used if the matter is too technical or scientific and if it was not possible to leave English it can be used in correspondence above the district level offices. Also, in a taluka if linguistic minorities population is not less than fifteen percent and if they submit any memorandum in their language those may be responded as far as possible in that language. Publication of the publicity materials, government notices etc., must be continued in those languages.

The powers of the Criminal Procedure Code were invoked and judiciary also was brought under the purview of Kannada as official language; from Nov 1, 1974 all courts of the Judicial Magistrates; from Sep 14, 1978 all Civil Courts subordinate to the High Court and from May 21/23, 1979 in all Courts of Sessions in Karnataka Kannada was declared as the language. However, English was allowed to be the language of the courts, if Kannada is not the mother tongue of the Presiding Officer, he was permitted to record evidence in English also the Presiding Officer was allowed to use English words and phrases if necessary.

The officials were directed to respond to the Kannada petitions and letters in Kannada only (August 24, 1970). The government offices were asked to display Bilingual ((Kannada and English) name plates of the offices and the officers of the government (Dec 8. 1971). Use of Bilingual seals, rubber stamps and letter heads in the government offices was made compulsory (June 29, 1972). Even after four years of introduction of Kannada in administration at the taluk and subdivisional offices use of English continued unabated. So, with effect from Jan 1, 1977, use of English was wished to be kept at minimum. The district level offices were asked prepare notes and to correspond with the subordinate offices and the public in Kannada. A direction to compulsory use Kannada in administration throughout the state at all levels of administration including all corporations, government aided autonomous institutions etc., from Feb 15, 1983, was issued. It was decided to supply only Kannada typewriters to the taluk level offices and the existing English typewriters are to be withdrawn and given to the district level

offices wherever necessary (Aug 27, 1979). Efforts were made as part of celebration of *raJabhasha varsha* (year of official language) for one year from Nov 1, 1979, to compulsorily use Kannada at all levels of administration. All the heads of the departments were ordered to make reviews regarding the use of Kannada in administration as per the directions of the government, whenever they visit their subordinate offices and include it in their report and inform the same to the director of the Kannada and Culture.

In implementing the official language policy Kannada- English bilingualism was at the core. The government noticed that earlier documents were normally prepared in English and then rendered into Kannada. But the reverse of the same translation from Kannada to English was advised. The secretaries of all the departments were asked to prepare all bills, annual reports, statements of the government, answers to the questions etc., to be placed in the legislature must be prepared and presented/supplied in Kannada. Thus, prepared documents must be translated into English and both versions presented (Sep 9, 1980). The Karnataka Local Authorities (Official Language) Act 1981 was published in the Gazette on April 1, 1981, which declared Kannada as the Official language of all the local authorities. Here the local authority includes statutory corporation established by the government, registered cooperative society (April 1, 1981).

Overseeing the implementation ***kannaDa aaDaLita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti***

The government desired compulsory implementation of comprehensive use of Kannada in administration at all levels from Feb 15, 1983. It must be used in file noting, correspondences, proceedings of the meetings, accounts, register etc., if necessary, English could also be used without parting Kannada. Even after nearly twenty years of efforts to implement the official language policy in the domain of administration there was not a visible success. The success or otherwise of a policy could be measured only after its effective implementation. Narayana Swamy Committee in its report on March 31, 1971, itself had recommended constitution of an advisory committee *for a few years* to oversee the progress of implementation and to give advice regarding use of Kannada in administration. So, the first effort, to oversee the implementation of official language policy, a committee *kannaDa aaDaLita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti* (Administrative Kannada Watchdog Committee) was constituted on June 23, 1983. It was mandated to see whether all the departments are trying to implement the state governments policy of official language compulsorily; whether any deficiencies are found in this effort; who or what are the reasons for these deficiencies; suggestions to overcome these deficiencies and are there any other proposals to implement the policy of the government quickly and satisfactorily?

On the recommendation of this committee the government ordered the return of the English typewriters from the taluka and subdivisional offices before Dec 31, 1983; district and division level offices to retain one and two of them respectively and return the rest before March 31, 1984. Also, from July 16, 1984 in all the government offices excluding the departments dealing with technical matters, the day today affairs should be conducted in Kannada; already supplied English forms, registers etc., must be filled in Kannada, inter office correspondence must be written in Kannada, when the office staff write notes on file in Kannada, officers above them should not make notes on them in English.

The heads of the department and officers were advised to specify the ability of the government employees to use Kannada in administration and their commitment to the same while writing their confidential reports (April 7, 1984). Knowledge of Kannada was made compulsory for the government appointments. The persons selected on or after Aug 8, 1986, were to be appointed only after they pass in the Kannada language examination conducted by the appointing authority (July 16, 1985). Knowledge of Kannada was a prerequisite for them.

Whereas passing in the Kannada departmental examination or an examination declared as equal to this by the government, by the officials of the All-India Services in the state cadre was also made compulsory. The officials who had studied Kannada as a main subject or medium of instruction were exempted (Nov 19, 1994).

It had come to the notice of the government that the offices at the division and the districts are lagging behind in the implementation of the official language policy of the government and it took serious note of it and ordered strict implementation of its orders and instructions of the government in this regard; the violation of the same was considered as negligence and disobedience to the orders of the government and disciplinary action be taken for the same; the local bodies, local institutions getting grants from the government, boards, municipalities, administrative institutions, government factories/industries, universities etc., were asked to strictly follow the instructions of the government regarding Kannada as the official language (July 27, 1990).

kannaDa abhivruddhi manDaLi

The second effort in the implementation of the language policy began with the creation of *kannaDa abhivruddhi manDaLi* instead of the earlier *kannaDa aaDaLita bhaaShaa kaavalu samiti* (and *gaDi salahaa samiti*) by the government on Sep 14, 1990. Ineffective implementation of the official language policy had come to the notice of the chief minister so, the heads of the offices were ordered to return the files if the correspondence and file noting are not in Kannada and seek explanation from the concerned officials and the employees (Nov 20, 1991).

The jurisdiction and the responsibilities to oversee the implementation of the language policy of the government were expanded. It got the jurisdiction in addition to the government departments, now public sector undertakings, local institutions created by the government and government aided institutions to correspond directly and obtain information, clarification. It was empowered to ‘...inspect the action taken by the departments, to implement the official language policy of the government; identify the obstacles in the total implementation of Kannada as the official language and make suggestions to the government to overcome them; to give suggestions to the government regarding the need of additional administrative language literature, training, service examinations (language examination); make review of any violation in the implementation of the orders regarding Kannada in the presence of the officer and report to the government to take action on such persons; any other matters that the government may assign from time to time and prepare an action plan to implement the Sarojini Mahishi committee recommendations through the concerned departments (The details of are discussed in the section on employment).’

Kannada Development Authority

The third effort of the government was to give the statutory status to the Authority, through the Karnataka Act No.28 of 1994 to the Kannada Development Authority (KDA) to supervise the effective implementation of the annual project, programmes prepared by the Authority for the development of Kannada in various departments, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of as Kannada official language. The defined functions in the Act included: ‘(a) review the actions taken by the different departments; public undertakings, all institutions and local bodies and institutions and receiving grants by the State Government in the implementation of official language policy of the State Government; (b) suggest measures to the State Government for the effective implementation of the recommendations of Dr. Sarojini Mahishi Report as approved by the State Government; (c) identify the hurdles in the implementation of Kannada as the administrative language and to take suitable measures to solve them; (d) review from time to time the system of Kannada Examinations (Service Examination), Examinations conducted for testing the knowledge of Kannada along with the relevant syllabus existing or that may be prepared and if necessary suggest the Government to

revise, modify or renew the same, to conduct study and consultations regarding the manufacture, purchase and distribution of Kannada typewriters, the use of Kannada in modern equipment like computers, teleprinters, telex, which are used in the modernisation of offices and in this connection to take decisions that would promote extensive use of Kannada and to take necessary actions to get it implemented; (e) arrange training programmes, workshops, exhibitions and seminars which would facilitate the use of Kannada for officers and officials and Kannada teaching courses for non-kannadigas and to prepare the necessary syllabus and literature; (f) publish, purchase and distribute useful publications relating to the development of Kannada; (g) ensure all the forms used in the offices are printed in Kannada and to examine and grant permission for the printing of forms, publications and registers which are required to be in languages other than Kannada; (h) examine whether the regional language as being used in the forms, notices and name plates that are in day to day use in accordance with the language policy of the Central Government in the offices of the Central Government, banks, post offices and in other offices and undertakings which have more public contacts in the State and to conduct correspondence with those offices in this connections; (i) take decisions on the matters of preparation, revision, printing and distribution of reference books on administration and to implement the same and to monitor the progress in this field and suggest necessary measures; (j) examine the standards of Kannada text books and give instructions to rectify the mistakes, if any, in these books.

The domain of the KDA got further expanded with effect from Sep 30, 1997, by the inclusion of the clause to ‘...take action to secure priority for, and promotion of Kannada in the field of education and cultural activities.’ Further, the KDA was authorised to ‘...seek and obtain information relating to the implementation of Dr. Sarojini Mahishi Report and the Kannada Development from any officer of the State Government and such officer shall be bound to furnish the information...’ and KDA was anticipated to ‘...advise the State Government regarding implementation of its projects and programmes.’ Thus, KDA got very wide space to function.

The government constituted awareness committees at the taluka, district, and city corporation level to involve people in the effective implementation of the language policy of the government and the Kannada development programmes (Oct 21,1997). Further Kannada implementation wings were advised / formed at all the levels of administration like secretariat, division, district, sub-division, and taluk. Punitive measures like reprimanding, withholding of annual increment, withholding of promotion, demotion were also recommended to the employees who do not use Kannada in administration (June 13,2002).

PART-II Education

As we already in the beginning, before unification of Karnataka, the different geographical units that came under the umbrella of Karnataka had different patterns of school education. As a result of unification, they were supposed to come under one system. A perusal of the documents from these regions that comprise the present-day Karnataka indicates the existence of three different kinds of schools: Vernacular schools, English schools, and Anglo-Vernacular schools. The vernacular schools taught the regional language and other subjects in the same language. Similarly, the English schools taught English and other subjects in English. Both these types of schools existed in almost all the regions. Although several common elements in the curriculum adopted in the different regions could be identified, there were differences in the curriculum from one region to another. Only languages having their own script had found a place in formal education at the time of unification. The aim of this education system was to spread ‘...European knowledge throughout all class of people and this was to be

imparted to the upper classes through the medium of English and to the masses through their own spoken languages.’

But precisely, after the unification (now also), the role of Sanskrit in school education was the major crux before the *shikshaNa eekataasamiti*, at state level, chaired by the minister for education that went into the issues of common curriculum for the reorganized state. This committee included Sanskrit in the list of first languages in the school education. Though Karnataka was formed with Kannada as a major language of the state, it could not escape from including Sanskrit in the school curriculum at the secondary stage, though in reality it is not a natural mother tongue of any person. According to this decision even the students with Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Tamil could study Sanskrit as a first language. etc., in schooling. The terms first, second, third language etc., are pedagogical terms referring to their chronological introduction in the schools; thus, first language must be the language first introduced to the student in the school. First language and medium of instruction are normally expected to be correlated. Now in multilingual context these pedagogical terms are aberrated and such correlation has almost vanished.

Stage-I

Primacy of mother tongue in primary schools from 1st to 4th standards :1956

Karnataka adopted a uniform curriculum and syllabus for all its regions/districts in the state from 1959-60, and by the end of 1962-63 all the schools had totally switched over to the new uniform curriculum. Karnataka established the following pattern of language policy for education in schools since the linguistic reorganization of states in 1956.

1. **I to IV Standards:** The students would study only one language, that is, the mother tongue. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass.
2. **V to VII Standards:** One more language out of the following ten languages -- Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. Maximum 100 marks with a minimum of 40% for pass, and this minimum was reduced to 35% for students from the VII Standard. The students from the III Standard to VII Standard could also study Hindi, or composite Kannada, but this was not obligatory. A composite course may be defined roughly as the higher standard of its counterpart at the ordinary level. A composite course carried more marks than the ordinary level and the students may have more than one paper for the final examination in the subject concerned.
3. **VIII, IX, and X Standards:**
 - i. **First language:** Any one of the following languages: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course of one of the following languages consisting of three periods per week: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi and two periods of one of the following languages: Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, or Hindi. The First language consisted of Papers I and II carrying 100 marks and 50 marks each respectively, together with the total of 150 marks.
 - ii. **Second language:** Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi as the Second

language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language. It consisted of two papers with 50 marks each.

- iii. **Third language:** Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. The Third language consisted of only one paper carrying 50 marks. *This was compulsorily taught, but it would not count for a pass. It was left to the students either to appear or not to appear for the examination in that paper.* (italics mine)

It was primacy of mother tongues in the primary schools from 1st to 4th standards in the beginning of 1956. When this was accepted, adopted, and practiced, there was very less awareness as to the implications of such a formula both among the parents, language policy thinkers. What was important was Kannada should find the place in schooling from the point of Kannadigas and from others point of view it should be possible to study their mother tongue in the school. At that time, English was not much in demand as a medium of instruction. All were satisfied with English as a subject.

This pattern of language choice in school education was practiced for more than two decades in Karnataka. The late sixties and the early seventies witnessed strong opposition to Hindi since it was perceived as a threat to the existence, use, and development of Kannada. This had guided the Kannada mother tongue speakers to lean towards English. However, many among them also felt that Kannada faced a threat to its continuation as the dominant school language from Sanskrit. It was found that the students from the Kannada majority or other minority mother tongue groups also opted for Sanskrit as a subject of study in the schools. Students availing Sanskrit as first language scored more marks in the final examinations than their Kannada counterparts. It was perceived by many that the easy instructional materials used in the Sanskrit classes, and a liberal evaluation system adopted by the examiners helped students to obtain higher marks in the final examinations contributed to its popularity among the parents as well as the students. The report of the Secondary Education Board constituted to examine the issues confirmed by these assessments about Sanskrit (1979). It was also possible to pass the State Board examination at 10th standard without passing the Kannada course in the scheme outlined above (*see italics above*). Thus, it was realized that the Official Language of the state had no appropriate place and role in the language education system of Karnataka in the primary and secondary schools.

It was but inevitable, then, that this pattern of language choice created and widened the incompatibility between the policy of language choice for administration and the languages chosen for the purposes of education in the state. The State government employees lacked adequate knowledge of Kannada to use it as an effective medium of administration. This was found to be an impediment in using Kannada in the administration of the state at all levels. At the political level, there was a growing desire to use Kannada in as many departments of the government as possible. This pressured the State Government to create extra avenues to enable its employees to acquire a working knowledge of the State Official language through other formal or non-formal avenues.

At this point of time language movement initiated by various political parties, groups of Kannada teachers, students, college and university professors, literary critics, playwrights, and creative writers created an awakening among the Kannada speaking majority to seek a

place of pride or pre-eminent place for Kannada in the affairs of the state. Their dream was to restore the primacy and lost glory of their language as the only medium of governance in the linguistically re-organized Karnataka state. This awakening in favor of using Kannada as the language of administration was a consequence of many factors including linguistic movements, political agitations, and the general political awakening among the backward classes. This description of the linguistic situation in Karnataka can be easily applied to many other linguistically re-organized Indian states also. Spread of literacy mainly in Kannada, and the spread of general education among the people, also led to a new awakening. The large-scale migration of people, mainly from adjacent states, for employment opportunities that opened through fast industrialization of the state was perceived to be curtailing the employment opportunities for the Kannada majority. All these needed an avenue for the expression of anger and disgust among the people. The language choice in education provided an avenue to meet the challenge thrown up by industrialization and consequent migration of people from other linguistic groups. The 49th *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (49th All India Kannada Conference) held at Shivamogga in 1976 asked the government to (i) remove Sanskrit from the list of first languages and (ii) to create facilities in the schools to teach Kannada compulsorily from first to tenth standards. The 51th *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (51th All India Kannada Conference) held at Dharmasthala in 1979 queried the government to make Kannada compulsory first language in all the high schools of the state. The 53rd *akhila bhaarata kannada saahitya sammeeLana* (53rd All India Kannada Conference) held at Chickmagalore in 1980 requested the government to remove Sanskrit from the list of first languages in the secondary schools and shift it to the list of non-first languages.

In post-independence India, after the reorganisation of the state on linguistic lines, Kannada in Karnataka failed to develop to the extent to which it was anticipated, failed to become a language of economic opportunities for Kannadigas, as medium of instruction worked against Kannada medium students. The results of the 10th standard and 12th standard for decades together say a pathetic story of pass percentage of Kannada medium students. More students were opting of Kannada medium, and more students were failing in it as compared to English medium students, year after year. Growth in economy, job openings allowed entry for English educated youngsters and others. Hindi has a pan Indian employment market and English has worldwide job opportunities. Kannada has employment market only in Karnataka which is consumed by English educated from Karnataka and migrants from other states. Thus, creating an imbalance in employment markets for Kannadigas. Kannada and Kannadiga's losing ground in the state of Karnataka found expression in the formation of Gokak Committee in 1980 on school languages and Sarojini Mahishi Committee in 1983 on linking land, language, and employment (discussed in the later part of this essay).

Stage-II

Deletion of Sanskrit from the list of first languages :1979

The government decided to delete Sanskrit from the list of first languages in 1979 and included it in the second/third language list. But the government that took this decision did not remain in power to implement its decision. The subsequent government reconsidered the stand of the previous government and decided to maintain the status quo. Pro-Kannada groups protested this decision. This agitation against retaining Sanskrit in the first language list made the government to think afresh about the policy of language choice in school education. For this purpose, the Government of Karnataka constituted a committee (July 5, 1980) with Prof. V.K. Gokak as the Chairman and placed the following questions before it for appropriate recommendations.

1. Should Sanskrit remain as the subject for study in the school syllabus?

2. If so, how to retain it without it being offered as alternative to Kannada?
3. Would it be proper to have Kannada as a compulsory subject as per the Three Language Formula, and should the option of selecting the remaining two languages be left to students themselves?

Fairly well conceived questions that reflect the role that languages (role allocation in language planning terminology) must play as subjects in the schools in a multilingual situation. This was aimed at repairing the damage that the decision of the *shikshaNa eekataa samiti* in language education policy (1959-60 curriculum) had done for decades to the official language of the state.

The Committee after eliciting opinion from the public and due deliberations recommended (January 27, 1981) to the government that:

1. Kannada should be introduced as a compulsory subject for all children from 3rd Standard.
2. Kannada should be the sole first language for the Secondary Schools (i.e., 8th, 9th, and 10th Standards) carrying 150 Marks.

The Committee further recommended that this should be implemented for the education of Kannada speaking pupils from 1981-82 itself, and, in respect of others, from 1986-87, after taking necessary steps to teach Kannada to them from the 3rd standard beginning with the academic year 1981-82 itself.

The Prof.Gokak Committee was set up to suggest whether Sanskrit should be retained in the school curriculum, if retained how it can be retained as a subject of study without being an alternative to Kannada, and whether Kannada should be a compulsory subject and other two languages are left to the choice of students. The committee did not say anything about Sanskrit but focussed on providing primacy or so to say supremacy for Kannada. The report by the Gokak committee was devoid of understanding of multilingual nature of the state of Karnataka and played into the Kannada gallery. It messed up the issues that it was supposed to deliberate upon and make recommendations. The avoidable errors in the design of language policy by looking into grouse of one linguistic group and forgetting multilingual nature of the state also is one of the causes of failure to implement its recommendations. In the recommendations, we can see a total shift of focus from Sanskrit to Kannada.

The order (April 30, 1982) issued by the Government of Karnataka based on this report prescribed the following pattern for language study:

- At the secondary school level First Language Kannada or Mother tongue: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, or Hindi to carry 150 Marks.
- Two other languages Kannada, Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, or Marathi, to carry 100 Marks each.

NOTE:

1. Students offering a language other than Kannada as First language will study Kannada as a compulsory language and any one of the remaining languages (from Group-B) both of which will be examination subjects for the S.S.L.C.
2. Students offering Kannada as First Language will take any two of the above languages (from B Group) except Kannada.

3. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII, IX or X Standard and who have not studied any of the languages listed as First language may be allowed to take Additional English or Hindi as First language.
4. The Teaching of Kannada from III Standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1982-83 itself and the language pattern for the High Schools prescribed in Para (1) above will come into effect from the academic year 1987-88.

It may be noted that the above order issued by the government really addressed the basic issue of Sanskrit which the Gokak Committee did not address and deleted it from the list of first languages though it did not make any statement on Sanskrit. It was included in the list of other two languages. The Kannada-speaking majority did not find this solution adequate to meet their demand according a pre-eminent place to Kannada.

Stage-III

Kannada a 'Sole' first language in the secondary schools:1982

The Government after reconsidering its order issued the notification (July 20, 1982) detailing the language choice for school structure and modus operandi for its implementation through the circular (August 11, 1982) where in Kannada was declared as a 'Sole' First Language in the Secondary Schools (1982). According to this order:

1. At the secondary school level, the language pattern to be adopted shall be as follows (from the academic year 1987-88) A. First language: Kannada shall be the sole first language (to carry 125 marks) B. Two other languages from the following: Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Malayalam, or Kannada. (To carry 100 marks each). Note: 15 grace marks shall be given for a period of ten years in the first language examination, to students, whose mother tongue is not Kannada, and (b) in Hindi examination to students who study Hindi and whose mother tongue is not Hindi.
2. Students coming from outside the State and joining VIII or IX Standard in the State of Karnataka and who did not study Kannada earlier may be permitted to take English or Hindi as first language.
3. The teaching of Kannada from the 1st standard in non-Kannada schools will commence from the academic year 1983 itself and the language pattern for High School prescribed in Para (1) above will come into force from the academic year 1987-88.

The students who are joining to 8th standard from the year 1982-83 cannot take Sanskrit as first language or as a composite language. Pursuing this order, the Director of Public Instruction issued a Circular (August 11, 1982) indicating the strategy to be followed in the implementation of the order. Accordingly:

"All the non-teaching Kannada schools in the State should begin to teach Kannada language from the 1st standard in the year 1982-83 as per instructions contained in para 3 of the Government order. For that purpose, the following periods of subjects and text books and lessons for study are prescribed as under:

1. Periods: Five periods a week i.e., two periods from work experience, two periods for physical training, and one of singing education.
2. Textbooks: Kannada Bharathi.
3. Lessons for study: 1 to 16, 18 and 36 lessons.
4. Marks: This being a subject for examination, 100 marks are fixed.
5. Marks giving: Marks giving and examination rules as prescribed for the 1st standard are made applicable to this.”

An analysis of this language formula reveals an inadequate understanding of the concepts like 'mother tongue', 'first language' and strategy adopted for choosing languages for education. Also, this formula stands out as an exceptional case where a regional (majority) language/official language of the state is ascribed a special status of '*sole first language*' in the secondary school, and this language is made a compulsory language for all students irrespective of their mother tongue with the same syllabus. This formula does not grade languages as first language, second language, etc., either in terms of pedagogical concepts, or in terms of chronology of their introduction in the school system. In this formula, the Kannada mother tongue student had an advantage over the students of other mother tongues. A mother tongue Kannada student has Kannada as first language. The Urdu or other mother tongue student must take Kannada as the first language. He might select Urdu or another language as one of the other two languages. The third language may be English. Thus Hindi, one of the languages of the three-language formula, will not become a part of his education. If he desires to take Hindi, his mother tongue will not become a part of his education.

Stage-IV

Judiciary and adjudication on language policy for education

Up to this point, in the debate or agitation over the choice of languages for school education, only Kannadigas were in the forefront. The linguistic or religious minorities or others did not participate in the language policy debate actively. However, the Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee (*General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka and others*), challenged the July 20, 1982 order and the circular of Aug 11, 1982, by the Director of Public Instruction in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition moved from the Single judge Bench to the Division Bench and then to the Full Bench. The following three questions came up before the Full Bench.

1. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982, or any part of it is void being violative of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the petitioners under Articles 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution
2. Whether the Government Order dated July 20, 1982, or any part of it is violative of the pledge of equality guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution.
3. Whether, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case, the Circular dated August 11, 1982, issued by the Director of Public Instruction of the State Government is violative of Article 14, 29(1) and 30(1) of the Constitution?

This became a classic case in multilingual India and formed a basis for wide debate on the role of the regional language/state official language in the school curriculum and on the question of student's mother tongue as medium of instruction. And who will decide the medium

of instruction, state, or parents? This has no analogy to the cases decided by the courts till day in the country. After hearing all the concerned parties, the two Judges in the three-judge bench ruled in one direction and another judge ruled in another direction. However, the majority opinion, by law and practice, was to be accepted as the judgment to guide the language policy of the State. So, it is captivating to find how different judges of the same bench looked at the language issues and the legal provisions that sought to address the issue.

The litigants (Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee and others) argued that - there is no rational basis for making Kannada as the sole first language; it is unreasonable for the state to compel the students to study the official or regional language if they do not have aptitude and if they intend to reside in the state only temporarily; providing opportunity to study their language is as much in the national interest as is the study of the regional language; to achieve primacy for Kannada, minorities need not be compelled to study it from the first standard in the schools; the parents and students should choose whatever they want to study and the state cannot 'indulge in regimentation' in the matter relating to the study of languages; children must have the benefit of having education in their mother tongue; children whose mother tongue is not Kannada get a discriminatory treatment and they cannot study Kannada and compete with Kannada mother tongue students; the right to equality under Article 14 is affected; the linguistic minorities have the right under Article 29 to take steps to conserve their language and also a right under Article 30 to establish institutions of their choice, which right includes a right to take a decision as to what language should be studied as first language; it is for them to decide in what manner their language should be conserved, preserved, produced and it is not for the government to decide and the government under the guise of public interest cannot impose conditions.

The state while arguing in favor of its policy said that - it has power and right to take steps for the development of Kannada, including making the study of Kannada compulsory to all the children from the primary school stage and as the sole first language in the secondary school since Kannada is the declared official language of the state and hence it is rational to make it compulsory; this is necessary to give primacy to Kannada in the affairs of the state; also 'the State has power to make regulations in the interest of excellence in education and any regulations so made by the Government cannot be regarded as infringing on the rights of the minority groups; the usefulness of a language is measured in terms of its use in administration, trade, industry, defense, managerial decision-making and such other wide variety of a range of domains and in social and family affairs. Such domains can be covered by more than one language used complimentary to each other. Language development is central to educational advancement on a mass scale; is central to economic, cultural, and political developments; is corollary to national development. India is a country with a population of sizable numbers, speaking and using different languages and therefore the problem becomes difficult and complex' and 'A child belonging to a minority section of the community in any State speaking a language other than the regional or the local language will thus develop its personality with two languages; one spoken at home, the other spoken beyond the threshold of his home, for in the absence of knowledge of the local language an individual would be at a severe disadvantage in participating in the daily life of the State. When a child or person learns two languages, one as his mother tongue and the other as the language spoken by the people around, both become his language. Therefore, it cannot be said that a child speaking a language other than the regional language at home is totally alien to the regional language'.

The Judges examined the submissions made before them. The majority opinion of the Bench on the teaching of Kannada compulsorily in the primary stage, and as the sole first language in the secondary schools and its insistence led to the violation or otherwise of various Constitutional provisions. Their opinions can be summarized as follows:

1. The Government order compelling all children to learn Kannada in the primary schools in the State including those established by minorities is arbitrary and violative of Article 14, because this Article 'incorporate an injunction both to the Legislature and Executive not to deny equality before law and equal protection of the laws'. The children with Kannada mother tongue and others are dissimilarly placed because the children with Kannada mother tongue will not study any additional language, whereas the children with other mother tongues are forced to study the regional or the Official Language causing additional burden. This burden may cause dropouts. Curtailing the periods allotted to other subjects to accommodate Kannada is irrational and arbitrary.
2. The order prescribing Kannada as the sole first language at the secondary school level is also discriminatory because it prevents the students from having a language of his choice as first language. This will place him in a disadvantageous position from the student who comes with Kannada as first language from the first standard. The grace marks to be awarded to bridge the gap itself accepts this discrimination. Since grace marks are awarded only to the students who fail to secure minimum marks for pass and not to others, the order places everyone in unequal position. Since Kannada mother tongue students can study Kannada both as first language and as other language gives them an advantage over others who must study three different languages in high school. This is against the three-language formula. Also, from the point of view of Kannada, even the Kannada mother tongue children are denied an opportunity to take any other language as first language and enhance their knowledge (*Hidden meaning is Sanskrit*). The students coming from other States for VIII to X standards cannot opt for their mother tongue and have to opt for Hindi or English. This is a clear case of discrimination and is against all other regional languages. It is the opinion of various committees and commissions that children should not be burdened with an additional language in the primary school itself.
3. The issue of medium of instruction and first language are intimately connected. In most of the cases, the language chosen by the student as first language happens to be his medium of instruction also. So 'it would be incongruous to say that a linguistic minority's choice for medium of instruction is absolute, but the choice of first language is not'.
4. From the point of view of the Karnataka Civil Services Rules, it is enough if an employee has obtained knowledge of Kannada from 'Having Kannada as medium of instruction or by studying Kannada as main or first language, or by studying Kannada as an optional subject, or as second language, or by passing an equivalent examination'. So, it is possible for a person even without studying Kannada as the first language but by studying as one of the languages can carry on the function of the Government in its Official Language. Hence it is not necessary to study Kannada as first language alone to gain the knowledge of the Official Language. So, 'the study of the same can be insisted as one of the languages for study in the high schools, but not necessarily as the first language'. Hence, prescribing the study of the Official Language of the State as one of the three languages in the high schools under the three-language formula will not violate Article 14.

5. The language and script can be conserved through educational institutions. The rights guaranteed under Articles 29 and 30 are not subject to restrictions. The State cannot either directly or indirectly take away or abridge, infringe, or impart the right guaranteed by these articles. This language rule is not in the interests of the minority. Here the choice is of the minority groups themselves. The Government has only the right to prescribe the general standards to secure excellence in education in each of the subjects.
6. People in this country have one citizenship and under Article 16 have right to employment in service anywhere in the country. Since no other State has such a language policy this policy will be inconsistent with personal liberty and equality guaranteed under the Constitution.
7. In Karnataka minorities are not opposed to the use of Kannada fully in administration. Even then Kannada has failed to replace English. It is fancy for English that has retarded the progress of Kannada and its replacement in different walks of life.
8. The judges felt that this 'does not mean that Kannada, the Official Language, cannot be made compulsory subject for study for the students in this State'. They made it clear 'that the State which has, subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the power to prescribe the syllabus to regulate education, can prescribe Kannada as one of the compulsory subjects. It is also the duty of every citizen who is a permanent resident of this State to study Kannada. But the regulations made in this behalf must be of general pattern and should apply uniformly to all'.
9. They agreed that 'there are no two opinions on the primacy for Kannada in the affairs of the State and its occupation of pride of place in the affairs of the State' and 'that position must be accorded to regional/Official Language of each and every State of our country'.

However, in the process of arguments, the possibility that the minority language speaking students who have already accepted Kannada as mother tongue may try to misuse the provision of grace marks by reverting to their minority mother tongue, and that the allocation of grace marks is likely to condone under-achievement in Kannada, and thus frustrate the very purpose were ignored. Thus, in language-related litigation academic issues take a back seat and the legal issues come to forefront.

Justice Sri Balakrishna gave the note of dissent. According to him:

1. Kannada to be an intra-state vehicle of thought; undisputed spoken language of the masses; knowledge of the language of the state as imperative to one and all.
2. The element of compulsion for acquiring the Official Language of the State cannot be called reprehensible; here compulsion leads to enlightenment and enrichment; primacy to the official language is mark of distinction and not discrimination.
3. Language is a part of the syllabus, and State is entitled to formulate its domestic policy; access to mother tongue is not denied when offered as a second language.
4. No detriment is caused to the minorities in the matter of conservation of language, script and culture.

5. 'Extra efforts for extra knowledge cannot be regarded as undue burden compared with the benefits that flow to them; compulsion to teach Kannada does not affect the right to establish and administer educational institutions of the choice of the minorities.
6. And since possible disadvantages are overcome by the reasonable and adequate provisions in the notification; the government order in question has not violated any Constitutional provisions.

Based on the majority opinion, the court directed that the Government of Karnataka will be at liberty:

1. to introduce Kannada as one of the two languages from that primary school class from which the study of another language in addition to mother-tongue is made obligatory as part of the general pattern of primary education.
2. to make the study of Kannada compulsory as one of the three languages for study in secondary schools, by making appropriate order or Rules, and make it applicable to all those whose mother tongue is Kannada and also to linguistic minorities who are and who become permanent residents of this State, in all primary and secondary schools respectively, whether they are Government or Government recognized, including those established by any of the linguistic minorities.

Regarding medium of instruction, the High Court (*General Secretary, Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka*) had said that the state government:

1. to provide and ensure that primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education up to first four years including pre-primary education is imparted in mother tongue of the children concerned, in Government schools as also schools established by any private agency including linguistic minorities which are recognised, whether receiving financial aid or not, subject to the existence of prescribed minimum number of children having a common mother tongue who have got themselves admitted to the school concerned; and
2. to leave the choice of selecting the first language for study in the High Schools to the students.

Founded on the direction of the High Court, the Government of Karnataka elucidated the language policy for school education in its order (June 19, 1989) pending the decision of the Supreme Court. This now combines the issue of language as a subject and language as medium of instruction in the schools. This is the first time that the government used the word '**language policy for education**' in its official document. Karnataka seems to be the first state in India to use the wordings *language policy for education* in the official documents. Accordingly:

1. From 1st standard to 4th standard, mother tongue will be the medium of instruction, where it is expected that normally only one language from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English will be the compulsory subject of study. From 3rd standard Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students. This will be taught on a purely voluntary basis and it will not be at the cost of any other instruction imparted in the school or

any other school activity in which all school children participate. There will be no examination at the end of the year in Kannada language.

2. From the 5th standard onwards, where, in the normal course a second language is introduced, the child has to study a second language selected from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the First language, subject to the condition that the child who has not taken Kannada as the First language will have to take Kannada as the Second language.
3. From 5th standard, provision will be made for the study of the third language which will be other than the languages studied by the student as First and Second language. This must be chosen from the group of languages, namely, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian.
4. Attendance in the third language class will be compulsory, writing of the examination in the third language will also be compulsory, but from 5th to 8th standards it will not be obligatory to pass the third language examination. No extra credit will be given in rank, division, class, etc., on account of the marks obtained in the third language examination from 5th to 7th standard.
5. At the secondary stage, i.e., from 8th to 10th standards, three languages will be compulsory. First language carrying - 125 marks, second language - 100 marks and the Third language carrying - 100 marks. It will be obligatory to pass the examinations conducted in all these three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.
6. The standard expected in second and third languages at the end of 10th standard will be what would have been achieved at the end of 6 years of study, if the language subject had been chosen as First language.
7. As contemplated in Government Order No. ED 113 SOH 79, July 20, 1982, Kannada-speaking students will not be given any grace marks in Kannada. Non-Kannada speaking students will be awarded up to a maximum of 15 grace marks to enable the students to pass the Kannada language examination.
8. Exemption from studying Kannada as a compulsory language can be given to the students whose parents have come to the state on temporary transfer.

The main differences between 1959 and 1989 formulae are:

1. In 1959, from 1st to 4th standards only one language was taught that is mother tongue. In 1989 mother tongue was declared as medium of instruction. List of mother tongues got restricted to 8 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. In 1959, from 5th to 7th standards one more language was to be chosen from the list of 10 languages: Kannada, Urdu, English, Marathi, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, or Sindhi. In 1989 from 5th to 7th standards second language was to be chosen from the list of 11 languages: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Persian, Sanskrit, or Arabic, which will be other than the first language. It may be noted that Gujarati and Sindhi are deleted and Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit

are added. This indicates the sociolinguistic changes that have taken place in the span of 30 years in Karnataka. The students who have not opted for Kannada as first language have to opt for it as a second language compulsorily. Thus, Kannada becomes a compulsory subject from the 5th standard for all the students fulfilling the desire that the official language of the state must be a part of the school education.

3. In 1959, from 8th to 10th standards, three languages were:

First language: one of the following 8 - Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit, or a composite course.

Second language: Those who had taken English as the first language would study Kannada, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, or Marathi as the Second language. Those who had not taken English language as the First language would study it as the Second language

Third language: Those who learned Kannada as the First language would study Sanskrit or Hindi as the Third language. Those who learned Kannada as the Second language would study Hindi as the Third language. Those who studied Kannada either as the First or Second language would study Kannada as the Third language. This was optional for studying.

In 1989, from 8th to 10th standards three languages:

Three languages will be compulsory taught. It is compulsory to pass the examinations conducted in all the three languages, and one of them shall be Kannada.

First language: Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, English or Sanskrit.

Second language: Hindi, English, or Kannada

Third language: Hindi, English, Kannada, Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic

It must be noted that Sanskrit re-enters into the list of first languages. Meanwhile, the government, to implement the Education Policy 1986, issued curriculum guidelines (April 24, 1992) to be adopted from 1992-93. According to them, the students could opt for mother tongue Kannada, English, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi or Urdu in the 5th, 6th, and 7th standards. The second language will be English for Kannada mother tongue students and Kannada for all others. The third language can be one of the following: Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic or English. Here each language carries 100 marks. Learning Kannada is made compulsory. *The students opting for Sanskrit should answer in Sanskrit only.* In the secondary school, the first language consists of Kannada, Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Marathi, English, or Hindi. The second language list has Hindi, English, or Kannada. The third language list has Hindi, English, Sanskrit, Persian, Kannada, or Arabic. One of the three languages should be Kannada. Here the first language is for 125 marks, and other two 100 marks each.

Stage-V

Medium of instruction in schools: 1989

The validity of the judgment of the High Court was questioned in the Supreme Court on the ground that the linguistic minorities are discriminated and they cannot be forced to study Kannada (violation of Article 14); linguistic minorities cannot be prevented from an opportunity to choose languages (violation of Article 350-A). The order of June 19, 1989 was litigated (*English Medium Students Parents Association vs State of Karnataka and Others*) in the Supreme Court of India. The court not only discussed the legal issues but also cognitive issues of the students and emotional issues of the people seeking a place for their mother tongue in the schooling. On Dec 8, 1993, it said that:

1. the element of compulsion at the primary stage is no longer there because the GO is unequivocal when it says from 1st to 4th standards mother tongue will be the medium of instruction...
2. from 3rd standard onwards Kannada will be an optional subject for non-Kannada speaking students ... the GO is in consonance with Article 350 A.
3. it cannot be contended that a student studying in a school from Karnataka need not know the regional language. It should be the endeavor of every State to promote the regional language of the state.
4. The state knows how best to implement the language policy. It's not for the court to interfere.

The choice of medium of instruction in Karnataka was also based on the statements in the Constitution and the Grant-in-Aid Code of the State government since Oct 19, 1969. According to this arrangement, 'In all primary schools, the medium of instruction shall ordinarily be the Regional Language or mother tongue of the child'. The English medium schools or English medium sections in the primary schools were permitted by the Director of Public Instruction to cater to the needs of migratory groups and 'Students whose mother tongue is a minority language for which there is no provision in the schools of the locality. 'The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional language, gave rise to fast growth of education in English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic minorities who could opt for English due to their perceived threat from Kannada. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing a universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through English medium.

So, the primary and secondary education in English medium, like engineering and medical education, became donation/capitation (commercialized) -oriented, and ultimately a tradable commodity. The legal provisions that were framed to protect minority rights became an effective means for every section of the Karnataka society to make capital out of the very same legal provisions. There were institutions of the linguistic minorities imparting higher education and primary education in English medium but not through their mother tongue. The government took a policy decision not to sanction English medium schools, except in rare cases, where a considerable number of non-Kannadiga residents and minority institutions were involved. This led to litigation by those who failed to get permission or recognition for their English medium schools.

This policy was challenged by the Sahyadri Education Trust (*Sahyadri Education Trust vs State of Karnataka*) on the ground that the medium of instruction is one aspect of freedom of speech and expression. The student cannot be compelled to express in one (specific) regional language and not in English. The parents have every right to give education to their children in English and if there is a language policy it should be applicable to all the primary schools uniformly and according to permission to some and not doing the same for others is a clear case of discrimination. The High Court saw a valid argument only on the ground 'that many other institutions have been given permission to impart primary education in English medium but the petitioners have been singled out by denying them the right to impart education in English medium.' It directed the government to accord 'permission to the petitioners to start English medium primary schools'. However, this Judgment was viewed by many as support to the cause of English medium schools.

The rules of the government apply to the government and the institutions aided by it. But they do not apply to other private institutions. The law of demand and supply operated in

Karnataka. Gradually, demand for English medium schools in the government and aided sector was there but the government had its own reason not to meet this demand from its resources. Hence, the private and un-aided schools mushroomed in the state to meet this demand and at the same time, the aided schools were in no mood to cater to the demand by levying reasonable fee. Thus, schools imparting education through English medium created by this demand and supply chain wanted that they too should be recognized. There were two socioeconomic forces in medium of instruction jugglery. Staunch Kannada medium interests and staunch English medium interests taking refuge under linguistic minority umbrella or under legal umbrella.

To guide the government in taking a policy decision regarding medium of instruction, the government constituted a committee with Prof. H. Narasimhaiah as Chairperson. The objective of the committee was to '*...suggest remedy for the problems arising from the unrecognized English Primary Schools and also examine the question of Medium of primary schools....*' This is one of the best reports on medium of instruction for any multilingual context to decide about the medium of education for school education. The recommendations of this committee are linguistically professional, cognitively sound, socially, and economically development oriented. But, politically may not be digestive, since many politicians in the state run the private educational institutions either directly or indirectly, mainly teaching in English medium. On June 3, 1991, the committee recommended that:

- a. Permission should not be given indiscriminately to the existing unauthorised schools. After holding inspection of the schools if minimum facilities are available and if the rules and regulations of grant-in-aid Code are fulfilled, permission can be given to such unrecognised schools. No permission be given to other schools. Admission to the 1st standard should be given to study only in Mother-tongue in such recognised schools from June 1991. In case this condition is not fulfilled, the recognition of such schools should be withdrawn.
- b. In schools recognized as indicated above, opportunity should be given to complete the study in 4th standard in the medium in which the student is studying at present in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th standards.
- c. In case required number of students is not available to study in mother tongue medium or if facilities could not be provided to study in mother tongue medium, such schools should opt for the regional language as their medium.
- d. In the primary stage, no permission should be given to CBSE, ICSE schools in the state. Such existing schools should satisfy only the needs of the students who have the right to study in English Medium as per the Constitution, court decisions and as per provisions of Grant-in-Aid Code.
- e. In the existing recognised English Medium schools also, it is proper that medium of study should be the mother tongue of the student from the academic year 1991-92. In case required number of students is not available to study in the medium of mother tongue or for any other reason it is not possible to provide facilities to study in mother tongue, it is necessary to opt for the regional language as their medium of study. The Government shall take steps to provide facilities such required for this.
- f. To improve the position of Kannada Medium Schools and to raise their standards, the Government should take necessary steps on priority basis.

- g. Conditions should be inserted in the Rules of appointment, that those who seek appointment in Government and Aided Institutions should have studied Kannada language as their first language in SSLC.

Stage-VI

English medium only for English mother tongue students:1994

English Medium Only for English Mother Tongue Students (1994) became a policy. In fulfillment of the Supreme Court Judgment of Dec 8, 1983, in the background of the recommendations of the H. Narasimhaiah Committee the Government issued the order of April 29, 1994, wherein it made a comprehensive policy relating to *language as a subject in the school education and medium of instruction* in Karnataka. Accordingly:

1. From 1st to 4th standards, the child's mother tongue will be the medium of instruction. It will be one of among-Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English.
2. From 3rd standard Kannada should be optional subject to non-Kannadigas. There is no examination in it at the end of 3rd or 4th standard.
3. From the 5th standard, the student must choose second and third languages. They can be one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. The student who is not studying Kannada as first language must study it as second language. Attendance for classes and appearing for examination for third language is compulsory and it is not an examination subject.
4. From the 8th standard to 10th standard in the secondary schools three languages will be taught compulsorily. The first language for 125 marks will be any one of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, or English. The second and third languages for 100 marks each can be any two of the following: Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian. One of these should be Kannada. The students whose mother tongue is not Kannada and the students whose mother tongue is not Hindi will get grace marks up to 15. This will be in vogue for 10 years.
5. This order also had certain other clauses relating to medium of instruction. They are:(i) in all the government recognised schools from 1st standard to 4th standard medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada from 1994-1995. (ii) students admitted from 1994-95 should be taught in mother tongue or Kannada. (iii) change over to English or any other language medium is permitted from 5th standard. (iv) only the students whose mother tongue is English will be permitted to study in the existing recognised English medium schools from 1st to 4th standards. (v) the unrecognised schools will be considered for regularisation if they fulfil the necessary conditions...the unrecognised schools which do not comply will be closed etc.

This was challenged in the High Court of Karnataka by the linguistic/religious minorities, parents associations, children/parents through their educational institutions run by majority etc., (*Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka vs*

The State of Karnataka and Others). This was referred to and adjudicated by the Full bench of the High Court. The questions that the bench answered after examination are:

- a. Is right to choose a medium of instruction a fundamental right?
- b. Whether parents and children have the right to choose the medium of instruction?
- c. Whether every citizen, a religious denomination and a linguistic or religious minority has a right to establish an educational institution of his/its choice?

The full bench ruled that:

- a. Right to education is a fundamental right. It flows from Article 21, right to life. Free and compulsory primary education is guaranteed to all the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years under Article 21 A as a fundamental right.
- b. Right to education includes right to choose a medium of instruction. This is the fundamental right of the parent and the child.
- c. Right to freedom of speech and expression includes the right to choose a medium of instruction. Right under Article 19(1)(g) to establish and administer an educational institution of one's choice; one's choice includes choice of medium of instruction.
- d. Also, under the Articles every citizen, every linguistic and religious minority have right to establish and administer educational institution under 19(1)(a)(g), 21, 26, 29(1) and 30(1) and it also includes right to choose the medium of instruction which is the fundamental right of the management concerned.
- e. The policy that mother tongue or regional language shall be the medium of instruction in primary schools is valid and legal for the schools run or aided by the State.
- f. This policy is not valid in case of other recognized primary schools since it will be violative of Articles 19(1)(g), 26 and 30(1).

The government in 1992 had decided to give permission to (i) un-authorised English medium schools if they fulfil the conditions of the code of primary education (ii) English medium schools if they are not eligible for imparting education in English medium can impart education in Kannada or other language medium if they fulfil the rules of the grant in aid code. The students of these schools were at liberty to switch over to any other language medium from 5th standard. The Daffodils English School (*Daffodils English School vs State of Karnataka and others*) had questioned the validity of some of the clauses of this order of 2002 in the High Court of Karnataka. The petition was sent to the single Bench for decision in the context of the judgment of the Full Bench. The single judge bench of the High Court struck down the following clauses of the government order:

- (i) The medium of instruction should be mother tongue or Kannada in all the state government recognised schools from 1st to 4th standards with effect from the academic year 1994-95 and from the year 2002-03 from 1st to 5th standards the medium of instruction will be only mother tongue or Kannada.
- (ii) Permission can be granted to only students whose mother tongue is English, to study in English medium in classes 1st to 5th in existing recognized English medium schools.
- (iii) All unauthorised schools which do not comply with the above conditions have to be closed.

The Government of Karnataka did not accept the judgment and filed a special leave petition in the Supreme Court requesting for stay of the High Court order of 2008. The Council appearing for the state argued that ‘...the children will imbibe better if the medium of instruction was in their mother tongue. We must take care of the interest of the children. Learning through mother tongue is the universal law for all.’ The Chief Justice Balakrishnan who was hearing in the three-judge bench remarked that ‘It is easy to say things. They are unable to get even a clerical post. How do we survive in this world? Parents are ready to pay Rs.20,000 to 50,000 for admission in English medium schools. This is the real situation. They do not want to send their children to mother tongue medium schools. The choice should be left to the parents.’ The Supreme Court refused to grant the stay. [The Hindu, July 5, 2009]

Stage-VII

Right to choose the medium of instruction:2014

In this context, it is necessary to cite Right to Education (Aug 27, 2009). In 21st century this is in search of a new paradigm for language education. In this document the language issue comes up directly at 3 points. They are extracted below:

(i) ‘...child belonging to disadvantaged group’ means a child belonging to the scheduled caste, the scheduled tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification; (ii) medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue(iii) For sixth class to eighth class at least one teacher per class so that there shall be at least one teacher each for – (i) Science and Mathematics; (ii) Social Studies; (iii) Languages.’

The debate educational or legal hardly considers these language issues in the Right to Education Act. But many other points of this are debated and attempts to implement are made. The important, dangerous, and intelligent word (here in italics) provides an escape route to open English medium schools/classes: ‘medium of instructions shall, *as far as practicable*, be in child’s mother tongue.’

The Supreme Court took up the petitions on the 2008 judgement of the High Court of Karnataka (*State of Karnataka and Anrvs the Associated Management of (Government Recognised Unaided English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others*). On July 5, 2013, decided to refer the same to the Constitutional Bench with the following questions to be addressed by it:

1. What does Mother tongue mean? If it referred to as the language in which the child is comfortable with, then who will decide the same?
2. Whether a student or a parent or a citizen has a right to choose a medium of instruction at primary stage?
3. Does the imposition of mother tongue in any way affects the fundamental rights under Article 14, 19, 29 and 30 of the constitution?
4. Whether the Government recognized schools are inclusive of both government-aided schools and private and unaided schools?
5. Whether the state can by virtue of Article 350-A of the Constitution compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as medium of instruction in primary schools? Apart from the above said issues, the Constitution Bench would also

take into consideration any other ancillary or incidental questions which may arise during hearing of the case.

The Constitution bench after due deliberations and listening to both sides on May 6, 2014, decided that:

1. Mother tongue...means the language of the linguistic minority in a State and it is the parent or the guardian of the child who will decide what the mother tongue of child is.
2. ... a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice about the medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at the primary stage in school.
3. ...imposition of mother tongue affects the fundamental rights under Articles 19,29 and 30 of the Constitution.
4. ...government recognized schools will not only include government aided schools but also unaided schools with have been granted recognition.
5. ...State has no power under Article 350 A of the Constitution to compel the linguistic minorities to choose their mother tongue only as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

The arguments from the government side as reported in the copy of the judgment fail to convince even people who are not that conversant with law. But the arguments from other side, succeeded in drawing the attention to their side. Two valuable reports one on *shikshaNa tagnara salahaasamitiya varadi* (Prof. Chandrashekhara Patil -1999) submitted to Sri. H. Govinde Gowda the then Minister for Primary and Secondary of the Government of Karnataka and *shikshaNa mattu boodhanaa maadhyama niitirupuNaa varadi* (Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa -2001) though are of high value as academic inputs to the government, people, and judiciary - do not find worth implementing or emulating. It is the tragedy of language education policy in Karnataka.

What is mother tongue? The Supreme Court was not clearly apprised of the concept and the precedence of the use of this concept in the official documents of the country. Even today, the same is not clear for the judiciary. It cannot be defined in clear cut way due to multilingualism being practiced in the country where it is not an exception, but a norm. However, the decennial Census of India uses a definition for the concept which has evolved since the British period. In the Census year 1971- 'The language spoken in the individuals' home during his childhood or a near equivalent such as the language which individuals' parents spoke or which he first learnt to speak' ; in 1991, 2001, 2011 – 'The language spoken in childhood by the person's mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person's home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In case of infants and deaf mutes the language usually spoken by the mother should be recorded. In case of doubt, the language mainly spoken in the household...'. The UNESCO in 1951, in its typology of language concepts had defined mother tongue as 'the language one acquires as a child'.

In the last few decades, India achieved rapid industrialization in several sectors and states. This has resulted in the relocation of people in the social hierarchy and mobility in some manner. This has also led to planned and unplanned growth of major Indian languages with the help of Constitutional, institutional, and individual support. Some languages achieved better status because of the support they received from the Union and the State governments. However, the last decades of the century are the decades of globalization and Information Technology. These two developments have jointly begun to make a great impact on the

education scenario of the new millennium. Globalization and information technology have created a greater demand for English education, and education through English.

Stage VIII English from the 1st standard:2007

Introduction of English in the schools of Karnataka from the first standard as a subject is an important turning point in language policy. On Oct 29, 2006, it was decided to teach English as one of the languages (as a subject) from the first standard itself in all the Kannada medium schools and the schools of the linguistic minorities. In the year 2007, Accordingly, it was introduced as a subject of study in all the government and aided schools from the 1st standard. It must be noted that hardly anybody opposed this move of the government, including the persons who were opposed to the introduction of Kannada on the ground that it creates a burden on children. Karnataka, at this juncture, is facing two challenges, one from the point of view of the preservation and development of Kannada language and culture, as the official language of the state, and another from the point of view of coping up with the challenges thrown in by the market forces.

Languages in education, policy, and statistics

Along with this legal scenario of language education in Karnataka, language education scenario also started to change fast. English from the 1st standard was not enough. The statistics (Source: U-DISE Karnataka Reports) available in public domain speak for themselves. The demand for learning in the English medium was increasing, and the students were not enrolling in the government schools, there was a crisis in the student enrolment, due to non-availability of such facility adequately in the government schools the parents were opting for the same in the private schools. Table below illustrates the same.

Table:3
Sample of students' enrolment in different medium of instruction
2010-11, 2015-16 And 2018-19

Medium	Class	2012-13	2015-16	Difference 2012-13 2015-16	2018-19	Difference 2012-13 & 2018-19
Kannada	L P	41,01,132	39,36,732	-1,64,400	31,41,884	-9,59,248
	U P	14,42,032	19,05,406	+4,63,374	16,96,302	+2,54,270
	Sec	18,33,245	6,59,404	-11,73,841	10,01,423	-8,31,822
	Total	73,76,409	65,01,542	-8,74,867	58,39,609	-15,36,800
English	LP	8,70,548	11,11,550	+2,41,002	20,73,518	+12,02,970
	U P	4,62,713	8,50,968	+3,88,255	12,29,850	+7,67,137
	Sec	6,69,815	5,43,836	-1,25,979	7,21,332	+51,517
	Total	20,03,076	25,06,354	+5,03,278	40,24,700	+20,21,624
Urdu	L P	3,14,438	2,79,328	-35,110	2,25,867	-88,571
	U P	1,05,625	1,29,206	+23,581	1,07,487	+1,862
	Sec	81,086	53,190	-27,896	52,128	-28,958
	Total	5,01,149	4,61,724	-39,425	3,85,482	-1,15,667
Marathi	LP	73,986	63,013	-10,973	54,749	-19,237
	U P	32,214	41,485	+9,271	35,384	+3,170
	Sec	45,892	28,806	-17,086	24,368	-21,524
	Total	1,52,092	1,33,304	-18,788	1,14,501	-37,591

Table:4
Enrolment of students from 1st to 10th in four mediums of instruction

	2013-14	2015-16	2018-19
Kannada	73.210	60.210	56.288
English	20.179	24.789	38.794
Urdu	4.877	4.566	3.715
Marathi	1.454	1.318	1.103

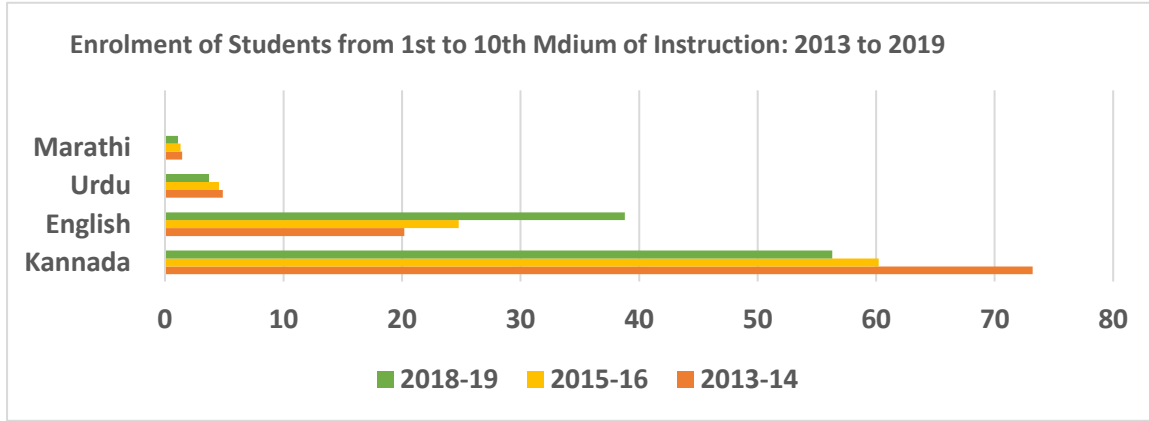
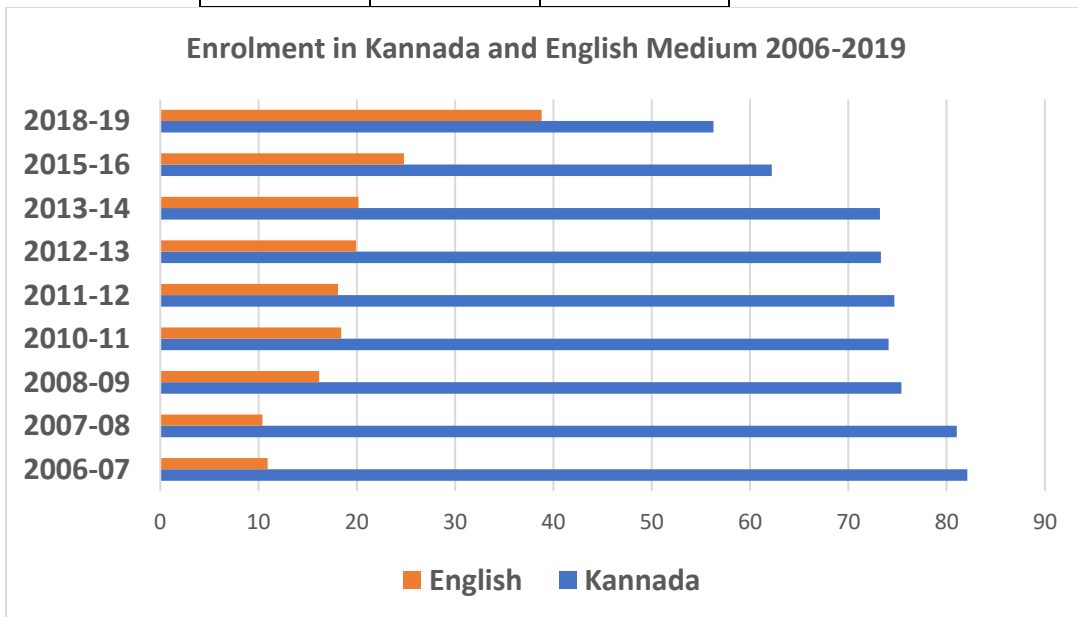


Table:5
Percentage of enrolment of student's 1st To 10th standards in
Kannada and English medium

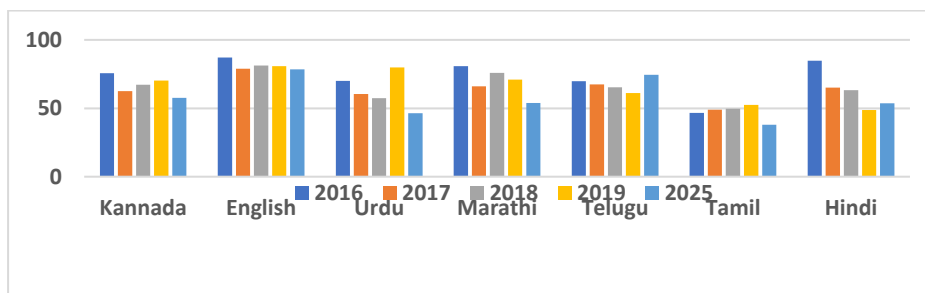
Year	Kannada	English
2006-07	82.10	10.93
2007-08	81.02	10.40
2008-09	75.39	16.17
2010-11	74.10	18.40
2011-12	74.67	18.08
2012-13	73.31	19.91
2013-14	73.21	20.17
2015-16	62.21	24.78
2018-19	56.288	38.794



The above Table-3, 4, 4 and their respective charts and table-4 indicate that in case of Kannada, Urdu, and Marathi medium of instruction the enrolment of students was rapidly decreasing from year to year. But it was progressively increasing in case of English medium of instruction. This clearly indicated that Indian languages were no longer sought out as medium of instruction by the students in Karnataka. English is most sought out medium of instruction. English as medium of instruction in the primary education was affecting every Indian language as medium of education. The Table-5 and the chart present pass percentage of students in different medium of instruction in 10th standard examination in five years in a decade from 2016 to 2025. Medium divide in the 10th standard pass is very significant. Every year percentage of pass in English medium is higher than the pass percentage of students in all other medium of instruction. The pass percentage is considerably low in other mediums.

Table-6
Percentage of success of students in different
medium of instruction in 10th standard examination in a decade:2016-2025

Medium	2016	2017	2018	2019	2025
Kannada	75.61	62.47	67.33	70.19	57.61
English	87.00	78.94	81.23	80.88	78.38
Urdu	70.06	60.48	57.29	79.87	46.46
Marathi	80.86	66.15	75.86	70.87	53.97
Telugu	69.91	67.37	65.31	61.06	74.56
Tamil	46.51	48.96	49.71	52.46	37.88
Hindi	84.85	65.09	63.24	48.81	53.72



Much before the verdict of the Supreme Court on May 6, 2014, more students had started to opt for English medium in large numbers and the enrolment in the Indian language medium was depleting at an alarming level. Only in case of Tamil there was a little demand from students, it can be attributed to the language loyalty of the concerned speech community irrespective of the place where they are staying. Now, armed with the Supreme Court judgment, parents and owners of the private educational institutions accelerated the mushrooming of English medium schools in Karnataka.

The social and educational system, as already illustrated through various statistics, has covertly designated English medium for the elite and other language medium for others. The changing equations in the society are clear for everyone to see. English education bestows an advantage on those who adopt it. Naturally, the poor people also desired to somehow improve their lot by opting for the English medium education for their children. Their preference for the English medium may not really solve their problems. They continue to be disadvantaged because, often, their children happen to be first generation school-goers, with no help from the family members to improve their study skills. When the elite social groups do not care for their language and culture, why should others bother about their mother tongue, and education through that language? The fear is that if the present trend continues, the market forces will

convert the regional and other Indian languages only as subjects of study and eliminate them as medium of instruction. This is an unfortunate and retrograde step for any society. Since independence, Indian languages have come a long way in their development through organized activities. One of the ways these can retain their status they gained after Indian independence is through absorbing technology and regaining the confidence of their speakers by obtaining market value for them.

In 1956 since India wanted to come out of clutches of English and go to its roots in Indian languages wanted to impart education through the mother tongue of the child. The Supreme Court judgement in 2014 seems to be in tune with the present thinking of the elite and changed global and economic scenario. Impact of this judgement on mother tongue as medium of instruction is disastrous. In Karnataka here is a sample of number of applications received to start classes in 2015-16 in two educational districts as reported in The Hindu on Jan 2, 2015.

Table-7
Demand for medium of instruction

		Bangalore North	Bangalore South	Total
Pre-Primary	Kannada	189	288	477
	English	168	311	479
Classes 1 to 5	Kannada	59	109	168
	English	442	654	1096
Classes 6 to 8	Kannada	10	0	10
	English	170	295	465
Classes 9 & 10	Kannada	1	0	1
	English	52	74	126

The number of classes in English medium (2166), if permitted could outnumber Kannada medium (656) classes. But certainly, this indicates the market demand for English medium. The Hindu on June 24, 2015, reported that “*The High Court on Tuesday cautioned officials of Education Department that it would not hesitate to send them to prison for not adhering to the court’s directions for granting English-medium status to eligible schools in terms of the law declared by it in the Supreme Court.*” (Italics mine). During September 2015 the government of Karnataka is reported to have issued notification ‘...that schools registered in Kannada medium but imparting English medium education should be given retrospective recognition for English medium. Other schools that applied for conversion would get permission for English medium from the current academic year.’ (The Hindu, Sep 15, 2015)

Here is another kind of story of Kannada medium school reported in Prajavani on Aug 20, 2015. Al Kabir Kannada medium High School is an aided government school in Bannimantap area of Mysore. This school has Kannada, English, and Urdu medium. There are

less than 25 students in the 8th to 10th standards in the Kannada medium. So, the Education Department has ordered to close the same and asked to transfer the students to other schools.

The Table-6 illustrates the enrolment of students medium and school management wise during 2018-19 from 1st to 10th standards. It shows that the private un-aided schools are housing 87.69 % of English medium students and only 13.72 % of Kannada medium students. Whereas the Government schools are housing 66.93% of Kannada medium students and only 3.44 % of English medium students.

Table-8
Medium and management wise enrolment 2018-19 from 1st to 10th standards

	Kannada	English	Urdu	Tamil & Telugu	Marathi
Education Department	39,08,516	1,38,617	2,55,253	4,475	72,131
Social Welfare	19,823	1,58,187	628	0	0
Local Bodies	5,643	3,780	216	0	162
Private Aided	11,02,849	1,26,032	67,929	5,423	32,646
Private Un-Aided	8,01,378	35,29,312	60,956	236	9,209
Others	1,316	7,222	3	0	0
Central government	35	61,329	497	0	353
Un-recognised	49	221	0	0	0
Total	58,39,609	40,24,700	3,85,482	10,134	1,14,501

There are two major things that are always ignored in the discourse on language policy implications. First thing is that the common man who gets affected by the policy cannot distinguish between learning a language as a subject in the school and learning a subject through a language, that is medium of instruction. They look alike and understood in the same manner. He perceives both as one and the same and clamours for English medium. Second important thing is language teaching pedagogy whether it is teaching Kannada or English, sans ground realities of the socio-economic factors and actual needs of the students. These languages are taught in the schools not for communication purpose, but for literature and literary sensibilities. They took over the space of communication skills rendering the students poorly educated in both English and Kannada language skills.

Because of the landmark Judgement of the Supreme Court of India on May 6, 2014 where in it was said that ‘...a child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school’, we can say that the issue of medium of instruction in the primary schools not only in Karnataka but also in the country has come to stabilise for next few decades until and unless some drastic political, constitutional changes take place in the country

At present Kannada is not endangered since it is having official patronage and is learnt as mother tongue by sizable group of people. Kannada must survive through learning as a mother tongue by its people. If due to some reason or the other like the one that we are discussing now, if the group switches over to English or some other language, in due course of 3 to 4 generations, the number of speakers may dwindle. Bilingualism in a dominant language like English and Hindi is more dangerous for the existence of Kannada.

Stage-IX

Bilingual medium of instruction: 2019

The demand for learning in the English medium was increasing, and the students were not enrolling in the government schools, there was a crisis in the student enrolment, due to non-availability of such facility adequately in the government schools the parents were opting for the same in the private schools. In this context, the government from the academic year 2019-20 sanctioned 1000 additional English medium section along with Kannada medium in government primary schools. Subsequently, to meet the demand for such facility extra bilingual section was allowed in the years 2019/20 -1001, 2020/21-1003 2024-25-1792. The facility of additional bilingual section with English medium was extended to Urdu primary schools also from 2020/21 in the 400 Urdu medium schools. The bilingual method of teaching through bilingual textbooks (English-Urdu etc.) was expected to help the students to understand the content easily in English through their mother tongue. Totally 4196 schools have bilingual sections with Kannada and Urdu medium in 2025. The number of bilingual schools is increasing from year to year. The government has approved opening of bilingual classes in 1103 Bangalore North and South and districts, and 2897 government schools in other thirty-three educational districts. In addition, the permission has also been given to open new bilingual classes in the government high schools in Tirthahalli, Bilalukoppa, Hosur-Guddakeri, and Heddur of Shivamogga district (July 4, 2025: The Hindu)

It is reported that ‘The aim of the Bilingual Medium Section is to provide the boys and girls the in competitive advantage of Kannada/English bilingualism, irrespective of the family environment they come from’ (School Education:2025). Now, bilingual model of teaching through mother tongue and English medium is becoming popular among the people as well as policy makers. A gradual decline is noticed in the enrolment of the students in the government primary and secondary schools from year-to-year 2022-23:45.46 lakhs, 2023-24: 42.94 lakhs and in 2024-25:40.74 lakhs. In three years, a drop of 10.38% as per the statistics provided in the Legislative council by the Department of School Education and Literacy. One of the reasons cited by the education minister in the Council was ‘Lack of bilingual school....’ Enrolment could increase along with other measures by ‘Bilingual schools...’ (The Hindu, Aug 18, 2025).

This trend is going to change the language education scenario in the state and may also change the scenario in the country also in due course. After a decade or so, Kannada will be learnt certainly as a subject since it is supposed to be a compulsory subject in the schools and there may not be any student left in the school interested to study through his mother tongue or Kannada medium. It will have a great impact on society and create rootless people. People may economically prosper but culturally they will be poor and second-class citizens of their own country. At present Kannada is not endangered since it is having official patronage and is learnt as mother tongue by sizable group of people. Kannada must survive through learning as a mother tongue by its people. If due to some reason or the other like the one that we are discussing now, and change in the language policy, if the group switches over to English or some other language, in due course of 3 to 4 generations, the number of speakers may dwindle. In a century or two, it may become a museum language. I think bilingualism in a dominant language like English or Hindi is more dangerous for the existence of Kannada.

Stage-X

Current scenario: National and the Karnataka language policies

It is essential to recollect the role of national language policy recommendations for education to guide the states in their policy formulation. Three-language formula was considered as a strategy for the problems of multilingual schooling in India. The *National*

Policy on Education of 1968 spoke about the regional languages and the Three Language Formula. The 1986 Policy reiterated the earlier stand. The *States Reorganization Commission* had asked the Union Government to elucidate a policy outline for education in mother tongue at the Secondary stage. The *All-India Council for Education* recommended the adoption of the three-language Formula (TLF) in September 1956. The endorsement for this formula came from various directions. It was adopted by the Chief Ministers' conference. The National Policy on Education 1968 recommended the inclusion of the TLF 'which includes the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the Southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states' in at the Secondary stage. This was reiterated in the *Education Policy 1986* and was adopted as the Programme of Action by the Parliament in 1992. These are major attempts to arrive at a language policy for education in India. Since education is in the concurrent list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the language policy formulation for education and its implementation is left to the State governments under the Constitutional safeguards and broad guidelines cited above.

The National Education Policy-2020 had proposed that: 'The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity. However, there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.' And 'Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language. Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible. This will be followed by both public and private schools. ...' However, the Karnataka government did not accept the NEP:2020 and appointed a commission to study and make recommendations.

Kannada compulsory for graduation

As part of the language education policy an attempt was made by the government of Karnataka to introduce compulsorily Kannada at the undergraduate level in the state. The government vide its order of August 7, 2021, by citing NEP-2020 prescribed Kannada as one of the two languages to be compulsorily studied from the academic year 2021-22 in the undergraduate courses irrespective of the language/s students studied up to Class XII, the state from which they are, their mother tongue or the regional language. This study of compulsory 'Functional Kannada' was of six months duration and not a full-scale subject. This was of two levels – one for those who have studied Kannada before joining undergraduate courses and another one for those who come from outside Karnataka who did not know Kannada. Legality of this order was challenged through a PIL by the Samskrita Bharati (Karnataka) Trust and others in the High Court of Karnataka. The Ministry of Higher Education Government of India informed the court that under NEP-2020, '...higher education institution will use mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction and/or offer bilingually,' The litigated order was stayed in April 2022 by the High Court and subsequently the state government revoked the same.

Karnataka State Education Policy Commission:2025

The Karnataka State Education Policy Commission, in its report submitted to the government on August 8, 2025, has made recommendations relating to language use in education. Since the report till date is not available in the public domain for public scrutiny/research, citation, dependence on the media reports cannot be avoided. Language policy recommendations relating to education are: (a) language policy is applicable to all the

government, aided and private Kannada and English medium schools, (i) Kannada/mother tongue and (ii) English and abandoning the three-language policy currently in vogue. (b) Kannada / mother tongue as medium of instruction up to the 5th standard, if possible, up to the 12th standard (Prajavani: Nov 22, 2025).

According to a report in The Hindu (Aug 12, 2025) the recommended In the English medium schools English is taught as the first language and Kannada as the second language. In the Kannada medium schools, Kannada is the first language and English is the second language. (c) However, in the six Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Hindi, and Malayalam linguistic minority schools - Kannada is compulsory as first or second language; medium of instruction is the mother tongue of the student. In these schools if students opt for their mother tongue as first language, Kannada will be the second language. English will be optional third language. In case the student opts for English, they must opt for Kannada as the first language and English as the second language. In case English is opted as the first language, Kannada will be the second language. Here, students can learn their mother tongue as the third language. One of the members of SEP Task Force (School Education) V.P. Niranjanaradhya has said that (d) 'If Tulu, Konkani, Kodava and other regional language students want to learn in their mother tongue, that is also allowed.' (The Hindu; Aug 12, 2025). While adjudicating a PIL about the State to have its own Education Policy by ignoring the National Education Policy 2020 the High Court of Karnataka ruled not to interfere in the policy decisions of the governments unless they are violative of the Constitutional or statutory rights. The Court did not entertain the petition. (The Hindu: Aug 13,2025). The recommendations of the commission about language education in Karnataka in toto are, all mother tongues inclusive and implement worthy. After due process of approval in toto or with modifications by the government the policy shall be implemented from the academic year 2026-27.

The question of language through which education must be imparted always got entangled with the issue of language(s) to be taught in the schools. The same thing happened in case of Karnataka too. So, we saw in the case of Karnataka the way the issue started with 'which language to be taught and when' but ended up in getting a judgment about teaching through a language too from the courts of law. The anti-Hindi stand of earlier decades, instead of supporting the regional languages, gave rise to the fast growth of education in the English medium. This gave an added advantage to the linguistic minorities who could opt for English due to their perceived threat from the regional language in this case Kannada. Thus, the microscopic minority of English mother tongue succeeded in providing a universal umbrella for all the elites in all categories, the minorities as well as the majority, by creating a common avenue for education through the English medium.

Stage: XI

Impacts

From the point of history of language policy formulation for education in multilingual Karnataka, intervention by individuals, groups of individuals in the form of support/pressure groups with or without common cause/interest, role of institutions like judiciary is an interesting and important issue to note and study. So also social, political, legal, linguistic, and economic aspects linked with language played an important role in deciding position of language(s) in education, media, administration, and other domains. Here is an academic exercise of who did what during the language debate in the legal domains. The parties involved were: on one side - Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee, English Medium Students Parents Association, Associated Management of (Government Recognised, Unaided, English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools, Daffodils English School etc. They did not argue for the cause of Kannada. All of them argued for protection of their Constitutional rights, not for studying through their mother tongue but have the right to choose the medium of

instruction. They succeeded. On other side, the State of Karnataka and some other organisations like the Kannada Development Authority argued in terms of pedagogy, cognition, culture etc. and could not persuade the judiciary from their legal thinking.

After going through the decades of debates on language education in Karnataka, it is essential to see where we stand today. The judgments of the High Court and the Supreme Court on the choice of languages in education and medium of instruction have many implications for language education in multilingual India also. Attempts to remove Sanskrit have miserably failed. Success is in making Kannada a compulsory subject as one of the three languages. Welcome addition is Tulu an indigenous language of Karnataka as third language. As of now:

1. The three-language formula, which was so far designated as a strategy, and which had no direct Constitutional status and was totally dependent on the governmental and institutional support, has now been given a legal sanction and status from the court of the country for its implementation.
2. Teaching a regional language, the Official Language of the state as a compulsory language in the schools, more specifically at the secondary stage, is recognized as legally acceptable. It is even considered as a must.
3. Earlier research had claimed that learning more languages is not a load. The same is reinforced by the judgment that teaching more languages as subjects from primary schools is not a burden imposed on the students.
4. A government need not wait up to 5th standard to introduce a second language. It can be introduced from the 3rd standard itself. Introduction of English as a subject from the 1st standard itself is silently accepted by majority and minority. All the states might have done the same. If not done, may do now.
5. The judgement ‘... child or on his behalf his parent or guardian, has a right to freedom of choice with regard to medium of instruction in which he would like to be educated at primary stage in school,’ will result in linguistic re-colonisation of the country and create rootless citizens from the 21st century onwards. This will gradually affect the linguistic-eco system of Karnataka and will also affect the linguistic-eco system of India.
6. One of the good policy initiatives of the Government of India regarding the medium of instruction is that, according to the CBSE circular, the students learning under its scheme must compulsorily register the name of their mother tongue. Also, they must make their choice of third language known. (Prajavani, September 16, 2015) This may possibly force Karnataka also to do the same.
7. We saw earlier (June 19, 1989) that (i) the Government of Karnataka’s language policy for school education failed to make Kannada a compulsory subject of instruction in the schools and (ii) the Supreme Court (May 6, 2014) ruled that parents have the right to choose the medium of instruction for their children. In its latest effort to make the Official Language of Karnataka-Kannada a compulsory language in the schools of Karnataka the Government has taken a policy decision and come up with *The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015* (Act No.22 of 2015). This Act aims to make teaching of Kannada compulsory from 1st to 10th standards either as a first language or as a second language in a phased manner from the academic year 2015-16 in all the schools of the state irrespective of their funding, status, and establishment.

According to this policy ‘...student who has not opted his mother tongue (other than Kannada) as First or Second Language may study his mother tongue as Third Language.’ This Act has not come into force with which it was intended to be implemented.

Part-III Landscape

The linguistic landscape is ‘The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration.’ Multilingual Karnataka is a visual banquet in this respect. In some area’s it is monolingual, generally bilingual or multilingual, depending on the linguistic composition of the geographical place. The government to bring prominence to the official language of the state and uniformity in the display of names had notified under the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Rules, 1963 that ‘The name board of every establishment shall be in Kannada and wherever other languages are also used, the versions in other languages shall be below the Kannada version’ (Dec 31, 1963). Further to give eminence to Kannada in the public space the clause ‘The name board in Kannada version shall be written predominantly by providing more space than for other languages, if any’ was notified’ (Jan 25, 2008). Though there is an awareness about the display of names in Kannada among the establishments many of them accepted and some others are not adhering. Since the government vehicles were displaying the registration number plates only in English all the concerned were asked to compulsorily display Kannada letters and numerals also along with English letters and numbers (Aug 18, 2000). Though the government had given instruction on Feb 10, 1983, itself to give the government advertisements in Kannada in the Kannada dailies, it was not strictly followed. Hence again strict advice to adhere to the instructions was given to all including allied organisations (Nov 19, 1998). The Bangalore Kempe Gowda International Airport was asked to get the name plates of the shops and commercial establishments written in Kannada; airport and all airlines to provide Kannada newspapers to the travellers and provide services of the Kannada knowing persons in reception, public service etc (May 12, 2009).

Directions were given to display the banners in Kannada in the functions of the government and associated organisations. In case of interstate, national or international functions along with Kannada, English or Hindi were allowed to be used (March 15, 2002). As part of Kannadisation of the towns the government recommended all the concerned to name the unnamed streets, new extensions in the towns, cities, circles, parks with the names of Kannada poets, thinkers, and locally important personalities (Feb 14, 2002).

Part-IV Employment

Gradually, from the late 1970 onwards awareness grew in the public and government that the employment opportunities in the existing sectors have started to shrink for the locals of the state and the new sectors were welcoming outsiders, but locals are not receiving adequate chances. Under these circumstances the government appointed a committee (Aug 4, 1983) with Dr. Sarojini Mahishi as chairperson to ‘...study the present factual position relating to employment of persons belonging to Karnataka in Central Public Sector Undertakings and Banks and other institutions under the control of the Government of India.’ And ‘...ascertain the problems and grievances of the employees who belong to Karnataka in such undertakings.’ The committee was authorised to make recommendations concerning remedial measures. As

desired by the Committee the purview of it was expanded by the government to include the government owned industries and the big private industries also.

The committee made fifty-eight recommendations on Dec 30, 1986, out of them thirteen recommendations were not accepted by the government. Since Karnataka is a multilingual state important issue was to determine who should be considered as Kannadiga for employment? The government on Feb 2, 1985, decided that Kannadiga is the one who knows Kannada to speak, read and write, should have been living in Karnataka for a period of fifteen years and as evidence for the same should submit school certificate, ration card and voter list. The responsibility of implementation of the recommendations of the report was entrusted to various government departments. Dr. Mahishi herself had her expressed unhappiness about non implementation of the report. The report was revised and results of implementation were not visible. The employment opportunities in the government sector are further shrinking and fast opening in the private sector and outsiders are becoming beneficiaries of this expansion. Notwithstanding the efforts of the government the results of implementation of the recommendations even after nearly forty years are not seen. Effort to link language policy to employment opportunities has not yielded desired results.

Part-V

Comprehensive development of Kannada-2022

In its fourth effort, the Karnataka Government, after nearly sixty-six years of the reorganisation of the state and fifty-six years of declaring Kannada as the official language of the state, with its decades of efforts and experience in realizing the policy brought out an all-sector inclusive comprehensive language policy declaration 'The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act, 2022 (Karnataka Act No. 13 of 2023)' for promoting the policy execution. This aims at comprehensive development of Kannada language and providing better opportunities for Kannadigas in education, employment and visibility for Kannada etc. Nevertheless, this is a compilation of earlier policy decisions, with some additions reminds the language policy observers and implementers of it about the constant efforts of the government. The salient and some (not all) relevant features of this Act are summarised here.

Administration: The Kannada Language shall be the Official Language of the State and Local Authorities. It shall be used in all Bills, Acts, Orders, Rules, Regulations, Byelaws issued by the Government, Local Bodies, Boards, Corporations, Statutory and Non-Statutory Bodies or undertakings and registered Co-Operative Societies. Translations of existing Legislations in English shall be published in Kannada; important Central Acts with Karnataka Amendments shall also be translated into Kannada. English will continue to be used for correspondence with the Government of India, Foreign Countries, Other States, High Courts, Supreme Court, and where English must be used as per law and where it cannot be avoided due to administrative reasons or communications are purely technical and scientific in nature, it can be used. Linguistic minorities as far as possible can use Kannada or English for communication with the state government, and its offices. The responses may be in Kannada or in English. To implement the official language policy an enforcement mechanism at the levels of state, district, and taluka are formed. The enforcement officer is expected to do periodical inspection of the offices to confirm compliance and report to the committee. These committees will hold meetings once in three months about steps taken for implementation and report.

Employment: Knowledge of Kannada is precondition for employment in the state government and allied organisations. The selected person must pass the Kannada language examination equivalent to the first or second language of 10th Standard conducted by the approved authority. The person who has already passed such examination is exempted.

Education: The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015 (Karnataka Act 22 of 2015) shall continue to apply. In higher Education, Technical Education and Professional Education: According to the New Education Policy, in Higher, Technical, and Professional Education course, practical and functional knowledge of Kannada relating to the professional course shall be taught as per the decision of the concerned universities. The students who have not studied Kannada as one of the languages at the secondary school shall also be taught basic Kannada as a subject prescribed in the university syllabus. As per the notification of the government specific percentage of reservation in higher, technical, and professional education will be provided to the students who have studied in the Kannada medium from 1st standard to 10th standard in Karnataka or in Kannada medium schools in any other states.

Judiciary: The District or Trial court or Tribunals shall conduct proceedings in Kannada and give the orders and judgments in Kannada; the concerned officer while recording evidence in Kannada, can use English words and phrases if necessary; High Court may by order permit the concerned officer to record evidence in English; the Orders of quasi-judicial functionaries of the State Government shall be in Kannada.

Information Technology: Websites of the government and allied shall be in Kannada in Unicode or available technology from time to time; e-tenders, electronic application forms, messages, letters, etc., shall also be in Kannada. Open-source software and accessories for the effective use of Kannada language will be developed.

Landscape: The nameboards, advertisements, forms, pamphlets, banners, flex, electronic display boards, notices, bills, receipts, should primarily be in Kannada; the name board should display 60% in Kannada and it should be displayed in the upper half of the name board; product name and direction for use produced and sold in the state will be in Kannada in addition to other language.

The state and central government, private establishments in the state with more than one hundred employees should establish 'Kannada cell' and 'basic Kannada teaching unit;' every person will use Kannada also in all communication and correspondence with the public.

Part-VI

Present status of Kannada

Kannada is a language with multiple status, it is (i) a *Scheduled Language* (adopted on November 26,1949 by the Constituent Assembly) due to its listing in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India; (ii) the *Official Language* (1963) of the Karnataka State and (iii) a *Classical Language* (2008) declared by the Government of India since it has - high antiquity of early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500–2000 years; body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers; the literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community and the classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots. Thus, Kannada is simultaneously a modern as well as a classical language.

Part-VII

Epilogue

In the domain of Kannada as official language, policy is static and its implementation is dynamic. Though language policy was declared decades ago, despite committees and authorities with only advisory role giving very valuable inputs for use of Kannada in administration and the government machinery working for its active implementation, has not found complete success. Even in 2025 after the Comprehensive Kannada Development Act 2022 the implementation mechanism in the state has not worked up to the expectations of the government in more than sixty-two years of declaration of Kannada as the official language. This is evident from the communication by the Chief Secretary wherein she has '...instructed

officials to use Kannada extensively for administrative purposes in all State departments and district administrations, warning that disciplinary action will be taken against those who fail to comply' (June 26, 2025: The Hindu)). There is a need of systematic formal evaluation of the policy of use of Kannada in administration rather than opinion-based assessment and decision making. There was a big-time gap of seven years between the reorganization of the state (Nov 1, 1956) on linguistic lines and enacting of the Official Language Act (Oct 5, 1963). There was also a time gap of five years in taking serious steps to implement the stated policy (April 1, 1968; taluk level ...). It was not immediately and rigorously implemented since formation of the unified state.

It is true that prior to the reorganisation of Karnataka, use of Kannada in administration in different geographic parts was uneven, making it even after unification was not an easy task. Medium of instruction from which the government officials originated were also different. Many of them were new to use Kannada in official domains. This was true for one generation of administrators but not for next generations of officials. Lack of strong will power to implement the policy, creation/formation of various toothless committees, authorities etc., without real administrative power for extraneous reasons to oversee the implementation also seem to be some of the causes for ineffective implementation. The implementors see them as scare crows and many of their recommendations are accepted and some others are lingering on paper for posterity. Step by step incremental implementation of the language policy in administration and judiciary is logically sound but due to long time gaps in steps and unknown apathy of implementors, even today Kannada as an official language is not fully implemented. Here, strong political will and not toothless multiple organisations for overseeing is the implementation is the need of the hour.

Language policy in the domain of education in the multilingual state of Karnataka is not static but dynamic, as it stands today, was not framed and implemented in a single stroke, but it has evolved from 1956 through the process of conflict, understanding, adjudication and adjustment of roles for various mother tongues (home languages) as school languages and medium of instruction. It has evolved in several stages with the decisions taken by the recommendations of the committees, legislature, bureaucracy, and the judicial intervention. These decisions were guided at times by the prevalent dominant public opinion and often were adjudicated by the judiciary by looking into the claims and counterclaims of various mother tongue/language groups. Often social, economic, political, legal, and other issues not related to education have influenced the language choice for education. Still the language policy in the domain of education like many other policies is in a fluid state and may take some more time to get stabilised, but it is certain that it has come around one circle with the Supreme Court judgement in 2014 about the medium of instruction. Right to education in once own declared mother tongue has become right to choose a language as medium of instruction for primary education.

In the context of the New Education Policy (2020), it was reported that the Department of Primary and Secondary Education of the Government of Karnataka has recommended to the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India that at the primary level the parents have final word in the selection of medium of instruction of their children. Also, it has recommended that in the higher primary level medium of instruction be bilingual-English as well as mother tongue and at the secondary level schools will have an option to choose the medium of instruction. Regarding number of languages to be taught, it had recommended that at the lower primary level be-2, at the higher primary level 3, at the high school level 2 and at the higher secondary level 1. In the multilingual Union of India, language policy of one state cannot be compared with the policy of another state since each state is multilingually unique, and they are permitted to have their own policy within in the Constitutional framework. And policy is not fixed or stagnant. It gets modified according to the felt needs of the society.

Language policy for education ‘language as a subject and as a medium of instruction’ from 1st to 10th standards in Karnataka has gone through several stages for : primacy of mother tongue in the primary schools from 1st to 4th standards (1956); status of Kannada as a ‘sole’ first language in the secondary schools (1982); only students whose mother tongue is English can study in English medium from 1st to 4th standards (1994); the student or on his behalf parents or guardian has right to choose the medium of instruction (2014) ultimately proved beyond doubt that legal issues are important for judiciary and not the academic or cognitive issues. The poor response of the students to study through their mother tongue, extraordinary love of English medium and support of the government for the same through setting up of new English medium sections. Attempt of the government to compulsorily teach Kannada either as first or second language in schools with ‘The Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015’ not taking off the ground in letter and spirit are important policy initiatives. In the domain of education, mother tongue as a school language has got restricted to linguistic minority schools. All attempts to eliminate Sanskrit as a first language have failed.

After all the discussion on school languages and medium of instruction in the state, today (2025) Karnataka has provisions in the primary and secondary schools to teach Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Malayalam, English, and Sanskrit (7-languages) as first languages; English and Kannada (2-languages) as second languages; Hindi, Kannada, English, Urdu, Sanskrit, Konkani, and Tulu (7-languages) as third languages at the secondary school stage. At the Pre-University stage facility is there to study Kannada, Arabic, English, Optional Kannada, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Marathi, Urdu, Sanskrit and French (11-languages). The students in the state from the primary to secondary stage are allowed to opt for Kannada, English, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, and Malayalam (8 languages) as their medium of instruction. Now, the state has moved from the policy of monolingual medium to bilingual model of teaching through mother tongue and English medium in the government schools. It may spread if it becomes popular and slowly erode all other mediums and hold on only to English medium education. In this scenario it will be a great challenge for the language policy makers/implementers to protect mother tongues as school languages and mother tongue as medium of instruction at least at the primary stage.

The illustration and discussion till now show that the language policy of Karnataka is unique. It has a liberal and accommodative, recognizes its multilingualism, and respects the same. Apart from the domain of administration, education, employment, landscape, etc., it recognises existence of major minor languages within its territory. It is reflected in its decision to develop and promote all the numerically minor minority mother tongues/languages, their literature and culture. Thus, Academies like Kodava Sahitya Academy, Konkani Sahitya Academy, Tulu Sahitya Akademy, Arebhashe sanskrithi and Sahitya Academy, Beary Sahitya Academy and Lambani bhasha Academy are established on the lines of Kannada sahitya Academy. The government provides funds for the promotion of language, literature, and culture by these academies. The contribution for the purpose for which they have been set up needs to be evaluated from time to time.

The language policy of the state in the domain of education and development has almost ignored some of the indigenous mother tongues including tribal once, in its necessary emphasis on Kannada, major minority languages, Sanskrit and English. Supremacy for Kannada is important in Karnataka, but statistically smaller mother tongues spoken in the state are also important. Kannada has pressure groups, and Kodava or Tulu are awakening. But Yerava or Lamani or Soliga or Koraga etc., have no pressure group to fight for the cause of their language in schools. Attempts to make minor languages like Tulu, Konkani as first languages; making Kodava, Lambadi etc., as school languages; creating a space in the schooling for the children of endangered mother tongues like Yerava (total population: 30,359 & mother tongue speakers: 24,574), Jenu Kuruba (total population:36,076 & mother tongue speakers: 11,577), obtaining

actual count of Koraga, Soliga, etc., mother tongue speakers to protect their mother tongues from extinction are challenging tasks. If language planners agree that our endangered languages/mother tongues are our intangible heritage, it is essential that the policies are directed towards preserving such heritage mother tongues through schooling rather than trying only to document them for posterity. Karnataka is an abode of several endangered tribal mother tongues, and these have not been detected even by the language policy makers for their protection and revitalisation. The tribal development plans should have mother tongue revitalisation through education as one of the important components since they can be saved from extinction only through schooling.

The contemporary challenge to the language policy of Karnataka: is in the implementation of Kannada in administration, employment of Kannadigas in all sectors; stabilising language choice for education in schools; creation of an inclusive policy of smaller mother tongues by bringing them into the ambit of education at least at the primary level; and conducting an objective evaluation of its innovative model of bilingual medium of instruction in terms of its pedagogic impact on students. Now, it must be seen how the language policy implementation in all the domains of its use will get an impetus under the bandwagon of use of Artificial Intelligence for human development.

**First completed on August 30, 2025.
Revised on Feb 21, 2026.**

References

- Aadalitha Kannada. Ed. By A Murigeppa and Mukhyamantri Chandru. Hampi, Kannada Vishwavidyalaya. 2009.
- Aadalithadalli Kannada: pramukha aadeshagalu – suttolegalu. Bangalore: Kannada Abhivrudhi Praadhikaara, 2002. And its revised version.
- Aagneгалu-Adeshagalu- A Collection of Pro Kannada Orders, Circulars connected with Administration, Education, Employment, etc., (Chief Editor) L. Hanumanthiah
- All India Official Language Conference 1– 3 March 1978: Souvenir. New Delhi: Department of Official Language. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka vs The State of Karnataka and others. High Court Judgement on July 2, 2008. [ILR 2008 KAR 2895].
- Banakara, Mahadeva. 1986. Aanglara aadalithadalli Kannada. Bangalore, Directorate of Kannada and Culture, government of Karnataka.
- Census of India. 2011. Language Tables and bilingualism tables Government of India.
- Daffodils English School vs State of Karnataka and others. High Court judgement on Oct 3, 2008. [ILR 2009 KAR 104]
- English Medium Students Parents Association vs State of Karnataka. Supreme Court Judgement on Dec 8, 1993.
- Gopala Rao, H.S. 1996. Karnataka ekiikarana ithihaasa. Bangalore, Navakarnataka Publications.
- Government of Karnataka. The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development Act ,2022.
- Government of Karnataka. The Kannada Language Comprehensive Development (Amendment) Act ,2024.
- Government of Karnataka. The Kannada Development Authority Act, 1994.
- Government of Karnataka. Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015.
- Government of Karnataka. The Karnataka Official Language Act, 1963.
- Government of Karnataka. Official language problem analysed (Papers read in the Southern States Official Language Seminar – 1976 at Mysore). Ed. By Jaithirth Rajpurohit. Bangalore: Directorate of Languages and Development of Kannada.

- Government of Karnataka.1986. Swathanthrya puurvadalli aadalitha Kannada. Bangalore: Directorate of Kannada and Culture.
- Jyotsna Kamat.2009. Education in Karnataka through the ages. Bangalore, The Mythic Society.
- Krishnaswamy Iyengar, H.S. 1985. Avalokana; A Compendium on Karnataka's heritage. Bangalore: World Kannada conference, Directorate of Kannada and Culture.
- Linguistic Minorities Protection Committee vs State of Karnataka. High Court judgement on April 29, 1989 [ILR 1989 KAR 1595].
- Mallikarjun, B. 2003. Globalization and Indian Languages. Johann Vielberth and Guido Drexel (eds), Linguistic Cultural Identity, and International Communication. Saarbrucken: AQ-Verlag.23-46.
- Mallikarjun, B. 2004. An Exploration into Linguistic Majority-Minority Relations in India. Language in India. E-Journal, 4. August.
- Mallikarjun, B. 2012. The Evolution of Language Laws in India. A Monograph. Language in India. E-Journal, 12. September.
- Mallikarjun B. (2018). Indian Model of Language Management. Language in India. Vol.18:11. 4. November.
- Mallikarjun B. (2019). Multilingualism in 21st Century India. Language in India. Vol.19:9. September.
- Mallikarjun B. (2020). Language Education in Karnataka Since 1956. Language in India. Vol. 20:3. March.
- Mallikarjun B. (2021). The Eighth Schedule Languages-A Critical Appraisal. Language in India. Vol.21;1. January.
- Mallikarjun B. (2025). Language Education in India-2025: A Call for Mother tongues first in Education. In Bhashe -Baduku (A Book on Insights into Language Policies). Ed. By Santhosh Hanagal. Bangalore: Veeraloka Prathistana.
- Mallikarjun B. (Forthcoming). 'Endangered Tribal Mother Tongues of Karnataka' in 'Tribal Languages of South India and Andaman and Nicobar Islands' Sowmya Dechamma (ed) PLSI Volume:44. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
- Martin Pütz & Neele Mundt (eds). Expanding the Linguistic Landscape: multilingualism, Methods and techniques for linguistic landscape research: About definitions, core issues and technological innovations. Durk Gorter1,2 1. University of the Basque Country UVP/EHU 2. IKERBASQUE – Basque Foundation for Science Pre-final version of a chapter (to appear in: Language Policy and the Use of Space as a Semiotic Resource. Bristol: Multilingual Matters).
- National Curriculum Document for School Education: A Discussion Document. 2000. New Delhi: National Council for Educational Research and Training,
- National Curriculum Framework for School Education: January 1, 2000
- National Education Policy -2020. Government of India.
- National Curriculum Framework for School Education -2023.
- Rajapurohita, Jayatirtha. 1976. Kannada tirpugalu.: Institute of Kannada Studies. University of Mysore. Mysore.
- Rajapurohita, Jayatirtha. (1985). *Kannada as State Language* in Avalokana; A Compendium on Karnataka's heritage. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, H.S (Ed)Bangalore: World Kannada conference, Directorate of Kannada and Culture.
- Report of the Educational Reform in Mysore. J.B.Mallaradhya Committee. February 1953.
- Report of the Language Committee (Dr. Gokak Committee). 27th January 1981
- Report of the Secondary Education Commission (Mudaliar Commission Report). Ministry of Education. Government of India. June 1953
- Sahyadri Education Trust vs State of Karnataka on July 4, 1988. [ILR Vol.38. 1988].

Source of Educational Statistics: U-DISE Reports, Government of Karnataka.
State of Karnataka and Anrvs Associated Management of (Government Recognised –
Unaided – English Medium) Primary and Secondary Schools and Others: Supreme
Court Judgement on May 6, 2014.
Suryanath U Kamat (Chief Editor).1982. The Karnataka state gazetteer-Part I. Bangalore:
Government of Karnataka.
Thirumalai, M. S. 2003. Lord Macaulay: The Man Who Started It all and His Minute.
Language in India. E-Journal, Vol.3:4. April.
UNESCO.1951. The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education. Paris.

Teaching English in a Multilingual Setting: A Case for Translanguaging

Srividya S., PhD.

Associate Professor

Dept. of English

Govt. Arts and Science College, Kozhinjampara, Palakkad

vidyasiv@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper evaluates the effectiveness of teaching English as an additional language in a primary school in the Tamil Linguistic Minority region of Palakkad District in Kerala. The study is set against the backdrop of the National Education Policy, which recommends using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, at least at the primary level. Drawing on a year-long English language skills acquisition programme conducted by a government college for students at a nearby local school in Athicode, Kozhinjampara, this paper aims to unravel the intricacies of teaching English in a multilingual environment. Based on 2 years of pedagogical experience, translanguaging is seen as an effective means of integrating additional language learning into mother tongue education, thereby providing a comfortable, approachable linguistic space for multilingual students in India.

Introduction

The significance of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary classes has been validated and emphasised worldwide. When India, a multilingual country, implements this change, it will fundamentally alter the dynamics of English-language education in the country. This paper addresses this issue based on the experience of teaching English to primary students in a linguistic minority region. Located at the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, the area is also bilingual, with two languages, Tamil and Malayalam. The need to think about teaching English as a foreign language and as a lingua franca to thousands of similar students across the country from now on is undoubtedly a very pertinent and challenging prospect. Added to this are factors such as students from lower- or middle-class socio-economic backgrounds, most of whom are first-generation learners, or whose first language is their mother tongue. They lack exposure to English, which could make it difficult for them to internalise its structure.

Background and Context

The study is based on a project undertaken at a Government Primary school in Kozhinjampara, a Tamil-speaking linguistic minority area in the district of Palakkad, Kerala.

The students use both Tamil, the language of Tamil migrants, and Malayalam, the state's official language. The project, called the *English is Cool* program, was launched by the Department of English of the Government Arts and Science College, Kozhinjampara, as an extension activity of the college.

Earlier, the Department had conducted a survey of the Nallepilly panchayat to assess the dropout rate among college students. The study's findings showed that, among many other factors, including socio-economic status and parents' lack of education, many students found it very difficult to understand subjects taught in English at the college level. That led to a considerable dropout ratio. Sheeja Kuriakose, in her dissertation, concludes from a quantitative survey on linguistic minority rights in Palakkad that, though people are aware of their linguistic rights and prefer Tamil over Malayalam or other languages, there is a gradual shift among the younger generation toward a preference for education in Malayalam rather than Tamil. As the respondents' education and job status increased, they wanted their children to have access to education in other languages (385-386). In line with this argument, we could see fewer students admitted to regional-language medium schools.

We also visited a nearby lower primary school. We found, through discussions with the school's teachers, that admissions decreased because it was a regional-language medium school that taught Malayalam and Tamil. Therefore, the parents were not ready to admit their children. This situation motivated us to start a year-long program in 2022 to help the students develop English language proficiency. The department's undergraduate students received ELT training from external and internal mentors, who were sent to the school daily to teach lower and upper primary students. The programme used a communicative approach to English language teaching, with activities and worksheets customised for each student. The students were divided into four groups according to their level.

This paper examines the project's efficacy, examining how students have benefited from this approach and the challenges in teaching English to regional language medium students.

Research questions and objective :

1. What challenges do students and teachers from multilingual backgrounds face in acquiring a foreign tongue?
2. How do multilingual situations affect the learning of another language?

Understanding this impact is crucial for designing effective language learning strategies in multilingual environments.

Significance and Scope

When India adopts the National Education Policy, which introduces the critical decision of learning in the mother tongue, it will undoubtedly pave the way for a revolutionary change that will end the language debate in intellectual circles. This will lead to a more comfortable learning environment and a better cultural context for Indian kids.

However, there are arguments over the impact of dominant languages on minority and tribal languages, and the exclusion they entail.

Although there are numerous arguments over the use of regional languages, it remains the case that English still occupies a dominant role as the co-official language of India alongside Hindi and as an elite language is mired in the “inter-regional ethnolinguistic politics” (Bharadwaj) of language in post-colonial India. English-language education in India must consider this divide when formulating policies. Although English language education has improved considerably in urban areas, rural areas have yet to benefit. Most students from rural areas find it extremely difficult and demoralising to use English as a language of interaction in official, academic, educational and other social contexts.

Notwithstanding, research on the acquisition of languages by children has focused on the positive role of the mother tongue not only in the learning of subjects but also in the acquisition of another language. This study provides practical insights into the challenges and benefits of this approach.

Literature Review

The fact that people proficient in a country's dominant language have more social advantages and cultural legitimacy is well established. Building on his idea of cultural capital, Pierre Bourdieu examines how people's linguistic capital becomes a game-changer in societal interactions. Therefore, accessibility to this symbolic capital also becomes a citizen's right. In the case of India, the use of English as a second language and an official language has created a lot of opportunities for the privileged and problems for the underprivileged.

The challenges faced by minority students in acquiring knowledge of subjects in English, as well as the hardships (Jhingran) and potential strategies for developing English as another language (Mahanand, Dewan and Mukherjee), have been researched with rigour. The politics and social dynamics of English language teaching in India (S.K. Das, Ghodke), the need for context-specific multilingual education (Mohanty and Mishra, Sridhar), and the need to implement mother tongue-based education for promoting social equity (Srinivasan), point to the urgent need to address the problem for a socially just educational turn. Sinha notes the convergence of scaffolded instruction, collaborative learning, multimodal resources, differentiated instruction, interactive teaching methods, continuous assessment and feedback, professional development for teachers, and community and parental involvement as essential strategies for an outcome-based learning process.

Focusing on the challenges faced by linguistic minorities, Annamalai argues for balancing the legacy of English with its decolonisation for the use of underprivileged sections of Indian society. This is much required in the context of the globalised economy and, equally significant for national cohesion, is the use of the mother tongue, which enables equal opportunities for minorities.

In acknowledging the linguistic resources of a multilingual student and thereby augmenting his capacity to learn new languages, Jim Cummins terms Translanguaging/cross-linguistic pedagogy a practice gaining international significance in the context of large-scale

immigration worldwide. This pedagogy draws on the linguistic resources of the learner's mother or home language and does not see one language as having any specific superiority over another. Here, the teacher considers a learner's bilingual resources as advantageous rather than detrimental to learning a second language. This cross-linguistic pedagogy effectively uses students' multilingual repertoires rather than the traditional grammar-translation method, practised out of context. It even enables translation between languages, making it an effective tool for learning another language.

Contextualisation of Research Topic

When the programme was launched, during the first year, the resources used were from the BBC Learning English website and British Council Learn English programs. During the first year, the students were grouped into lower and upper primary groups, and the instructors were asked to provide LSRW activities. However, the results were not very satisfactory, as evidenced by the school students' summative assessments. The instructors also reported on the challenges they faced in the bilingual class. Consequently, the classes were further divided into four groups, and new, graded texts were introduced that were more contextually grounded and culturally relevant to the Indian students.

Storytelling is a tool that has been widely used to enhance learners' interest. In one exciting session, storytelling was used to capture students' attention. The instructors performed storytelling in English, and students of the Tamil medium were asked to render the story in their language, which they did effortlessly. This made the language classroom more interactive and fun to be in. This also reduced learners' inhibitions about taking part in the English language classroom. This was repeated in Malayalam medium classes with similar results. Thus, using students' language resources made the classes more active and yielded better results than in a monolingual classroom. In another exercise, students were encouraged to write about themselves using cues and were asked to translate the same into their mother tongues, which they did with considerable ease.

When students showed a moderate improvement in their English language skills in the second year of the program, challenges remained. The lack of sufficient infrastructure in the school posed a problem for adopting listening activities in the form of audio and video recordings. Due to insufficient projectors, more extensive reading texts were not introduced in the classes either. However, translanguaging emerged, inadvertently, as an enabling tool in such situations.

Methodology

To assess the efficacy of the program and the challenges faced in teaching English as an additional language to Tamil linguistic minority students, we designed two questionnaires which used a descriptive research design to collect feedback from both the instructors who were actively involved in teaching English and the school teachers who monitored these classes and directly were in-charge of the students. The structured questionnaire used both quantitative and qualitative analysis, including ratings on various aspects of the program, and included open-ended questions to gather comments and suggestions. Regular feedback was

also taken from the school authorities. This was done to compare the responses of both the instructors and the school teachers about the program. The students were assessed based on formative and summative assessments. Interviews with the students were also conducted.

Results and Discussions

Survey 1

The survey by 75 respondents who participated in the program as instructors indicated a predominantly positive experience. Most rated their experience as "Excellent" or "Good." They also suggested that a significant percentage of students (75% and above) benefited from the program. Activity-based methods, language games, and group work were highlighted as particularly influential. However, though the multilingual nature of the classroom was challenging for them, 52% affirmed that it also had a positive advantage on the learning experience. The use of a common language proved less inhibitive for the learners. Some instructors recommended utilising more multilingual resources and a common language to interact with and attract the students to the learning process and using visual tools to enhance the program further. In addition, some instructors found code-switching an indispensable practice in a multilingual setting.

Survey 2

The survey aimed to gather feedback from teachers on the program's effectiveness and to collect suggestions for improvements. Feedback was collected from schoolteachers who observed the program's impact on their students, capturing their views on its effectiveness and challenges. The teachers opined that learning a foreign language is challenging for students of the regional language medium. According to their observations, only 50% of the students benefited from the programme. However, they agreed that overall, English proficiency improved after two years of the program.

Both surveys highlight the overall positive impact of the English Skill Acquisition Program. From the instructor's perspective, the first survey emphasises effective teaching methods and the management of multilingual classrooms. In contrast, the second survey, from the teachers' perspective, highlights the challenges regional-language-medium students face and suggests practical improvements to the program's implementation.

Implications and contributions to the field

A.K. Mohanty and Pattnayak rightly point out that, even though there is policy support for mother-tongue-based multilingual education, its practical implementation in classroom and marginalised student community settings remains a dream; there is a wide gap between policy and practice. If education has to become sustainable, inclusive, and equitable, this must be treated urgently. Using a translanguaging methodology for teaching English in Indian classrooms could yield better results, as it motivates learners to overcome their inhibitions and use their language to learn another language. This can provide an atmosphere that is not intimidating for the learner and accentuates her learning speed. More than monolingual classrooms, we need more spaces where multiple languages are at play.

Conclusion

The program shows the need to integrate the learner's language as an indispensable tool in learning an additional language, which may or may not be similar. As Deidre Kirwan notes:

Valuing pupils' home languages and encouraging them to use their growing language skills in school presents essential opportunities to facilitate the development of plurilingual repertoires and language awareness in all learners. (44)

However, the classroom practices must be thoroughly thought out and carefully planned. It should not revert to the grammar-translation method, which completely ignores listening and speaking skills in that language. The unique challenges in addressing the needs of Tamil Linguistic Minority students must be considered, and practical strategies devised. This may include addressing the shortage of ample bilingual texts, which could be a significant deficit in such a process.

At this stage, it is imperative to delve deeper into ways to devise multilingual tasks that benefit Indian students. Teachers must be trained and updated on the approaches and methodologies to be adopted in such a language classroom. Bilingual texts, visual and aural aids, collaborative learning tasks, and graded learning strategies are essential in this approach. More research on Translanguaging practices will provide new avenues for English language learning in India.

Works Cited

- Annamalai, E. "Nation-Building in a Globalised World: Language Choice and Education in India." *Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language-in-Education Policy and Practice*, edited by E. Annamalai, Multilingual Matters, 2005, pp. 20-39.
- Bharadwaj, Vasudha. "Language of Power or 'Fringe Language'?: English in Postcolonial India, 1946-1968." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 247, 2017. (link unavailable).
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Cummins, Jim. *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Multilingual Matters, 2000.
- Dewan, Manish, and Dhiraj Mukherjee. "Teaching English to the Underprivileged and Marginalised Students in India: Problems and Prospects." *The English Classroom*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2018, pp. 65-79.
- Ghodke, Digambar M. "English For Students From Marginalised Sections At The Tertiary Level: An Inclusive Approach." *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes* (2024): 107-116.
- Jhingran, Dhir. *Language Disadvantage: The Learning Challenge in Primary Education*. APH Publishing, 2005.

- Kirwan, Deidre. "Multilingual Environments: Benefits for Early Language Learning." *TEANGA: The Journal of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics*, vol. 10, Mar. 2019, pp. 38-57. <https://doi.org/10.35903/teanga.v10i0.69>.
- Kuriyakose, Sheeja. *Linguistic Reorganisation of States in India: Safeguards and Issues of Tamil Linguistic Minorities in Palakkad District*. Mahatma Gandhi University, 2018. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/249069>.
- Mohanty, Ajit K. "Multilingual Education: A Bridge Too Far?" *Multilingual Education for Social Justice: Globalising the Local*, edited by Ajit K. Mohanty, Orient Blackswan, 2009, pp. 3-18.
- Mahanand, Anand. *Multilingual Education in India: The Case for English*, 2017. www.researchgate.net/publication/335636247_Multilingual_Education_in_India_The_Case_for_English
- Pattanayak, Debi Prasanna. *Multilingualism and Mother-Tongue Education*. Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Rao, Srinivasa. "India's Language Debates and Education of Linguistic Minorities." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 43, 2008, pp. 63-69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40277928>.
- Sridhar, Kamal K. "Language in Education: Minorities and Multilingualism in India." *International Review of Education*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1996, pp. 327-47. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3444906>. Accessed 6 Aug. 2024.

=====
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 26:3 March 2026
=====

Reimagining Classical Languages: From Cultural Heritage to Digital Hypertext

Dr. Sunanda M. Shinde

Assistant Professor,

D. Y. Patil College of Engineering and Technology, (Autonomous)

Kasaba Bawada, Kolhapur, 416006

sunandagpatil@gmail.com

=====
Abstract

It is conventional that formal teaching and institution has played a critical role in the preservation of classical languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Pali and Bengali. In today's digitalized and globalized world, but, a new perspective is needed. This paper presents classical languages as continuous and dynamic knowledge systems, rather than temporary and cultural heritages. By understanding these languages as active institutions of logic and philosophy, we can move from passive arousal to active use. In sum, it is critical that the

=====
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 26:3 March 2026

linguistic heritage of India survive through a process of enmeshing tradition with innovation. Digital tools and Artificial Intelligence can be used to maintain the authenticity and robustness of the classical languages in order to create future knowledge out of these languages. This makes the old languages to be alive, usable and pertinent to the next generations. Through such changes, these languages can not only perform well in the classroom, but they also can operate in the context of the modern information ecology.

Keywords: Classical Languages, Digital Humanities, Artificial Intelligence, Language Preservation, Multilingual Education, Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

In the case of the term of classical language being referred to; the reference of classical language was done to the old manner of speaking and the focus was made on the hard drives of human history. These languages possess the ability to preserve profound anecdotes of the wisdom of our fore fathers, their social reminiscence and even their identity. In India, the status of languages as classical language is not only good honour but also pledge to maintain a good line of connection to our origins. However, nowadays these languages have a lot of problems in a digital world of instant communication and trading across the globe. A lot of youths particularly the gen z youths pose the question Does this still matter to me? Although we continue to admire these languages in rituals or history books, it tends to be detached with life.

The way forward is not to treat these languages like antique pieces in museums meant only to be seen. Instead the global academic community is realizing we need to bring them into the 21st century. The need is to move them from the museum and bringing back in the active use. Those languages should be treated as living systems of knowledge that can interact with science, ethics, and technology. With this it can be ensured that classical languages are not just remembered they are used.

The study advances the existing preservation initiatives through a refocusing on a global and forward-thinking structure. It goes beyond policy support to examine the ways in which classical languages can get a new life through digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) and contemporary multilingual education. We can make this heritage more accessible and researchable than ever before by turning ancient scripts into the digital data that is easily searchable and by using AI to unravel the mysteries of the complex texts.

2. Classical Languages: Concept and Global Significance

It is not only that a language is old that it is called classical; rather it is the wealth of knowledge contained in it. These languages normally evolve at a golden age, a period when a civilization is greatly advanced in science, art, literature, and philosophy. They reproduce the most significant ideas and findings of the human race in an easily comprehensible and permanent form. In contrast to the contemporary spoken languages that are utilized in their day-to-day communication, the classical languages are closely structured and accurate. They are powerful and sound documents that maintain the cultural, intellectual and historical memory of a civilization.

In every corner of the globe, languages like Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Classical Chinese and Arabic are the languages that have influenced the way individuals think and learn. They were the primary knowledge languages of their time. In some cases, contemporary Western conceptions of law, medicine, and politics are based on Latin and Greek. The languages do not

consist merely of words, but are structures of thought that help us perceive the world. They also make a close connection between the present and thousands of years of human knowledge and experience.

On the international level, the classical languages are not simply the symbols of national pride but also assist us in interpreting the concept of human civilization on the whole. They provide important evidence in the study of the way human language has evolved in time, in linguistics and philology. Studying their grammar and meanings, scholars are able to trace their connections to other language groups and observe how contemporary languages have expanded out of ancient ones thousands of years ago.

This was a big step initiated in 2004 when the Indian government established a special category to show appreciation to the oldest language treasures of the country by establishing a category called Classical Language. Initially, the bar was established on three key pillars including that the language must be more than a millennium old, it must have a fair amount of ancient literature that generations have kept close to their heart, and most importantly, the literary tradition of the language must be original, as opposed to borrowed off some other culture.

This was a big step initiated in 2004 when the Indian government established a special category to show appreciation to the oldest language treasures of the country by establishing a category called Classical Language. Initially, the bar was established on three key pillars including that the language must be more than a millennium old, it must have a fair amount of ancient literature that generations have kept close to their heart, and most importantly, the literary tradition of the language must be original, as opposed to borrowed off some other culture.

Globally, the classical languages are significant in the fields of learning, culture and tradition. They provide such rich material that they are used in fields such as comparative linguistics and philology to understand how languages vary, construct grammatical forms, demystify meaning, and trace interrelations between language groups in antiquity. Speaking of the philosophical thought and ethical principles in the world, the ancient authors still can provide the practical opinion on what is of interest to people and what is still significant today. Old words have an ancient origin and are still used to influence the way people speak in cross-cultural settings. Due to these languages, researchers use these languages to associate old writings with the living languages based on the common meaning. They are not confined to grammar or inscription, but they lead to the research of healing practices that have been long forgotten. They are even excessively in numbers, too star-shaped, harmonious with nature, even traditionally-inspired math. That they are not mere dead objects on shelves, but lead thought in laboratories, in wood and street and town. What is notable is the fact that they serve as global entities of knowledge which contribute to what is known by the people in the world. Learning more about them enhances cross-cultural understanding, fosters more effective collaboration among scholars, and helps retain old wisdom to their use in the modern world and generations to come.

In 2004, the Indian government made a significant move and introduced a special category in awarding exceptional linguistic treasures in the country by introducing a special category of Classical Language. Initially, the bar was established on the criteria of three key pillars; the language must be more than a thousand years old, must have an extensive legacy of ancient literature that generations have been proud of, and above all the literary tradition must be original, not an importation of another culture.

In fact, we see the need for greater precision which is what prompted the revision of these standards in 2005 at the behest of the Sahitya Akademi expert committees' advice. This update in turn made for the recognition of Sanskrit as an official language. What we did was to raise the bar we went back in time to 1500 2000 years and at the same time put forward a continuous rich literary history as a must. Also of note is that we required a break between the "classical" version of the language and its modern form which we found to have evolved so as to consider the ancient versions of these languages as almost independent systems of knowledge.

Based on work of Linguistic Experts Committees (LEC) which reported to the Sahitya Akademi these criteria were restructured in 2005. After this change Sanskrit was given the status of a classical language. What the revised criteria did was to put more stress on the language's age (1500 2000 years' back), to present a very rich and continuous body of literature, originality of that literature and to put out the classical language as a clear entity from its modern forms which may or may not have that classicity.

In 2024, the government continued to develop these rules in the spirit of being more inclusive and incorporating more research. While the requirement of ancient roots remained the same, the focus began to shift toward "hard evidence." For a language to be recognized as classical, the language could not be based solely on legends, poetry, and other literary expressions. It had to provide proof in the form of ancient writings and, more importantly, knowledge texts. These texts were prose writings that pertained to philosophy, science, or law.

A classical language does not have to mirror its modern descendant. We see that over the course of thousands of years languages change so greatly as to become almost unrecognizable from the modern version. By this we note that which there is a break in the continuity, the government put in place measures to protect and study the separate great intellectual achievements of the past which may be very different from what is present in the modern language which has gone a different way.

In 2024 at a historic turn of events in October 3rd India put in place a which saw the expansion of its classical languages by the addition of Bengali, Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, and Assamese to the select group. Also joining the initial six Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia this brings the total to eleven. This is not simply a reorganization of which languages are included; it is a great step forward in the recognition of what makes up the linguistic tapestry of India. Out of over 1,600 languages which are spoken in the sub-continent these eleven represent the base which a language tree has grown from over thousands of years and which has been shaped by migration, faith and local tradition.

This governmental recognition does not only pay tribute to the past, it is a stage to the future. By encouraging these languages India is releasing as much of the ancient knowledge as it can to us as we, in turn, diminish the distance between ancient and modern researchers and students. We are opening new areas to world academic inquiry and it is through that too which we are proposing to the world Indian rich literary traditions both the philosophical profundities of Pali and the very breath of life that is Marathi. This is a strong point that the civilizational identity of India is not something to be put away in a museum, but instead it is a history that is alive and breathing and is constantly changing.

3. Literature Review

The language and literature of India is one of the rich and varied languages globally. The country is a tremendous living mosaic with over 1,600 language varieties spoken around the

sub-continent due to the thousands of years of migration, religion, social change and historical experience. The scholars hold that the evolution of the Indian languages is not only a linguistic issue; it is also a symbol of the civilizational pulse of the country that has remained extremely consistent over the course of both antiquity and contemporary periods.

India is also a leading example of multilingualism which is mainly supported by the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language groups. Nevertheless, the image is further enriched by the presence of the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages, which are the main pillars of the identity of the central and northeastern India. Although the 2011 Census reports that 22 languages are officially in use by the Constitution as an Eighth Schedule, hundreds of regional languages and dialects bring more nuances to such a rich scenery.

The debate of classical languages is changing in academic circles. Other philosophers such as Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar believe that they should not be regarded as dusty relics. Rather, they are living connections, which connects us because of the same morals and the same intellectual past. According to Sarkar, the best example could be Sanskrit that is an ancient power that influenced not only the language in India, but also in South and Southeast Asia. Another splendid paradox also brought about by him is that although those southern languages as the Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Malayalam languages have maintained their own ancient forms, their lexicons have been shot through with Sanskrit, and this is a sight that just goes to show how much these traditions have conversed with each other over the ages.

The richness is reflected in the literary worlds that these languages have created. In the north, such languages as Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and Marathi have generated enormous literature. The example of Hindi literature, which had moved out of the epic ambit of the Ramayana to the heartfelt Bhakti poems of the Middle Ages and thence into the contemporary social realism. Urdu has recognized the ghazal and nazm to discuss the issues of love and social justice, and the Bengali literature entered the world of literature through the genius of Rabindranath Tagore.

The south tells an equally powerful story. Tamil stands as one of the world's oldest classical languages, with a literary streak that hasn't broken for over 2,000 years, beginning with the Sangam era. Telugu literature reached its peak during the magnificent Vijayanagara period, Kannada is celebrated for its revolutionary Vachana poetry that pushed for social reform, and Malayalam literature beautifully captures the socio-political heart of Kerala.

Recently, the government has stepped up to turn this pride into policy. A major milestone occurred in October 2024, when Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali were added to the classical list. This move makes India the only country in the world to officially recognize eleven classical languages, a clear signal of its commitment to saving its ancient knowledge. The Ministry of Education has backed this up by setting up dedicated universities for Sanskrit, a specialized institute for Classical Tamil, and centers of excellence in Mysuru to ensure these languages are researched and taught at the highest levels.

It isn't just a government effort, though. Groups like the Sanskrit Promotion Foundation are working to make learning accessible to everyone, while the National Translation Mission is busy translating complex academic texts into regional languages. This ensures that a student doesn't have to give up their native tongue to succeed in higher education.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is seen as the real "game-changer" here. By emphasizing early education in a child's mother tongue and creating high-quality bilingual textbooks, the policy aims to build students who are both culturally rooted and intellectually confident. Researchers believe this is the key to keeping classical languages sustainable. The consensus is clear: we have a solid foundation, but to truly thrive in a digital, globalized world, we must keep finding new ways to weave these ancient languages into our technology, our classrooms, and our daily lives.

4. Classical Languages in the Digital and AI Era

The greater rise of artificial intelligence and computer technology has completely changed the playing field of the traditional languages. Quite to the contrary, these tools are now potent allies that contribute to the fact that ancient traditions can be made alive so that they can be available to a student and researcher globally.

The digitization of physical treasures such as manuscripts, inscriptions and palm-leaf records has become one of the largest changes. Previously, these texts were not that easy to study; you needed to travel somewhere to a certain library and the documents also were often too delicate to read. Those barriers have been eliminated in the digital archives and online repositories today. The rare and delicate texts are currently being rescued off physical rot and made available on high resolution text, which can be studied by anyone with some internet connection.

Not only by capturing images of old pages, but also through digital humanities projects are rendering this information searchable and interactive with the use of AI. The patterns of thousands of years of history, philosophy, and medicine can now be analyzed using annotated databases and linguistic tools by scholars. This is not only safeguarding the past as it is keeping the vast amount of knowledge contained in these classical systems safe and alive to be used and applied by the next generation.

4.2 Language Processing and Artificial Intelligence

A major problem of the classical languages today is the reduction in student interest which has frequently been caused by the perceived lack of career opportunities. Evidence has shown that often the traditional text-based nature of teaching does not appeal to the students of today that often are bored with the heavy emphasis on memorization and complex grammar rules and the fact that they are not allowed to see the real beauty of the language. A possible solution to this issue is technology-enhanced pedagogy which allows the classroom to become more interactive and student-centered.

With the help of blended learning models, mobile applications, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), the classical language teaching becomes much more flexible to the current lifestyles. The tools that might be used to simplify the otherwise intricate grammatical structure to be easier to digest and remember might be digital stories telling, gamification, and audiovisual. With such resources, students are free to learn the content as fast as they want and at the same time in a very academically rigorous way. At the end of the day, the inclusion of technology in the teaching process repositioned classical languages as something thought provoking and practical. Rather than being regarded as being dead or inert, they are lively systems that appeal to a larger and more diverse audience. These languages with greater accessibility and interactivity will be kept as an important element of our international intellectual community, and not merely a scholarly interest.

4.3 Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy

The lack of interest in classic languages as well as the perceived lack of career opportunities is one of the biggest challenges of the classical languages nowadays. Studies based on surveys indicate that the old-fashioned text-based instructional techniques do not necessarily appeal to the modern learners. Technology based pedagogy provides the best remedies to these problems by changing the way the classical languages are taught and learnt.

Classical language education can be more interactive, flexible, and learner-centered with the help of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), mobile learning applications, multimedia resources, and blended learning models. Complex grammatical ideas and improved understanding can be simplified with the use of audio-visual content, gamified learning tasks, and digital storytelling. Blended learning which involves integration of classroom teaching with use of digital applications enable the learner to study the classics language at their pace without compromising on academic standards.

With the help of the use of technology in pedagogy, classical languages will be rebranded as thought-provoking and practical and, thus, appeal to more and more diverse learners.

4.4 Discussion: Preservation to Empowerment.

As it is analyzed in the present study, the preservation is not enough to ensure that the classical languages do not disappear. Classical languages need to be vigorously enabled by incorporating modern educational, technological and cultural orientations although it is important to maintain the texts and traditions.

One, instead of being confined to the exclusive or elite academic environment, the classical languages should be included in the mainstream and multilingual education. Second, it is possible to relate the classical languages to the current areas such as sustainability, ethics, environmental studies, and artificial intelligence to illustrate the relevances in addressing the modern global issues. Many of the classical works offer very valuable thoughts on sustainable living, social harmony and moral reason that are quite topical in modern problems.

Third, popular culture, digital platforms and creative media should be promoted to encourage people to use the classical languages especially the younger generations. In international academic and professional life, classical languages become significant again when brought as the tool of the critical thinking, the ethical reflection and the cultural understanding. This plan

was effective in balancing the innovation, employability and global relevance as well as preserving the heritage.

5. Conclusion

The old languages are living systems of learning that affect our values, culture and the thought of man. They are living traditions of thought that can be adapted to the changing needs and possibilities of education and technology, not frozen relics of former ages.

Classical languages will only leave as long as they are involved in significant interaction with the educational technology and knowledge networks of global society that manifests in the policy and debate. In this paper the author emphasizes that digital developments and cross disciplinary use can save these languages. In a world of digital transformation and emergence of AI digital Humanities and Technology informed pedagogy are bound to prevail in the classical languages in the new millennium as a dynamic source of inspiration and information. This strategy will mean that even in the future the languages will be capable of educating empowering and linking generations of all backgrounds and subjects.

References

Berti, M. (2019). *Digital humanities and ancient texts: Tools, methods, and challenges*. Springer.

Central Institute of Classical Tamil. (2023). *Research, translation, and preservation of classical Tamil literature*. Government of India.

Central Institute of Indian Languages. (2022). *Centres of excellence for classical languages*. Mysuru: CIIL.

Census of India. (2011). *Census of India 2011: Language data*. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

Crane, G. (2016). What do you do with a million books? Digital humanities and classical studies. *D-Lib Magazine*, 22(7/8).

Crystal, D. (2010). *Language death*. Cambridge University Press.

Jurafsky, D., & Martin, J. H. (2023). *Speech and language processing* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

McCarty, W. (2014). *Humanities computing*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Mete, J., & Dutta, S. (2024). *Beauty in Indian languages*. GSAR Publishers.

Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *Establishment of central universities for Sanskrit*. Government of India.

Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.

National Translation Mission. (2023). *About the National Translation Mission*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.

Press Information Bureau, Government of India. (2024). *Efforts of government for protection and preservation of classical languages*. Ministry of Culture, Government of India.

Press Information Bureau, Government of India. (2024). *Status of classical language: An explainer*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Sanskrit Promotion Foundation. (2023). *Promoting Sanskrit through education and research*. Government of India-supported initiative.

Sarkar, P. R. (1999). *The evolution of Indian languages*. Ananda Marga Publications.

UNESCO. (2018). *Safeguarding endangered languages*. UNESCO Publishing.

Morphology of Pronominals of Sheikha Gal: A Descriptive Study

Mehnaz Rashid, Ph.D.

Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir,
Hazratbal, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India, 190006.
Email: mehnazku2022@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study primarily aims to provide a description of the pronominal system in Sheikha Gal, a language spoken by the marginalized indigenous community of the Kashmir region of India. The different types of pronouns have been presented with their detailed paradigms to show the variation in pronouns along the grammatical categories of person, number, and case. Interestingly, the pronouns in Sheikha Gal take case inflections like regular nouns which have been explained in a detailed manner.

Keywords: Pronominals, Case, Sheikha Gal, Number, Oblique.

Introduction

Pronouns constitute a closed class of deictic and anaphoric expressions that function as pro-forms or substitutes for noun phrases in a language. As noted by Thomas E. Payne (2006), pronouns are free forms (as opposed to affixes) that can independently occupy the position of a noun phrase within a clause. Similarly, Paul R. Kroeger (2005: 45–46, 138–140) observes that virtually every position where a noun phrase may occur can be replaced by a pronoun. Kroeger further emphasizes that a pronoun substitutes not merely for a noun but for an entire noun phrase (NP). Because pronouns display a distribution distinct from that of common nouns but comparable to proper names, they are best analysed as belonging to the NP category rather than the Noun category.

Pronouns are typically not modified by determiners and only rarely by adjectives, reinforcing their status as complete noun phrases. Across languages, pronominal systems commonly encode grammatical categories such as person, number, and gender. In addition to these core categories, some languages exhibit specialized pronominal forms that reflect the speaker's social relationship with the hearer. In such cases, the choice of personal pronouns serves as an important marker of politeness, shaped by factors such as relative social status, age, and degree of intimacy. For instance, in both Hindi and Urdu, the personal pronoun /a:p/ functions as an honorific form of address for singular as well as plural referents, signalling respect toward the addressee.

Scholarly work on pronouns, politeness, and linguistic ideology highlights the complex relationship between linguistic structure and social practice. Such research demonstrates that pronominal choice is not merely a grammatical matter but also reflects ideological processes

that connect language with power, identity, and social hierarchy. In this sense, language can be viewed as a system through which power relations are negotiated, as the question of who is permitted to say what to whom is closely tied to social status and authority.

At the individual level, meaning resides not only in what is said but also in who is speaking. In many languages, metalinguistic structures such as pronouns (e.g., ‘you’) function as markers of social identity, constructing intimacy, solidarity, distance, or respect between interlocutors.

The pronominal system of Sheikha Gal can be classified into seven categories: personal, reflexive, possessive, relative, demonstrative, interrogative, and reciprocal. The case system of pronouns closely parallels that of nouns, with suffixes marking various grammatical cases clearly visible on personal pronouns. In Sheikha Gal, all cases are morphologically marked except for the nominative and accusative (Rashid, 2021). The following table presents the case paradigm of the noun /kar/ ‘house’.

Cases	Noun	Postpositions
Direct	Kar	∅
Oblique		kar-an(dative)
		kar-at/(locative)
		kar-tū(ablative)
		kar-na:l(sociative)
		kar-da(genitive)

2. Personal Pronouns

In Sheikha Gal, personal pronouns are inflected for person, number, and case. There is no gender distinction in the personal pronominal system. In the third person, however, distinct forms are employed to mark proximate and remote reference.

	Singular	Plural
Ist Person	/me/‘I’	/asi/‘we’
2 nd Person	/tu/ ‘you’	/tussi/‘you’
3 rd Person	/he/‘he’/she’ /e/ ‘it/	/hena/ ‘they’

First Person

In the first-person singular, no distinction is made between masculine and feminine forms. The only overt contrast in the singular paradigm is between the nominative and dative forms. In the plural paradigm, the genitive exhibits a distinct form, while the remaining case forms share a common oblique base. The nominative–oblique distinction is thus maintained in both singular and plural forms.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/me/	/asi/
Dative	/mo:nu/	/asan/
Locative	/mere:ta/	/asata/
Genitive	/mere:/	/sa: ɖa/
Ablative	/mere:la:l/	/asala:l/
Sociative	/mere:na:l/	/asana:l/

This pattern suggests a stem alternation based on case rather than gender, highlighting the role of oblique formation in the first-person paradigm.

Second Person

In the second person, as in the first person, no distinction is observed between masculine and feminine forms. The plural paradigm exhibits a distinct genitive form, while the remaining case forms share a common oblique base. Thus, similar to the first-person paradigm, the second-person forms maintain a nominative–oblique contrast alongside a specialized genitive form in the plural.

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/tu/	/tussi/
Dative	/tu:nu/	/tosan/
Locative	/tere:ta/	/tosata/
Genitive	/tere:/	/tusa: ɖa/
Ablative	/tere:la:l/	/tosala:l/
Sociative	/tere:na:l/	/tosana:l/

The parallel morphological patterning of first- and second-person pronouns suggests a systematic case-based stem alternation across participant roles in Sheikha Gal.

Third Person

As noted earlier, third-person pronouns in Sheikha Gal distinguish between proximal (referents within the speaker’s field of vision) and distal (referents outside the field of vision). In both singular and plural forms of the proximal and distal series, a nominative–oblique distinction is maintained. Case suffixes are attached to the oblique stem in both numbers, indicating that the oblique serves as the base for case inflection in the third-person paradigm.

3rd Person Proximate

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/he/	/henna/

Dative	/he:nu/	/henan/
Locative	/hes ta/	/henata/
Genitive	/hez da/	/henada/
Ablative	/hes la:l/	/henala:l/
Sociative	/hes na:l/	/hena na:l/

3rd Person Remote

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	/ho/	/hona/
Dative	/ho:nu/	/honan/
Locative	/hos ta/	/hona ta/
Genitive	/hozda/	/una da/
Ablative	/hos la:l/	/una la:l/
Sociative	/hos na:l/	/una na:l/

This proximal–distal contrast reflects a deictic system grounded in visual accessibility, a feature commonly attested in many Himalayan and South Asian languages.

3. Demonstrative Pronouns

In Sheikh Gal, /e/ ‘this’ and /hova/ ‘that’ function as the primary demonstrative pronouns and are used with both human and non-human referents. These demonstratives are neutral with respect to gender but are inflected for number and case.

Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
/e/	‘this’	/en/	‘these’
/hova/	‘that’	/hovən/	‘those’

The binary contrast between /e/ and /hova/ reflects a proximal–distal deictic opposition that parallels the third-person pronominal distinction in the language.

3. Reflexive Pronoun

Sheikha Gal has a single reflexive pronoun, /a:pe:/ ‘myself’. This form does not inflect for person, number, or gender and is therefore used across contexts to refer to ‘myself’, ‘ourselves’, ‘yourself’, ‘yourselves’, ‘himself’, and ‘themselves’.

Word	Gloss
a:pe	‘myself’
a:pe	‘ourselves’

a:pe	‘yourself’
a:pe	‘himself/herself’
a:pe	‘themselves’
a:pe	‘itself’

The invariant nature of the reflexive pronoun suggests that reflexivity in Sheikha Gal is expressed through a generalized reflexive strategy rather than agreement-based marking.

3. Interrogatives

One of the most frequently used interrogative pronouns in Sheikha Gal is /kooj/, which is sometimes pronounced as /koj/. This form is multifunctional and can express meanings such as ‘who’, ‘which’, and the indefinite ‘someone’ or ‘anyone’. It also functions as a relative pronoun in appropriate contexts.

The interrogative does not inflect for person, number, or gender; however, distinct case-marked forms are attested. The multifunctionality of /kooj/ reflects a common pattern in many South Asian languages, where interrogative forms extend to relative and indefinite functions.

Singular	Gloss	Plural	Gloss
keḍa	‘who’	keḍe:	‘who’
keḍza	‘which’	keḍze:	‘which’
kinta:ra	‘whose’	kinta:re:	‘whose’
ki:	‘what’	ki:	‘what’

3. Conclusion

Sheikha Gal exhibits a rich morphological system. The elaborate pronominal paradigms, inflected for person, number, and particularly case, reflect the morphological complexity of the language. The data further indicate that Sheikha Gal follows a nominative–oblique alignment pattern, wherein most case forms are derived from an oblique stem. This pattern is consistently attested in both nominal and pronominal paradigms.

These findings contribute to the documentation of an underexplored Himalayan language and provide insights into the typology of pronominal systems in South Asia.

Furthermore, the analysis opens up new directions for future research, including the exploration of syntactic alignment, language contact influences, and diachronic developments within the language. In this way, the study not only fills an existing gap in the literature but also lays the groundwork for continued scholarly engagement with Sheikha Gal and related linguistic traditions.

References:

- Aronoff, Mark, & Rees-Miller, Janie (Eds.). (2003). *The handbook of linguistics*. Blackwell.
- Bauer, Laurie. (2003). *Introducing linguistic morphology*. Georgetown University Press.
- Hassan, Sheeba. (2009). *Role of media in language contact: A case study of Kashmiri–Urdu* (PhD dissertation). University of Kashmir.
- Hassan, Sheeba, Rashid, Mehnaz, & Bhat, Shahnawaz. (2019). Gojri of tribal group ‘Fakir Gujjars’: A descriptive study. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics*, 19, 94–108.
- Hassan, Sheeba, Bhat, Shahnawaz, & Rashid, Mehnaz. (2020). Use and perception of lexical borrowings and slogans in conflict zone: A case study of Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims. In A. Zahoor & R. Rashid (Eds.), *Conflict and resistance narratives in literature: A collection of critical essays* (pp. 42–58). Rathore Academic Research Publications.
- Hassan, Sheeba, Bhat, Shahnawaz, & Rashid, Mehnaz. (2022). The ideological reflection across cultures: A comparative study of Shakespeare’s *All the world is a stage* and Hamid’s *Afsoos Dunya*. In A. M. Sheikh & S. Rana (Eds.), *Translation tales* (pp. 250–257). Authorspress.
- Kak, Adil A., & Panzoo, Oveesa. (2010). A brief note on morphological and morphophonemic features of Sheikha Gal (Watali). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics*, 3, 201–212.
- Kroeger, Paul R. (2005). *Analyzing grammar: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Payne, Thomas E. (2006). *Exploring language structure: A student’s guide*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rashid, Mehnaz, & Bhat, Shahnawaz. (2018). Language choice and language use in computer mediated communication: A case study of Kashmiri speakers. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities*, 3(1), 203–211.
- Rashid, Mehnaz, & Bhat, Shahnawaz. (2020). Code switching and code mixing in computer mediated communication: A study of Kashmiri speakers. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics*, 13, 195–205.
- Safdar, Rahila. (2014). Sheikha Gal. In O. N. Koul (Ed.), *People’s linguistic survey of India: The languages of Jammu and Kashmir* (pp. 279–283). Orient Blackswan.
- Sheikh, Aejaz M., & Rashid, Mehnaz. (2020). A phonological study of Sheikha Gal. *Aligarh Journal of Linguistics*, 10(2), 69–80.
- Sheikh, Aejaz M., Rashid, Mehnaz, & Nisar, Uzma. (2022). Noun morphology of Tibetan spoken in Kashmir: A descriptive sketch. In S. S. K. Syam (Ed.), *Tribal culture, language and literature* (pp. 198–215). Kerala University Press.

Sheikh, Aejaz M., & Rashid, Mehnaz. (2023). Making and breaking identity through language: A case study of the Sheikha Gal community. In A. Jadhav & G. Ajit (Eds.), *Indigenous peoples: Challenges of validation and inclusion* (pp. 176–182).

Sheikh, Aejaz Mohammed, & Rangila, Ranjit Singh (Eds.). (2018). *Reflections on science of language*. Educational Publishing House.

Spencer, Andrew, & Zwicky, Arnold M. (Eds.). (2001). *The handbook of morphology*. Blackwell.

Trask, R. L. (2007). *Language and linguistics* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Walter, Lawrence W. R. (1895/2003). *The valley of Kashmir*. Gulshan Publications.

Ecological Consciousness in English Literature: Environmental Perspectives and Sustainable Solutions

Dr. Ravindra Goswami

Seth G.B. Podar College, Nawalgarh (Raj)
goswami.raaj23@gmail.com

Abstract

Environmental concerns have consistently occupied a significant position within English literary discourse, reflecting the evolving dynamics between humanity and the natural world. From the Romantic celebration of nature's sublimity to contemporary eco-fiction's urgent engagement with climate change and ecological degradation, English literature has served as a critical medium for articulating environmental consciousness. This paper examines the representation of environmental issues—including deforestation, industrial pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate crisis—through a range of literary texts spanning the Romantic, Victorian, and contemporary periods. Through close textual analysis of works by writers such as William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Margaret Atwood, and Amitav Ghosh, this study explores how literary narratives both reflect and critique anthropocentric models of development. Foundational Romantic texts foreground spiritual and ethical connections with nature, while Victorian and modern works interrogate the ecological consequences of industrialization and technological expansion. Contemporary eco-fiction, including novels such as *The Hungry Tide* and *Oryx and Crake*, extends this discourse by envisioning dystopian futures shaped by environmental collapse and climate instability. Employing an ecocritical framework, the paper situates literary production within broader sustainability debates, emphasizing literature's capacity to shape environmental ethics and foster ecological awareness. Ecocriticism provides a methodological lens through which texts can be understood as active participants in environmental discourse rather than passive cultural artifacts. The study argues that English literature not only documents ecological anxieties but also constructs imaginative alternatives that promote sustainability, ethical responsibility, and reconfigured human–nature relationships. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that literature functions as both a reflective and transformative force in environmental thought. By integrating ecological themes with narrative imagination, English literary traditions contribute

meaningfully to environmental advocacy and sustainable consciousness. In an era marked by escalating ecological crises, the continued engagement with environmental literature remains essential for cultivating informed, ethically grounded, and environmentally responsible societies.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Environmental Consciousness, Sustainability in Literature, Eco-fiction, Human–Nature Relationship

Introduction

The convergence of literary studies and environmental humanities has, in recent decades, emerged as a dynamic and critically significant field of inquiry, foregrounding the capacity of imaginative writing to shape ecological consciousness and ethical reflection. English literature, from early pastoral and Romantic poetry to contemporary climate fiction and ecocritical theory, has persistently interrogated humanity’s relationship with the natural world. Far from serving merely as aesthetic ornamentation, literary representations of landscape, wilderness, and environmental crisis function as cultural mediations of ecological values, anxieties, and responsibilities. Writers across periods have articulated concerns regarding deforestation, industrial pollution, species extinction, and climate instability, often embedding within their narratives implicit or explicit visions of sustainable coexistence. The Romantic period constitutes a formative moment in the literary articulation of environmental sensibility. Poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge reconceptualized nature as a living, spiritually resonant presence rather than a passive resource for human exploitation. In *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth presents nature as a moral and restorative force that nurtures “tranquil restoration,” thereby advancing an ethic of reverence and contemplative engagement. Similarly, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* dramatizes the catastrophic consequences of violating the sanctity of non-human life, offering an allegorical meditation on ecological transgression and redemption. Such texts anticipate modern environmental ethics by foregrounding interconnectedness and moral accountability within the natural order. In the twentieth century, environmental discourse assumed a more urgent and activist dimension. The publication of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson marked a watershed in environmental writing, combining scientific rigor with eloquent prose to expose the destructive effects of chemical pesticides. Carson’s work catalyzed public awareness and significantly influenced environmental policy, exemplifying literature’s capacity to effect tangible socio-political change. More recently, Amitav Ghosh in *The Great Derangement* critiques

contemporary literary culture for its reluctance to confront climate change directly, arguing for innovative narrative forms capable of representing planetary crisis. Ghosh's intervention underscores the necessity of reimagining literary structures to accommodate the scale and complexity of the Anthropocene. The theoretical consolidation of these concerns is evident in the emergence of ecocriticism as a critical paradigm. Foundational scholars such as Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell have emphasized literature's role in mediating environmental values and fostering ecological literacy. Ecocriticism interrogates how texts construct the non-human world, how they encode environmental ethics, and how they contribute to broader sustainability discourses. Through this lens, literature becomes both reflective and interventionist—simultaneously documenting ecological anxieties and advocating transformative consciousness.

This study therefore situates English literature within an expanded environmental framework, examining thematic representations, narrative strategies, and ethical propositions embedded in selected texts. By tracing literary responses from Romantic reverence to contemporary climate critique, the paper demonstrates that literature not only heightens environmental awareness but also cultivates imaginative and ethical resources essential for sustainable futures. Ultimately, storytelling emerges as a powerful cultural instrument—capable of shaping ecological perception, influencing public discourse, and inspiring collective commitment to environmental conservation.

Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature

The institutionalization of ecocriticism in the 1990s marked a decisive moment in literary studies, establishing the environment as a central category of critical inquiry. A foundational contribution to this movement is *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, which consolidated key essays and theoretical positions in literary ecology. Glotfelty famously defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, emphasizing textual representations of nature and environmental crisis. Complementing this framework, Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* explores environmental representation in American literature, particularly through *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Buell argues that literary texts cultivate ecological consciousness by reshaping cultural perceptions of place, responsibility, and sustainability. Together, these works established ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary field bridging literature, ethics, and environmental studies. By foregrounding ecological awareness within textual analysis, early

ecocritical scholarship encouraged readers and researchers to reconsider canonical works through an environmental lens, thereby expanding the scope and relevance of literary criticism in an era of mounting ecological concern.

Environmental Themes in British and American Literature: Scholars have extensively examined how British and American literary traditions engage environmental concerns across historical periods. In *Romantic Ecology*, Jonathan Bate argues that Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley articulated an early ecological sensibility by celebrating nature's spiritual vitality in contrast to industrial modernity. Expanding this framework, Greg Garrard in *Ecocriticism* categorizes dominant literary tropes including the pastoral, wilderness, and apocalyptic imagination, demonstrating how environmental representation evolves in response to cultural anxieties. Contemporary fiction further intensifies this engagement. In *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood portrays ecological collapse driven by genetic manipulation and corporate excess, while *The Great Derangement* by Amitav Ghosh critiques mainstream literary forms for their inadequate response to climate change. Ghosh calls for narrative innovation capable of representing planetary crisis. Collectively, these scholarly and creative works demonstrate literature's enduring engagement with environmental themes and its evolving strategies for confronting ecological instability.

Ecofeminism and Postcolonial Environmentalism: Ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism broaden environmental literary studies by examining the intersections of ecology, gender, power, and colonial history. Ecofeminist thinkers such as Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant argue that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature stem from interconnected patriarchal and capitalist ideologies. In *Staying Alive*, Shiva critiques global development models that marginalize local communities and degrade ecosystems. Similarly, *The Death of Nature* by Merchant traces how Western scientific thought reconceptualized nature as inert matter subject to human control. Postcolonial perspectives further reveal how environmental degradation disproportionately affects marginalized populations. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon introduces the concept of "slow violence" to describe gradual ecological harm inflicted upon vulnerable communities. Novelists such as Arundhati Roy in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and Indra Sinha in *Animal's People* dramatize environmental injustice and corporate exploitation. These perspectives underscore literature's role in advocating environmental equity and sustainability within global contexts.

Sustainable Solutions and Environmental Ethics in Literature: Recent scholarship increasingly highlights literature's potential to foster environmental ethics and propose sustainable futures. Scott Slovic, in *Going Away to Think*, contends that narrative writing bridges the divide between scientific discourse and public engagement by translating ecological data into emotionally resonant stories. Literature thereby encourages reflective thinking and moral accountability. The concept of the Anthropocene—the geological epoch defined by significant human impact on Earth's systems—has further reshaped environmental humanities. In *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Dipesh Chakrabarty examines how historical and cultural narratives must adapt to planetary-scale awareness. By integrating ethical reflection with imaginative representation, contemporary environmental literature promotes sustainable values and collective responsibility. Rather than offering purely technical remedies, literary works cultivate ecological sensitivity and reframe humanity's place within global ecosystems. In doing so, they contribute to broader conversations about sustainability, justice, and the future of life on Earth.

Environmental Issues in English Literature

Environmental issues have emerged as a central and evolving concern in English literature, reflecting shifting human attitudes toward nature, industrialization, and ecological responsibility. From the Romantic reverence for the natural world in the poetry of William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley to the critique of industrial exploitation in Victorian works such as *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens, literature has consistently documented the tensions between progress and preservation. Modern and contemporary writers have intensified this engagement by addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental injustice, and technological overreach. Novels like *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood foreground ecological fragility and the catastrophic consequences of human negligence. Through pastoral imagery, dystopian imagination, and ecocritical reflection, English literature not only represents environmental degradation but also interrogates anthropocentric worldviews and advocates for sustainable and ethical human–nature relationships.

Nature and Romanticism: The Romantic movement marked a decisive shift in literary attitudes toward nature, elevating it from a mere backdrop for human action to a profound source of spiritual insight and moral reflection. Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats celebrated the beauty, sublimity, and restorative

power of the natural world. In *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth presents nature as a source of solace, spiritual renewal, and ethical guidance, suggesting that communion with the landscape fosters inner harmony and moral growth. Similarly, in *To Autumn*, Keats offers a sensuous meditation on seasonal transformation, emphasizing the cyclical rhythms and quiet abundance of the natural environment. This poetic reverence for nature can be understood as an early articulation of environmental consciousness, as it implicitly resists industrial exploitation and mechanistic worldviews. By portraying nature as sacred, dynamic, and emotionally sustaining, Romantic literature encouraged readers to value and protect the environment. The movement's emphasis on interconnectedness and ecological harmony laid an important intellectual foundation for later environmental thought and ecocritical inquiry.

The Industrial Revolution and Environmental Exploitation: The Industrial Revolution fundamentally altered the relationship between humanity and the natural world, and literature of the nineteenth century increasingly reflected anxieties about mechanization, pollution, and urban expansion. As factories multiplied and cities expanded, writers began to critique the environmental and social consequences of industrial progress. In *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens presents the grim industrial city of Coketown, characterized by smoke-filled skies, monotonous architecture, and dehumanized labor. The imagery of pollution and mechanization underscores the environmental degradation accompanying unchecked industrial growth. Similarly, *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy contrasts the enduring presence of Egdon Heath with human attempts to dominate and reshape it. Hardy's portrayal of the heath as both resilient and indifferent highlights the tension between natural forces and human ambition. These works serve as early warnings about ecological imbalance and the moral costs of industrial exploitation. By dramatizing the environmental consequences of modernization, nineteenth-century literature contributed to an emerging awareness of the fragile equilibrium between progress and sustainability.

The Rise of Eco-fiction in the 20th and 21st Centuries: In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, eco-fiction emerged as a significant literary genre responding directly to escalating environmental crises. Addressing issues such as climate change, species extinction, and ecological activism, eco-fiction integrates scientific awareness with imaginative storytelling. In *Oryx and Crake*, Margaret Atwood envisions a dystopian future shaped by genetic engineering, corporate greed, and environmental collapse, offering a cautionary narrative about the consequences of technological excess. Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight*

Behavior personalizes climate change through the disrupted migration patterns of monarch butterflies, linking global ecological phenomena to individual experience. Meanwhile, in *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh critiques contemporary literature's reluctance to confront climate change directly, urging writers to engage more fully with environmental realities. Collectively, these works expand the scope of environmental discourse, blending activism, ethical inquiry, and speculative imagination. Eco-fiction thus represents a vital literary response to global ecological challenges, advocating awareness, responsibility, and transformative change.

Literary Perspectives on Environmental Advocacy

Literary perspectives on environmental advocacy reveal how imaginative writing functions as both cultural critique and ethical intervention in ecological debates. Through poetry, fiction, and critical theory, authors have challenged anthropocentric assumptions and foregrounded the intrinsic value of the natural world. The Romantic vision of ecological harmony in the works of William Wordsworth laid an early foundation for environmental sensitivity, while later writers such as Henry David Thoreau emphasized simplicity, self-reliance, and responsible coexistence with nature. In contemporary literature, environmental advocacy becomes more urgent and politically charged, as seen in novels like *The Overstory* by Richard Powers and the climate-focused narratives of Margaret Atwood, which call attention to ecological collapse and the moral imperative for change. Through symbolism, dystopian imagination, and ecocritical engagement, literature not only documents environmental crises but also mobilizes readers toward awareness, activism, and sustainable thinking, thereby transforming narrative art into a powerful vehicle for environmental advocacy.

Ecocriticism: Analyzing Literature through an Environmental Lens: Ecocriticism, which emerged as a distinct field in the late twentieth century, provides a theoretical framework for examining the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It moves beyond traditional anthropocentric readings by foregrounding ecological contexts, environmental ethics, and representations of the non-human world. Scholars such as Lawrence Buell argue that literary texts actively shape environmental consciousness by influencing cultural values and public imagination. Through ecocritical analysis, literature is understood not merely as artistic expression but as a participant in ecological discourse. This approach uncovers how landscapes, animals, and natural processes are portrayed, and how such portrayals reflect or challenge dominant attitudes toward exploitation and conservation. A canonical example is

Walden by Henry David Thoreau, often interpreted as a foundational ecocritical text. Thoreau's reflections on simple living at Walden Pond advocate self-sufficiency, spiritual renewal through nature, and resistance to material excess. By emphasizing ecological balance and mindful existence, the text models sustainable practices grounded in ethical awareness. Ecocriticism thus enables readers to recognize literature's environmental dimensions, encouraging sustainable thinking and reinforcing the role of literary studies in contemporary ecological debates.

Literature as a Call to Action: Literature has historically functioned as a catalyst for social and political transformation, and environmental writing continues this tradition by mobilizing awareness and activism. Through persuasive narrative, vivid imagery, and moral urgency, literary works can influence public opinion and inspire policy reform. A landmark example is *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, whose exposé on the harmful effects of pesticides significantly contributed to the rise of the modern environmental movement and regulatory reforms. Although a work of non-fiction, it demonstrates how literary craft combined with scientific evidence can generate widespread ecological consciousness. Fictional narratives likewise serve as powerful calls to action. In *The Overstory*, Richard Powers interweaves multiple storylines to highlight the interconnectedness of human and plant life, underscoring the moral imperative of conservation. By portraying environmental degradation alongside acts of resistance and stewardship, such works inspire readers to reconsider their relationship with the natural world. Literature therefore transcends passive representation, functioning as an active force that challenges complacency and advocates collective responsibility toward ecological preservation.

Sustainable Solutions through Literature

Literature offers sustainable solutions not through technical prescriptions but through ethical reorientation, imaginative reconstruction, and cultural transformation. By reshaping the way readers perceive the relationship between humanity and the natural world, literary texts cultivate ecological consciousness and long-term environmental responsibility. Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth emphasized spiritual communion with nature, encouraging reverence and preservation rather than exploitation. In contemporary climate fiction, writers like Margaret Atwood and Kim Stanley Robinson envision alternative futures that integrate sustainable technologies, environmental ethics, and collective accountability. Novels such as *The Ministry for the Future* explore systemic responses to climate crisis, illustrating how policy

reform, scientific innovation, and global cooperation can mitigate ecological collapse. Through narrative empathy, speculative imagination, and ecocritical insight, literature fosters moral awareness and inspires practical engagement, thereby functioning as a transformative force that supports sustainable thinking and promotes responsible human–nature relationships.

Raising Awareness through Storytelling: Literature’s emotional and symbolic power enables it to cultivate environmental awareness in ways that scientific reports and policy documents often cannot. Through narrative immersion, readers are invited to experience ecological realities from within, developing empathy for both human and non-human life. Works such as *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway subtly illuminate the fragile balance between human survival and marine ecosystems. Although the novella primarily centers on the struggle of an aging fisherman, it implicitly gestures toward the vulnerability of oceanic life and the consequences of overexploitation. The vast yet delicate sea becomes a symbolic space where endurance, respect, and restraint are tested. By portraying nature not merely as a resource but as a living force worthy of dignity, storytelling fosters ethical reflection. Contemporary environmental fiction continues this tradition by dramatizing climate change, deforestation, and species extinction in emotionally compelling ways. Through character-driven plots and vivid natural imagery, literature transforms abstract ecological data into lived experience. In doing so, it mobilizes readers’ moral imagination, encouraging awareness, responsibility, and sustainable action. Storytelling thus serves as a powerful instrument for environmental advocacy by making ecological crises personally meaningful and ethically urgent.

Reimagining Human–Nature Relationships: One of literature’s most transformative contributions to environmental discourse lies in its capacity to reimagine the relationship between humans and the natural world. Rather than reinforcing hierarchical models in which nature exists solely for human use, many literary works advocate interdependence, reciprocity, and ecological humility. A seminal example is *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold, which introduces the influential concept of the “land ethic.” Leopold proposes that humans should regard themselves as members of a broader biotic community, bound by moral obligations to soil, water, plants, and animals. This reconceptualization challenges anthropocentric paradigms and encourages ethical stewardship rather than domination. Similarly, eco-literary narratives often depict characters who rediscover balance through respectful engagement with natural landscapes. By presenting alternative modes of coexistence—rooted in care, sustainability, and shared existence—literature reshapes cultural perceptions of environmental responsibility. These imaginative reconstructions do more than critique destructive practices; they provide

philosophical frameworks for sustainable living. Through metaphor, reflection, and ecological insight, literature nurtures a worldview in which humanity is understood as interconnected with, rather than separate from, the natural environment.

Literature as an Educational Tool: The integration of environmental literature into academic curricula significantly enhances ecological awareness and critical thinking among students. Literary texts addressing environmental themes encourage interdisciplinary engagement, linking ethics, science, history, and cultural studies within a humanistic framework. Courses in eco-literature expose learners to diverse representations of nature, environmental degradation, and sustainability, enabling them to analyze ecological crises through narrative interpretation as well as factual understanding. By studying works that foreground environmental responsibility, students cultivate empathy for affected communities and ecosystems while also developing analytical skills necessary for informed civic participation. Literature functions pedagogically by presenting complex environmental problems in relatable and emotionally resonant contexts. Through discussion, critical essays, and comparative analysis, learners explore themes such as climate justice, conservation, and ecological identity. Moreover, literary engagement promotes reflective inquiry into personal and societal values concerning consumption, development, and environmental stewardship. As an educational tool, literature does not merely transmit information; it shapes attitudes and ethical perspectives. Consequently, incorporating eco-literature into educational systems contributes meaningfully to the formation of environmentally conscious citizens committed to sustainable practices and long-term ecological balance.

Results and Discussion

The analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates that environmental concerns in English literature constitute a dynamic and historically evolving discourse, reflecting shifting cultural attitudes toward nature, progress, and sustainability. From the Romantic era to contemporary climate fiction, literary texts reveal a progressive intensification of ecological awareness and ethical engagement. Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley articulated an early ecological sensibility by foregrounding the spiritual, aesthetic, and restorative dimensions of the natural world. Their works advocate harmonious coexistence and position nature as a moral and imaginative counterpoint to industrial modernity, thereby establishing a philosophical foundation for subsequent environmental thought. With the advent of industrialization, literary representations of nature assumed a more

critical and cautionary tone. In *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens exposes the dehumanizing and environmentally destructive consequences of mechanized urban life, while *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy dramatizes the tension between human ambition and the enduring resilience of the natural landscape. These nineteenth-century narratives register the ecological costs of industrial expansion and signal an emerging awareness of environmental degradation. Contemporary literature extends this trajectory by confronting global ecological crises with heightened urgency. Writers such as Barbara Kingsolver and Margaret Atwood explore climate change, biodiversity loss, and technological excess, situating environmental collapse within complex socio-political frameworks. Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* presents a dystopian vision shaped by genetic engineering and corporate exploitation, functioning as a cautionary narrative about unsustainable development. Similarly, *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh foregrounds the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans, interrogating anthropocentric paradigms and emphasizing ecological interdependence. The application of ecocritical theory provides a coherent methodological framework for interpreting these texts, illuminating the transformation of environmental representation from Romantic idealization to contemporary crisis narrative. Ecocriticism underscores literature's dual function as both reflective and interventionist: it not only mirrors historical patterns of environmental interaction but also critiques exploitative systems and imagines alternative futures grounded in sustainability. The findings of this study affirm that literature plays a significant role in shaping environmental consciousness and fostering civic engagement. By embedding ecological themes within compelling narratives, authors cultivate empathy, ethical reflection, and critical awareness among readers. Consequently, English literature emerges not merely as a cultural archive of environmental perception but as an active participant in sustainability discourse, guiding contemporary societies toward more responsible and ecologically informed modes of existence.

Conclusion

English literature has consistently functioned as a reflective and formative medium in articulating environmental concerns, tracing an intellectual trajectory from the Romantic veneration of nature to the urgent ecological warnings of contemporary climate fiction. Across historical periods, literary texts have not merely represented the natural world but have actively shaped cultural attitudes toward conservation, sustainability, and environmental ethics. Through imaginative engagement, moral inquiry, and aesthetic innovation, literature has cultivated ecological awareness and contributed to broader environmental discourse. In an era

marked by intensifying climate instability and ecological degradation, the interpretive and ethical resources embedded within literary traditions acquire renewed significance. A critical examination of environmental themes in English literature reveals enduring preoccupations with nature's vulnerability, the consequences of anthropogenic exploitation, and the moral imperative of sustainable coexistence. The poetry of William Wordsworth, for instance, constructs nature as a source of spiritual restoration and ethical insight, implicitly advocating preservation and reverence. In contrast, contemporary works such as *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh and the *MaddAddam* by Margaret Atwood foreground the global ramifications of climate change, biodiversity loss, and technological excess. These narratives extend beyond descriptive realism, interrogating socio-political structures that perpetuate environmental injustice and ecological imbalance. The emergence of ecocriticism as a theoretical framework has further consolidated literature's role within environmental humanities. Scholars such as Lawrence Buell and Cheryl Glotfelty underscore the capacity of literary texts to cultivate ecological consciousness that transcends aesthetic appreciation and informs ethical praxis. By situating literary analysis within environmental contexts, ecocriticism redefines literature as an active participant in sustainability discourse rather than a passive cultural artifact. Moreover, speculative and science fiction writers such as Kim Stanley Robinson envision alternative ecological futures, exploring adaptive technologies, collective governance, and reconfigured human–nature relationships. Though imaginative, such narratives offer conceptual frameworks that resonate with contemporary debates on environmental stewardship.

Ultimately, English literature operates simultaneously as cultural archive and transformative agent. It documents historical shifts in environmental perception while also challenging readers to reconsider their ethical obligations toward the natural world. By chronicling ecological crises, critiquing exploitative paradigms, and imagining sustainable futures, literature functions as both mirror and catalyst. The continued scholarly engagement with environmental literature is therefore indispensable in fostering ecological literacy, strengthening public consciousness, and encouraging collective commitment to sustainable practices that ensure planetary well-being for future generations.

References

1. Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. Anchor Books, 2003.
2. Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
3. Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Houghton Mifflin, 1962.

4. Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. Chapman and Hall, 1854.
5. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
6. Hardy, Thomas. *The Return of the Native*. Harper & Brothers, 1878.
7. Kingsolver, Barbara. *Flight Behavior*. Harper, 2012.
8. Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, 1949.
9. Powers, Richard. *The Overstory*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.
10. Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Ticknor and Fields, 1854.
11. Wordsworth, William. *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*. 1798

Living With Absence: The Psychological Effects of Disappearance in *Then She Was Gone*

Ms. M. Suriyaa

Postgraduate Student in English
Department of English
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore

Dr. R. Kumara Sethupathi

Assistant Professor
Department of English
PSG College of Arts & Science, Coimbatore

Abstract

This article examines the psychological effects of disappearance in Lisa Jewell's *Then She Was Gone*. Although the novel is structured as a psychological thriller, its central focus lies in the long-term emotional trauma experienced by families of missing persons. Through the character of Laurel Mack, Jewell explores ambiguous loss, unresolved grief, guilt, and the gradual fragmentation of family relationships. Drawing on trauma theory and psychological studies of grief, this article argues that the novel portrays disappearance not as a single tragic event but as an ongoing psychological condition that destabilizes identity, memory, and interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, the narrative suggests that confronting painful truths and accepting reality are necessary steps toward emotional healing.

Keywords: Ambiguous loss, disappearance, psychological trauma, grief, family fragmentation

Introduction

Lisa Jewell's *Then She Was Gone* (2018) moves beyond the conventional boundaries of psychological thrillers by emphasizing the emotional and psychological devastation caused by a person's disappearance. While the novel revolves around the mystery surrounding Ellie Mack's disappearance, its deeper concern lies in exploring the enduring psychological effects of unresolved loss.

Ellie Mack, a bright and promising teenager, suddenly vanishes, leaving her family in a state of uncertainty and emotional turmoil. Her mother, Laurel Mack, becomes the emotional center of the narrative. Laurel remains trapped in psychological limbo because she cannot determine whether her daughter is alive or dead. The absence of closure keeps her suspended between hope and despair, illustrating how unresolved grief can obstruct the process of healing.

Ambiguous Loss and the Psychology of Disappearance

One of the most significant psychological dimensions of the novel is its portrayal of ambiguous loss. Psychologists define ambiguous loss as a situation in which a loved one is physically absent but psychologically present. Unlike death, which allows for ritualized mourning and emotional closure, disappearance leaves survivors in a state of unresolved grief.

For nearly ten years, Laurel Mack does not know what happened to Ellie. This persistent uncertainty prevents her from completing the grieving process. According to Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*, trauma disrupts an individual's sense of safety and continuity, often leading to prolonged psychological instability.

Trauma and Family Fragmentation

Ellie's disappearance does not only affect Laurel; it destabilizes the entire Mack family. Trauma often isolates individuals and disrupts relationships by undermining trust and communication. Laurel and her husband Paul cope with grief in different ways, which leads to emotional distance and eventually separation.

Ellie's siblings, Hanna and Owen, also grow up in a household overshadowed by unresolved loss. The home that once symbolized safety becomes a constant reminder of absence, showing how disappearance affects not only individuals but the entire structure of family life.

Memory, Guilt, and Psychological Compulsion

Laurel repeatedly revisits the final moments she shared with Ellie, searching for clues she may have missed. Over time, these memories become idealized. Sigmund Freud's concept of mourning and melancholia helps explain Laurel's psychological state, as her emotional attachment to Ellie continues in a self-punishing and guilt-ridden manner.

This persistent guilt prevents Laurel from moving forward. Her life becomes centered on the memory of her missing daughter, demonstrating how trauma can reshape perception, memory, and emotional stability.

Healing Through Truth and Acceptance

The novel eventually reveals the truth about Ellie's disappearance, providing long-awaited closure. Although painful, this revelation allows Laurel to move from ambiguous loss to definitive grief. Confronting the truth becomes the first step toward psychological recovery.

Acceptance does not erase grief, but it enables Laurel to reconnect with her surviving children and rebuild her identity beyond the trauma of loss. The novel ultimately suggests that healing requires the courage to face painful realities.

Summing up

Then She Was Gone portrays disappearance not simply as a narrative mystery but as a profound psychological experience. Through Laurel Mack's prolonged suffering, the novel explores ambiguous loss, trauma, memory distortion, guilt, and family fragmentation. The narrative demonstrates how unresolved disappearance can trap individuals in emotional limbo, destabilizing identity and relationships. At the same time, it emphasizes that truth and acceptance can open the path toward healing.

Works Cited

Boss, Pauline. *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, translated by James Strachey, Hogarth Press, 1957, pp. 243–258.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 1992.

Jewell, Lisa. *Then She Was Gone*. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

LaCapra, Dominick. Writing History, Writing Trauma. Johns Hopkins UP, 2001.

Whitehead, Anne. Trauma Fiction. Edinburgh UP, 2004.

Negotiating Meaning Across Cultures: A Corpus-Based Study of English-Hindi Idiomatic Expressions

Ayesha Siddique

Research Scholar, Department of Linguistics,
University of Lucknow, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh – 226007 India
alishakhan1411@gmail.com

Abstract

This research paper delves into the complexities of translating idiomatic expressions across English and Hindi, two linguistically and culturally distinct languages. Idioms, with their figurative meanings and cultural nuances, present significant challenges in translation, often leading to loss of meaning or cultural misinterpretation. This study explores how cultural differences influence the translation process and examines strategies employed to address these challenges. Through a comparative analysis of selected idiomatic expressions in both languages, the paper highlights issues such as the lack of direct equivalents, cultural references, and the impact of these factors on effective communication. By analysing both literal and adapted translations, the research provides insights into the effectiveness of various translation strategies, including adaptation, explanation, and localization. The study also considers the role of cultural context in shaping idiomatic expressions and discusses implications for translators working in cross-cultural settings. The findings aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between language and culture in translation practices, offering practical recommendations for achieving more accurate and culturally sensitive translations.

Keywords: Idiomatic Translation, Cultural Differences, Translation Strategies, English–Hindi Comparative Analysis, Cross-Cultural Communication

Introduction

Idioms are fixed expressions or phrases whose meaning isn't immediately obvious from the individual words. They often have a figurative meaning that's different from their literal interpretation. Idioms are a way to convey complex ideas or emotions concisely and often reflect cultural context, values, social norms, shared experiences and references. They're

commonly used in everyday language, literature, and informal speech. Literal translations of idioms can sometimes lead to confusion or misunderstanding.

For example, English Idiom: “Throw in the towel” – To give up or admit defeat.

Literal Hindi Translation: (/ɦa:ʈʰkʰəɽe: kəɽna:/) – To raise one’s hands.

Hindi Idiom: – To raise one’s hands to surrender/ admit defeat.

The idiom "throw in the towel" originates from the sport of boxing. In boxing, when a trainer or a fighter wants to concede defeat, they throw a towel into the ring as a signal to the referee and the audience that they are surrendering or that the fighter can no longer continue the match. The metaphorical use of the phrase has broadened to mean giving up or admitting defeat in any context, not just in sports. So, when someone "throws in the towel," they are choosing to stop trying or resign from a situation.

Idioms are deeply rooted in cultural and historical contexts of a language, making their translation particularly challenging. Understanding the cultural backdrop is crucial for accurate translation as idioms often embody specific cultural references. The translation of idiomatic expressions between languages is a complex area of study that involves both linguistic and cultural dimensions.

Translating idioms between English and Hindi involves more than just linguistic conversion; it requires a nuanced understanding of cultural differences that shape language use. English Idioms often reflect Western culture; historical events, societal norms and everyday life of English-speaking countries whereas Hindi Idioms reflect traditional values, historical events, and local customs specific to Hindi-speaking regions in South Asian culture.

This paper aims to investigate how cultural differences affect idiom translation between English and Hindi, the challenges faced by translators when conveying idiomatic expressions across these languages and analyses various translation techniques and strategies employed to address cultural nuances.

Literature review

Theoretical Frameworks in Translation Studies

1. *Eugene Nida's Theory of Translation*: Nida's '*Science of Translating*' emphasizes the communicative approach to meaning, viewing translation as a complex communicative process involving encoding and decoding. He highlights the crucial role of culture in this process, noting that both the sender and receiver of the message should share a common cultural background. According to Nida, "Translation is not simply about matching surface forms through correspondence rules but is a more intricate process involving analysis, transfer, and restructuring."

In his books '*Toward a Science of Translating*' (1964) and '*The Theory and Practice of Translation*' (1969) Nida talks about the concept of Dynamic and Formal equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on preserving the exact wording and structure of the source text to maintain its form and meaning, while dynamic equivalence (Functional Equivalence) emphasizes conveying the original text's intended effect and meaning in a way that feels natural and understandable in the target language.

Following the Dynamic Equivalence we can focus on conveying the meaning and function of the idiom rather than a literal translation. The focus is on how the idiom functions in the target language and culture. This theory is particularly relevant to idiomatic expressions, where a direct translation often fails to capture the idiom's nuanced meaning (Nida, 1964). Translators aim to find an equivalent idiom or expression in the target language that has the same impact or effect as the original, even if it is not a direct translation.

2. *J. C. Catford's Translation theory*: In the book '*A Linguistic theory of Translation*' (1965), Catford talks about adaptation which involves modifying cultural references or elements in the source text to better fit the cultural and linguistic context and expectations of the target audience. When translating idioms one can try to retain its essence by using cultural references more familiar to the target audience, to maintain the idiom's original tone and style.
3. *Hans Vermeer's Skopos Theory*: Developed by Vermeer in the late 1970s and outlined in his book '*Skopos and Commission in Translational Action*,' (1984), Skopos Theory highlights that the main aim of translation is to achieve the target text's intended purpose (skopos). This approach directs translation strategies according to the text's function and audience, influencing how idioms are rendered to meet the target audience's needs and expectations effectively.

4. *Peter Newmark's Theory of Communicative Translation*: Communicative translation is a key component of Newmark's broader translation theory and is specifically detailed in his work '*A Textbook of Translation*' (1988). The primary goal is to convey the meaning of the source text in a way that is natural and easily understood by the target audience. This approach emphasizes achieving a similar response or effect in the target language as the original text intended for its audience. This theory is centered on making the translated text as effective and engaging for the target audience as possible, focusing on readability, flexibility and cultural appropriateness.

Cultural Substitution – Another translation strategy in which a source-language idiom or culturally specific element is replaced with a target-language equivalent that preserves meaning and impact in the target culture. This strategy has been discussed and developed in various ways by Baker (1992), Newmark (1988), and is conceptually related to Nida's (1964, 1969) dynamic equivalence theory.

These frameworks provide translators with various approaches and tools for effectively dealing with idioms, balancing the need for literal accuracy with cultural and contextual appropriateness.

Challenges in Translating Idiomatic Expressions

Translating idiomatic expressions poses unique challenges due to their embedded cultural and contextual meanings. Idioms often have specific cultural connotations that may not have direct equivalents in the target language.

For example, the English idiom "kick the bucket" (meaning "to die") lacks a direct Hindi counterpart and thus requires a translation that conveys the intended meaning without literal translation (Kenny, 1998).

In addition, the concept of "translatability" plays a critical role in this process. Certain idioms may be untranslatable due to the absence of corresponding idioms or cultural references in the target language (Catford, 1965).

For example, the English idiom "let the cat out of the bag" meaning "to reveal a secret" necessitates an understanding of both linguistic and cultural subtleties in Hindi to find an appropriate equivalent or paraphrase.

Finding Strategies for Translating Idiomatic Expressions

To address the challenges of idiomatic translation, researchers have identified several strategies such as modulation, adaptation, cultural substitution, communicative translation, etc. Looking at the above theories, we can say that one needs to remember the dynamic equivalence and text's intended purpose (skopos), when translating idioms.

For example, English Idiom: “Bite the bullet” – To face a painful and difficult situation bravely.

Literal Hindi Translation: (/go:li: tʃəba:nɑ:/ka:tʃna:/) – Could be confusing without context.

Culturally Adapted Translation: (/səhənkərnɑ:/) – Means “to endure,” which conveys the meaning without the literal imagery.

The phrase is thought to have originated from the historical practice of having soldiers bite on a bullet to endure pain during surgery without anaesthesia. In modern usage, it signifies facing a tough situation bravely or making a hard decision despite the discomfort it may bring.

Cultural context shapes language use, including idiomatic expressions therefore translators must be adept at navigating cultural differences to ensure that the idioms resonate with the target audience. For instance, the cultural context of a Hindi-speaking audience may influence the choice of idiomatic expressions that are familiar and meaningful to them, even if they differ from the English source.

The role of Literature and Media in Translation of Idioms

Literature: In literary works, idiomatic expressions are often adapted creatively to retain the original tone and style. For instance, in translated novels, poetry or plays, translators may use culturally relevant idioms to maintain the narrative’s emotional impact. Translating Shakespeare’s idioms into Hindi may involve significant adaptation to maintain the original tone and style

Media: In movies and TV shows, subtitling and dubbing often involves adapting idiomatic expressions to ensure they make sense to Hindi-speaking audiences. For instance, translating humour or colloquial expressions might involve creating new phrases that resonate culturally. Idiomatic humour might be adapted to fit local comedic sensibilities.

Data Analysis

A comparative analysis of Hindi and English idioms to explore how cultural differences impact the translation of idiomatic expressions and to identify strategies for effective translation.

Table 1: List of idioms which have an equivalent in English-Hindi

	Hindi Idiom	Translation	English Idiom
1.	/sā:ṁp b ^h i: mərə: ɔ:rla:ṁhi: b ^h i: nəṁu:ṁe:/	The snake should die, but the stick should not break (Achieving a goal without negative repercussions)	Have your cake and eat it too (Having two conflicting things simultaneously)
2.	/p ^h u:l su:ṁg ^h ke: rəḥna:/	Eat very little	Eat like a bird
3.	/ro:zi: ro:ṁi:/	Basic means of support	Bread and butter
4.	/e:kti:r se: do: nɪʃa:ne:/	Achieve two results by doing one thing	Kill two birds with a stone
5.	/əḍ ^h ə ḍʒəl gəgəri: ṁḥələkət ḍʒa:e:/	A half-filled container spills more water	An empty vessel makes the most noise
6.	/na:ṁḥ nə ḍʒa:ne: a:ṁgən ṁe:d ^h a:/	Not knowing how to dance but calling the courtyard crooked	A bad workman blames his tools
7.	/olṁa: ṁḥo:rko:ṁva:l ko: ḍā:ṁe:/	When caught, the thief scolds the policeman	Pot calling the kettle black
8.	/ḍʒa:n ḥe: to: ḍʒəḥa:n ḥe:/	If there is life, then there is the world	Health is wealth
9.	/u:nṁ ke: mən ^h me:n ḍʒi:ra:/	A cumin seed in a camel's mouth (Indicating something insignificant in a large context)	A drop in the ocean

10.	/d̄ʒəb d̄ʒa:go: t̄əb səve:ra:/	Whenever you wake up, the day starts	Better late than never
11.	/ta:l məʈo:l kərna:/	To evade or avoid something	Beat around the bush (To avoid talking about something)
12.	/a:sma:n se: ɡɪre: kʰəd̄ʒu:r me:n əʈke:/	Moving from a bad situation to one that is even worse.	Out of the frying pan into the fire
13.	/du:sro:n ke: ɡʰər ka: t̄ʃʊlʰa: zja:da: ɡərəm/	People often think others have it better	The grass is always greener on the other side
14.	/sokʰ dökʰ ka: sa:t̄hi:/	At all times – both good and bad	Through thick and thin
15.	/ã:kʰõ: ka: ta:ra:/	Someone whom you are very fond of	Apple of my eye

Table 2: List of Hindi idioms with possible translation in English

	Hindi Idiom	English Translation	Explanation
1.	/əkəl pər pətt̄hər pənd̄a:/	Stone falling on the intellect	To have a lapse in judgment (Google Translate, 2024)
2.	/əpne: mof̄i mijā: mɪtt̄hu: bənn̄a:/	To become parrot in one's own mouth	To boast about oneself or To sing one's own praises
3.	/əpne: pə:ro:n pe: kʰəʈa: fiə:na:/	To stand on one's own feet	To be self-reliant
4.	/əpna: ʊllu: si:d̄h̄a: kərna:/	To straighten one's own owl	To serve one's own interests

5.	/əŋga:ro:n pər le:ʈna:/	To lie on heated charcoal	To be in a very uncomfortable or painful situation
6.	/əpna: sa: moɦ le: kər rəɦ d̪ʒa:na:/	To be left with a face like one's own	To be left with a dumbstruck or bewildered expression
7.	/əpni: k ^h ɪtʃi: a:p pəka:na:/	To cook one's own porridge	Pursuing own interests or objectives independently of others (self serving)
8.	/əŋgu:ʈ ^h a: tʃ ^h a:p/	Thumb-marked	Illiterate or uneducated
9.	/əndʒər pəndʒər d̪ ^h i:le:ɦo:na:/	Loosening of ribs and bones or parts	To be in a rundown condition
10.	/əpna: sər o:k ^h li: me:de:na:/	To put one's head in the mortar	To put oneself in a difficult or troublesome situation
11.	/əkəl ke: g ^h o:re: do:ra:na:/	Running the horses of intellect (Google Translate, 2024)	To apply one's intellect
12.	/əpna: əpna: ra:g əla:pna:/	To sing one's own tune	To emphasize one's own perspective or point of view regardless of others' viewpoints or needs
13.	/ã:ʈo:n me: bəl pəŋda:/	To have twists/ knots in intestines	To be under extreme stress or strain
14.	/ge:ɦu:n ke: sa:ʈ ^h g ^h u:n pɪsna:/	Weevil getting grounded with wheat	To be adversely affected along with others in a situation or to be caught in the crossfire
15.	/a:sma:n sɪr pe: ʈu:ʈna:/	The sky breaking on the head	To face a major crisis/ catastrophe

16.	/tʃo:ʈa: mʊn ^h bəʈi: ba:ʈ/	Small mouth big talk	Someone speaking beyond capacity or making grand claims despite their limited position or status
17.	/gʊla:bi: səpne:/	Rose-colored/ pink dreams	Idealistic dreams
18.	/k ^h əja:li: pʊla:ʊ bəna:na:/	To make imaginary pilaf (rice dish)	To indulge in unrealistic or fanciful thinking, often daydreaming about things that are unlikely to happen
19.	/na:ko:n tʃəne: tʃəba:na:/	To chew gram with one's nose	To face severe difficulties
20.	/le:ne: ke: de:ne: pəʈna:/	Have to give instead of take	To be caught in a dilemma (Google Translate, 2024)

Table 3: List of English idioms with possible translation in Hindi

	English Idiom	Hindi Translation	Explanation
1.	Under the weather	/mʊ:səmke: ni:tʃe:/	Feeling ill due to the weather
2.	A blessing in disguise	/tʃʊpa: ʃʊa: əʃɪrva:ʈ/	Something that appears negative but results in a positive outcome.
3.	Raining cats and dogs	/bɪllijā: ɔ:rkʊʈte: bəʳəsɾe: ʃe: ʃe:/	Raining heavily
4.	Full of beans	/p ^h əlijo:nda:l se: b ^h əra: ʃʊa:/	Energetic and lively
5.	Break the ice	/bəʳəʃto:ʈna:/	To initiate conversation to ease tension/ take the

			first step (Google Translate, 2024)
6.	The ball is in your court	/gɛ:nd̩ a:pke: pa:le: me: fi:ə:/	It's your turn to take action or make a decision
7.	Putting all your eggs in one basket	/səb ^h i: əŋd̩e: e:kt̩o:kri: me: d̩a:l̩na: /	Risking everything on a single plan or venture
8.	Snowed under	/bɔ:fke: ni:t̩f̩e: d̩əba: f̩uə: /	Overwhelmed with too much work or to be busy
9.	Spill the beans	/p ^h əlijā: / da:l̩gɪrɑ:nɑ: /	Reveal a secret or disclose information
10.	A piece of cake	/ke:k ka: e:kt̩okd̩ɑ: /	Something very easy to do
11.	In a pickle	/ət̩f̩ɑ:r me: /	In a difficult or tricky situation.
12.	Eat your words	/əpne: f̩əbd̩ k ^h ɑ:nɑ: /	Admit that what you said was wrong
13.	Salt of the earth	/pr̩t̩ ^h vi: ka: nəmæk /	A person of great worth and reliability (Google Translate, 2024)
14.	Bite off more than you can chew	/ɪt̩nɑ: ka:t̩o: d̩ʒɪt̩nɑ: t̩f̩əba: sək̩o: /	Take on more responsibility than you can handle
15.	Walk on eggshells	/əŋd̩e: ke: k ^h o:l pe: t̩f̩əl̩nɑ: /	Act cautiously to avoid upsetting someone
16.	Go bananas	/d̩ʒɑ:o: ke:le: /	Go crazy or become very excited
17.	Barking up the wrong tree	/gələt̩ pe:d̩pərb ^h o:ŋkna: /	To pursue a mistaken or misguided course of action

18.	Hit the nail on the head	/sɪrˈpərki:lma:rna:/	To be right about something or to address a matter precisely
19.	Hot potato	/gəˈrəma:lʊ:/	A controversial or difficult issue
20.	Bring home the bacon	/be:kəŋgʰərla:na:/	Earn a living or provide for one's family

Discussion

Proper idiom translation ensures that the intended message is conveyed clearly and accurately therefore when trying to translate idioms we have to keep in mind the following points:

- Cultural Context: Understand how idioms reflect cultural attitudes and societal norms in both languages.
- E.g.:-/u:nʃke: mənʰ me: be:kən/
- Impact on Communication: Misinterpreted idioms can lead to confusion or miscommunication.
- Case Studies: Analyze specific examples of idiomatic expressions and their translations.
- Audience Perception: Consider how different audiences, (native speakers of English and Hindi in this case) perceive and react to idiomatic expressions in translations. This could involve surveys or interviews to gauge how well idioms are understood or appreciated.

Strategies for Effective Translation

1. *Adaptation* (Finding contextual Equivalents), use idioms or expressions that convey similar meanings in the target language, potentially altering the core message to fit local context.
2. *Explanation* (Providing Context), provide a brief explanation when no direct equivalent exists.
3. *Localization* (Cultural Relevance), use idiomatic expressions that resonate with the cultural context of the target language. For example, using local proverbs or sayings to capture the essence of the original idiom.

Conclusion:

The translation of idiomatic expressions between English and Hindi presents a complex interplay of linguistic and cultural factors. Theoretical frameworks such as dynamic equivalence, adaptation and communicative translation offer valuable insights into addressing these challenges. Strategies like modulation, adaptation, and equivalence provide practical approaches to translating idioms effectively. Understanding cultural context remains crucial for ensuring that translations resonate with the target audience as effective translation often involves more than finding direct equivalents.

Humour often relies on idiomatic expressions that are culturally specific. Idioms can carry emotional weight that is hard to replicate across cultures. Translators must consider the emotional resonance of idioms and find equivalents that evoke similar feelings in the target audience.

Translators often face challenges in maintaining the original tone and style while translating idiomatic expressions in literature. For example, translations of Shakespeare's plays into Hindi must navigate idiomatic expressions that are deeply tied to Elizabethan culture.

Films and television shows often require idiom adaptation to ensure that jokes and cultural references are understood by the target audience. For example, translating idiomatic expressions in comedy shows may involve creating new jokes that fit the cultural context. The Translator's Background may also have an effect on Idiom Translation. Understanding that in different cultures, expressions related to sports or other activities might have different implications helps in finding suitable translations.

Analysing specific case studies can provide insights into translation strategies. Future research could further explore the effectiveness of these strategies in various translation contexts and the impact of cultural nuances on idiomatic expression translation. Further exploration could also focus on how technological tools and machine translation handle idiomatic expressions, the role of idioms in cross-cultural communication, how idiom translation varies across different genres and contexts, or examine the impact of globalization on idiom usage.

References:

1. Baker, Mona. *In other words: A Coursebook on Translation*. Routledge, 1992.

2. Catford, J. C. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.
3. Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books, 1973.
4. Kenny, Dorothy. *Lexis and Creativity in Translation: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Routledge, 2001.
5. Nida, Eugene A. *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden: Brill, 1964.
6. Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. R. *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: Brill, 1969.
7. Newmark, Peter. *Approaches to Translation*. Pergamon Press, 1981.
8. Newmark, P. *A Textbook of Translation*. London: Prentice Hall, 1987.
9. Vermeer, H. J. *Skopos and Commission in Translational Action*. In A. Chesterman (Ed.), *Readings in Translation Theory*. Helsinki: Oy Finn Lectura. 1989.
10. Vinay, Jean-Paul, and Jean Darbelnet. *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995.
11. "Chapter 2." Ir.unishivaji.ac.in, Shivaji University,
http://ir.unishivaji.ac.in:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/1995/7/07_Chapter%202.pdf
.
12. "Content." Openstarts.units.it,
<https://www.openstarts.units.it/server/api/core/bitstreams/4dbdbfca-15da-4afd-ab83-b92048266bd6/content>.
13. "ICALLH 2019." Web of Proceedings,
https://webofproceedings.org/proceedings_series/ART2L/ICALLH%202019/ICALLH19037.pdf.
14. "Idioms in English." Byjus.com, <https://byjus.com/english/idioms-in-english/#:~:text=An%20idiom%20is%20a%20group,of%20the%20words%20in%20it>
.
15. "Hindi Idioms." Successcds.net,
<https://www.successcds.net/class10/hindi/idioms.html>.
16. "Best Hindi Proverbs." HindiPod101, Innovative Language Learning, 10 June 2021,
www.hindipod101.com/blog/2021/06/10/best-hindi-proverbs/.
17. "Google Translate." Google, Google LLC, translate.google.com. Accessed 28-29 August 2024.

Resistance and Redefining ‘Chandal’ Identity in *Interrogating My Chandal Life*

Mr. Ch.MaheswaraRao

Research Scholar(Ph.D),
Krishna University,Machilipatnam.A.P
Asst.Prof.of English,
Vishnu Institute of Technology, A.P,
Email: maheshkeats@gmail.com

Dr.M.Koteswar Rao

M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D. M. Sc., (Psychology), PGDGC.
Associate Prof.of English, Krishna University, Machilipatnam
Andhra Pradesh

=====
Abstract

Freedom to participate in social and cultural discourse in daily life is crucial for the realization of the country as a real and independent entity. The quotidian nature of nationalism must be interactive rather than revered as an abstract concept attainable through perseverance and sacrifice. A considerable portion of civil society in India intentionally refrains from interacting with the untouchables or executing measures to improve the severe circumstances of Dalits. The upper-caste imposition of a social boycott against the untouchables reflects this anti-national and illiberal tendency. Through this article, the researcher discusses the role of education as an emancipatory instrument for Dalits through a critical examination of Manoranjan Byapari's autobiographical account. It also demonstrates the pursuit of knowledge functions not only as an engine for financial advancement but, more importantly, as a profound act of defiance against historically entrenched oppression and epistemic injustice.

Keywords:

Dalit literature, Education, Caste hierarchy, Social mobility, Freedom, Epistemic injustice.

Introduction:

In the contemporary era, the concept of human rights protection has been a topic of critical discourse among social scientists, scholars, philosophers, public intellectuals, and statesmen

globally. The increasing significance of rights-based discourse has compelled scholars and politicians to reevaluate the power dynamics, exclusionary behaviours, and disparities that affect individuals and communities. Within this wider context, Dalit literature has taken on a crucial function as an instrument for the articulation, contestation, and reimagining of issues related to dignity, justice, and acknowledgement. In India's intricate socioeconomic and historical context, the Dalit population has suffered decades of persistent discrimination entrenched in the unchanging community classifications, where their experiences were often marginalized by societal and spiritual constraints that classified them as the underprivileged (Ramteke 1823).

From a human justice perspective, literary depictions of marginalized, impoverished, victimized, and underprivileged communities gain distinct importance. These works not only record suffering but also expose the structural and institutionalized character of discrimination, thereby contesting prevailing narratives that normalize the experiences of the oppressed. In India, writings by Dalit authors have arisen as a significant and essential body of literary works that highlight caste-based oppression, abuse, economic exploitation, and social exclusion. In the last few decades, a wide range of Dalit literature has been produced on the Indian literary platform with great energy. The works include poetry, novels, short tales, biographies, memoirs and autobiographies. These works have all tried to change and challenge the historically unfavourable images and deep-seated biases that have long affected Dalit life and culture. Contemporary Dalit writers have transformed literary expression into a vital tool for cultural reclamation and social assertion.

Dalit authors have used these different genres to look at, reinterpret, and honour the inherent value and ethical behaviour of Dalit culture, which has often been misunderstood or ignored by mainstream upper-caste writers. Dalit literature emphasizes ethical qualities, communal solidarity, and work ethics by offering an authentic counter-narrative to centuries of cultural denigration. Prashant Ingole discusses in his article that Dalit literature changes beauty and storytelling rules and gives a voice to those excluded from India's literary mainstream. Dalit authors have used these different genres to look at, reinterpret, and honour the inherent value and ethical behaviour of Dalit culture, which has often been misunderstood or ignored by stories from higher castes (Ingole 91).

The emergence of these various literary forms indicates not only a mere diversification of style or genre but also it embodies an intellectual and cultural transformation. By putting the

Dalit experience at the core of literary production, these works redefine identity and belonging in ways that fight against caste discrimination while also promoting dignity, humanity, and social justice as important cultural ideals in Dalit literary works.

Rangnatha and Sunitha in their article titled "Dalit Movement: Quest for Identity to Social Equality", discuss the etymology of the word 'Dalit'. The word 'Dalit' comes from the Sanskrit word 'dal', which literally means 'cutoff', 'oppressed', 'downtrodden', 'broken', or 'reduced to pieces'. So, the word refers to people who are cut off from or far apart from the rest of humanity. People use the word 'Varnashrama Dharma' to talk about castes and classes that have been looked down upon.

The word encompasses the downtrodden subaltern castes and classes, including Scheduled Castes(SCs), Scheduled Tribes(STs). Gandhi called Dalits 'Harijans', the British called them 'Depressed Classes', and the Indian government called them 'Scheduled Castes' and Scheduled Tribes. There were additional names for Dalits, like 'Pariahs', 'Mlecha', 'Chandala', 'Panchama', 'Avarna', and 'Adishudra'.(p.76)

Reclaiming and Redefining the 'Chandal' Label as 'Namasudra':

Dalit consciousness in Bengal significantly evolved during the Partition era, initially inspired by Matua Sahitya, which arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the guidance of Harichand Thakur. Harichand Thakur, as the spiritual and social reformer of the Matua community from the Namashudra group which was previously labelled as 'Chandals' that led the opposition against this derogatory term. This religious framework functioned integrally as a social movement for the Namasudras, with its devotional songs frequently conveying messages intended to bolster the self-confidence and collective ego of the depressed community (Abraham et al.). Building upon this foundation, the Matua Andolan functioned as a driving force for the social rejuvenation of the depressed classes in Bengal by propagating the idea of social change among the masses. Although the group was formally designated as Namashudra in 1911, its social and financial situation largely remained unchanged. His son, Guruchand Thakur, carried out that revolutionary objective by collaborating with Christian missionaries to establish institutions of learning for Namashudras, while cultivating self-awareness, collective assertion, and a critique of caste oppression.

The life and literature of Manoranjan Byapari must be contextualized within this historical

continuum of resistance, self-respect, and educational enlightenment. Byapari manifests not only as an individual author but also as a vital embodiment of the Matua-led Dalit assertion in Bengal. Born in 1950 into a Namashudra family in rural East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), he inherited the legacy of caste stigma and systemic hardship that previous reformers had contested. Subsequent the Partition, his family relocated to West Bengal as refugees, where their dislocation exacerbated caste marginalization. Lack of formal schooling and forced into laborious employment, Byapari's existence epitomizes the incomplete endeavour of Dalit liberation as envisioned by Harichand and Guruchand Thakur. Through reading and writing, he converts hereditary degradation into intellectual protest, illustrating the progression of Dalit consciousness from collective reform movements to radical autobiographical self-expression.

Byapari's literary oeuvre spans articles, short stories, and books that collectively focus on the experiences of Dalits. It is his autobiographical narratives that provide the most direct insight into the contours of his life. His autobiography *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit* which is known as *Itibritte Chandal Jiban* in Bengali, was initially published in 2012. Subsequently, author Sipra Mukherjee translated it into English and published it in 2018. The narrative embodies his personal experience of marginalization and oppression and also serves as a testimony through which one can examine broader social structures of caste, class and religion. This article will critically examine Byapari's autobiography, *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An Autobiography of a Dalit*, which mainly focuses on humiliation and suffering, the cultivation of resilience, the transformative role of education and the use of writing as both a tool of self-expression and a means of liberation.

The Refugee Identity and its Humiliation:

Following India's attainment of its freedom, the partition of India became a curse for the Hindu inhabitants of East Pakistan who belonged to lower castes. After the partition of India, the Namasudras were forced to abandon their homes and seek refuge in India. In the beginning, it was fascinating to note that nobody desired to leave their home and establish themselves in a new country. Although, later, a section of Namasudra people started going to India under the leadership of Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, the other group of the Namasudra community were in favour of remaining in East Pakistan under the leadership of Jogendra Nath Mandal. The move led to a severe and tragic future. They were displaced. The migrants of the 1950s arrived burdened with horrific memories of brutality that would persist

throughout their lives. After 1951, the migrants began encountering a multitude of additional challenges. During their train travel, they were robbed and deprived of all their possessions. Peasants were permitted to carry a maximum of fifty rupees per individual. Women were seized and mistreated under the cover of night. Individuals lost their life belongings in this catastrophic disaster. Numerous individuals were shot in the process. They lost all connections with their homeland and emerged with a new identity designated as 'refugees'.

The Bhadrak (social elite group) refugees who relocated during the initial wave of migrants were provided the resources. After some time, the government also authorized them, and they were settled in colonies located in Calcutta and its vicinity. The condition of the Dalit peasants who arrived during the second wave was deplorable. They possessed limited resources, and anything they had was plundered throughout the rail journeys. They had been sent to various refugee camps located in the districts of Cooch Bihar, Nadia, 24-Parganas, Midnapur, and Burdwan. The concept of caste consistently captivates significant interest in India. It was essential in the distribution of the camps to the refugees. Peasants were enquired about their caste affiliation. The government exhibited a lack of appropriate care for their educational qualifications and occupations, categorizing them together as 'Namashudra Cultivators,' which was permanently inscribed on their registration cards. They encountered numerous challenges for survival. They were residing there like a herd of animals, devoid of privacy and sleeping in expansive areas together.

Byapari's childhood was characterized by severe impoverishment and caste-based oppression. This compelled him to undertake perilous in formal employment as a tea stall attendant, train porter, cook and similar roles. These exemplify the predicament of the Dalit youth, trapped in a culture that provided no alternative choices. These narratives of relentless labour emphasize not only financial difficulties but also profound existential deprivation that removes the lower-caste individual of autonomy, necessitating survival by way of physical exhaustion in the grim realities of urban Calcutta. The autobiography depicts early life as a critical battle ground where caste-class inter connections dictate living environments, converting young life into a domain of premature adultification and incessant humiliation.

Byapari's story commences with the statement "I was born into a destitute Dalit family in a location known as Turuk-Khali, adjacent to the village of Pirichpur, which was formerly part of the Barishal district in East Bengal" (Byapari 1). The opening line establishes the

central theme of the narrative, primarily focusing on Byapari's struggle against class and caste. His family is part of the Namasudra community, classified as Dalit and regarded as untouchable. The connection to 'banished East Pakistan' comprises the discourse of partition and relocation. The initial chapters of his autobiography addresses his birth, his destitute Dalit familial origin and the economic condition of the Namasudra community.

“There was not a grain of rice to cook in our family at that time. I have heard from my mother that my father, who earned his income by working as a contractual labourer, could work like an ox. But at that time, he was out of work. As a result, the kitchen fire had not been lit for the past four or five days. Our neighbours, friends and relatives who were from our community were as poor as us, their daily earnings going only as far as that day. Yet, there being no dearth of tenderness in their hearts, they would set aside a handful of rice from their meals for my mother”.

(Byapari 1)

Poverty had cast a long shadow over their lives. It shaped and created an unforgettable memory in his childhood. Existence itself frequently resembled a daily nightmare, with food scarcity being accepted reality rather than an unusual occurrence. It was during these times of adversity that he comprehended the genuine essence of hunger. The sacred texts declare that human birth is a divine blessing, a rare privilege bestowed upon a soul only afterbirth as traversed forty million other lives. If human birth is regarded as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, then Byapari's experience reveals the profound disparity between sacred ideals and actual existence. This uncommon existence has been moulded not by ease or spiritual satisfaction, but by hunger, scarcity, and unyielding adversity. Consequently, the concept of rarity assumes an ironic significance. It is uncommon not due to being endowed with ease or dignity, but because it has been shaped through struggle, reflecting the inequitable distribution of mankind itself.

Byapari's family, which is part of the Namasudra community, endured the traumatic experiences of displacement. Infant Byapari, along with his father, mother, one brother, and elderly grandmother, crossed the border with the hope of safety in a new country, but in reverse they faced only humiliation and nothing in favour. They stayed at Shiromonipur Camp in the Bankura district, where thousands of people had already set up brown tents on a field. He stated: “My father had had no desire to leave his land. I have heard my mother say that he used to have good relations with the Muslims and had been assured of his safety

by them. But his brothers had already left and my father was hesitant to stay on with a broken family and a broken heart. Thus my family crossed the border. (Byapari 14)

Bankura's drought-prone climate and hot temperatures made it difficult for thousands of refugees to survive with only two tube wells supplying water for the inhabitants. During the struggle for existence, it took one or two hours to collect a bucket of water for domestic tasks. Byapari's family received rice and lentils for survival, as well as a cash allowance of twenty rupees and one anna (equivalent to six paise). The author's description accurately depicts their struggle to subsist with limited government assistance in refugee camp. Byapari writes.

The day after he would receive the dole, Baba would take half-a day's leave from the Camp Office and go off to Bishnupur Chowk market to shop. That was the day we would have a full meal of fish curry and good rice. To our palates, fed for fourteen days on rotten, bug-ridden, dirty rice, the food that day would taste like manna from heaven. The government store houses from where we would collect our usual dole of rice possibly possessed very old stock. Some said these were from the stores of rice that had been kept for the soldiers during the Second World War. Over the past years, the rice had been rotten and become inedible. When one cooked that rice, there would be a foul smell. For lack of kerosene, the cooking would be completed before the sunset and when this rice would be cooked in all the tents, the entire place would be filled with the bad smell. (Byapari 16)

All individuals experienced gastrointestinal ailments during the initial days due to the use of this rice. The camp lacked a sufficient lavatory facility for all refugees. Individuals would have to go into the adjacent overgrown lawns and fields to discharge themselves. Individuals in good health, particularly women, tried to carry out this daily routine prior to sunrise. However, individuals in poor health and the old could scarcely await suitable moments or locations to relieve themselves. They typically crouched behind the tents. Consequently, the back of the tents would typically be covered in a filthy expanse of human excrement. If one is not cautious, one may contaminate one's feet; that was a frequent occurrence for us and children. Due to gastrointestinal disorders and extreme heat, a procession of death commenced in the camp area continuously.

It was like an epidemic of death, an endless procession of death on every side of

us. People returned after cremating one dead body only to prepare for the cremation of another. There was a stagnant pond if one went about a mile down the road that went through the camp towards the east. It was here that the cremations were done. Throughout the day and night, the pyres would burn here and the sky would be clouded over by the smoke. It was mostly the elderly and the children who died. The adults would be cremated and the children buried (Byapari 17).

The mortality rates in these camps remained alarmingly high due to disease, malnutrition, poverty, and the absence of proper sanitation and medical facilities. The critical situations were intensified by insufficient accommodation, as evacuees received wax-covered canvas tents and wooden logs that were intolerable in the extreme July heat, resulting in countless fatalities. This biased approach starkly stood in opposition with the handling of high-caste refugees, who were allowed to settle in around 149 colonies near Kolkata, while Namasudras and other lower-caste communities were consistently refused equivalent chances and alternatively shifted to desolate, abandoned regions (Paunksnis 820).

By criticizing the severe plight that had haunted his family, Byapari's immature and curious intellect was incapable of uncovering any appropriate answers to the uncertainties and dilemmas that haunted him. Overwhelmed by dissatisfaction and disorientation, he resolved to escape, seeking to make a more promising future for himself in the wider world. Byapari's financial difficulties and precarious upbringing made him vulnerable to sexual assault from a young age. Alongside social status and caste prejudice, he endured harassment and sexual assault committed by his employers, guardians. David Finkelhor delineates child sexual abuse in his publication "Child Sexual Abuse: Challenges Facing Child Protection and Mental Health Professionals" as transpiring under particular circumstances: when there exists a considerable age differential between the parties involved, when one party occupies a position of authority or assumes a care giving role with the child, or when the act is executed against the child's consent through force or deceit that lead to depression (Finkelhor 101).

Byapari's condition as an insecure, exploited youth with financial dependence fulfils all these conditions. Subsequent to the assault, Jeeban (Byapari) undergoes a profound sensation of the inner corruption and ethical degradation, despite being the victim of the violation. He begins to perceive himself as stained and unfit, internalizing the stigma placed on him by a system that associates violation with humiliation rather than unjust treatment.

This tragedy intensifies his emotional solitude, amplifying his feeling of alienation from meaningful interactions with other people. Jeeban becomes acutely cognisant of the solitary that defines his existence, a loneliness marked by both physical isolation and psychological and social estrangement. His alienation from society emphasizes the lasting impact of violence, as the attack weakens his identity and reinforces his marginalized position within an uncaring and harsh social framework.

In the chapter "Self-Directed Disgust: Reciprocal Relationships with Sex and Sexual Dysfunction," Jong and Borg elucidate that, in contrast to bodily impurity, which damages bodily health, this conceptual pollution destroys the true nature of the core self, stemming from perceived actions against the inner self rather than the outside structure. Research suggests that at least two distinct pathways contribute to self-directed disgust following sexual assault: a disparity between the ideal and actual self resulting from harm to the represented self, and blame for oneself stemming from the conviction that one should have taken greater measures to avoid the violation (Jong 97).

Byapari suffered continuous shame and societal inequalities directed at disadvantaged communities, maturing in an environment marked by caste discrimination, economic exploitation, and social exclusion, thus observing the brutality of a society that denied dignity to the marginalized. Poverty represented not merely a lack of finances but also involved continual humiliation, invisibility, and the violation of essential human rights. Such situations sometimes generate deep animosity and a strong yearning for revolutionary change. Consequently, Byapari developed a growing admiration for Naxalite communist ideas and was subsequently incarcerated.

This changing phase of prison time enabled him to pursue self-education, acknowledging the significance of education after experiencing its deprivation from a young age (Mukherjee). A incarcerated Naxalite counselled him to make effective use of his term, contending that within the confines of prison, he would be shielded from external threats and have the opportunity to refine his reading and writing skills. Byapari contemplated this counsel, observing that individuals who remained incarcerated were those who triumphed over their sorrow rather than yielded to despondency. He pursued his studies by perusing texts supplied by fellow Naxalite inmates, grappling with challenging terminology and concepts such as 'plagiarist,' which his instructor characterized as a 'learned thief' who appropriates the ideas of others. In the absence of institutional educators, the communal

setting of political prisoners developed a culture of collective learning, enabling Byapari to immerse himself in revolutionary literature and enhance his critical conscience.

Byapari converts individual embarrassment into a pivotal dialogue, shattering the enforced quiet while reclaiming liberty. Literacy transforms him into not merely a means for self-expression but also a potent instrument of resistance, helping the oppressed to transition from experienced suffering to articulated truth, from social obscurity to discursive visibility. Driven by his voracious hunger for knowledge and his fervent zeal for reading, Byapari recounted a memory of visiting a friend's residence, where he discovered volumes on 'Marxist ideology,' Maxim Gorky's 'Mother,' John Reed's 'Ten Days That Shook the World,' among many other literary productions. He also studied the works of Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, Tara Shankar, Mahasweta Devi, and other esteemed authors within the boundaries of Bengali literature.

However, reading literature alone could not sustain him, which is why he commenced working as a rickshaw puller. He entirely rejects the lifestyle of radicals and begins earning an income by operating a rickshaw in Jadavpur, Kolkata. One day, in an unexpected event that he encountered

Mahasweta Devi while travelling in his cart. He did not know who the passenger was in his cart, and, appearing as a well-educated person, he asked the passenger:

"Didi, if you don't mind, can you tell me the meaning of jibibisha?" She must have been surprised at the question. She said.

'Jibibisha means the will to live. But where did you get this word? "In a book," I answered. A silence followed. There was no way I could see her face as she sat behind me on the passenger seat. Then she asked, "How far have you studied?"

"I haven't been able to go to any school."

"Then how did you learn to read?" "I learnt a little on my own," I said.

"The wheels turned and we moved closer to our destination". (Byapari 220)

He requested her to tell the meaning of a challenging Bengali term he had encountered, that is,

‘Jijibisha’, a word denoting ‘the desire to live’, as Devi revealed to him. She was awestruck after hearing the word from a rickshaw driver, and she learned about his passion for learning and zeal to document his life stories. Under Mahasweta Devi's encouragement, Byapari commenced his literary career with his inaugural short story, “Rickshaw Chalai” (“I am a Rickshaw Puller”), published in the Bengali magazine *Bartika*. The author depicts this period as undoubtedly the most pivotal in his life, as he emerged as a prominent writer who grabbed the attention of the literary world. The happening of Byapari interacting with Mahasweta Devi was a great ambition in his life. Here counts the episode in his autobiographical work as follows:

“As for me, I was by then beside myself with excitement. My heart beat wildly, my body trembled, my mind trembled, my life trembled. I was having difficulty in holding myself upright on my two legs. I could not hold my head up high. It bowed towards its own accord towards this woman and prostrated myself at her feet”.
(Byapari 222)

Byapari enters into the realm of writing with the assistance and guidance of Mahasweta Devi. With the pseudonym Madan Dutta, Byapari commenced writing in her journal, *Bartika*, ultimately revealing his identity in the literary realm. He begins documenting his experiences as a Dalit. While composing articles and literary works, he came to understand that composing literature is the most challenging job. He articulates the challenges faced by an individual like himself, who lacked formal schooling yet has a fervent interest in reading diverse literature. He elucidates:

“A struggle worse than I had ever known. One line snaked upon to the other line. I found words spelt differently in different places. How was I to know which was the right one? Which word set where in the sentence made the sentence both comprehensible and grammatically correct? I wrote on the pages. And then I tore them up. I ran through some reams of paper and some litres of kerosene and bunked my work for some days before I was more or less satisfied with what I had written. Entitled “I Drive Rickshaws”, it was published in the January-March 1981 issue of *Bartika*”. (Byapari 223)

Byapari is one of the fortunate few authors who did not experience persistent rejections when submitting their works to publishers. Generally, his writings were promptly accepted. Byapari's autobiography transcends a simple account of survival amidst caste and class-

based deprivation, evolving into a narrative of a rebellious conscience shaped by unyielding battle. As Riya Mukerjee aptly observes, Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography interrogates the prevailing bhadrak narrative that characterizes Bengal as a 'casteless society' by documenting the myriad experiences of oppression and marginalization faced by Dalits. He conveys the anguish of suffering, animosity, brutality, and discrimination through this narrative, adeptly employing the medium of autobiography to depict the hardships of his life, which would otherwise be challenging for him to communicate so openly (Mukherjee).

Manoranjan Byapari embodies a multitude of roles such as rickshaw puller, Naxalite militant, minor criminal, cook, and ultimately writer, within the oppressive limitations of his Chandal identity. These intricate real-life incidents break the myths of idealized creative style, allowing readers to face the harsh, unembellished truths of Dalit existence. Byapari's prose avoids sentimentalism and idealization, intentionally highlighting the stark realities of deprivation, degradation, brutality, and defiance that characterize these lives. The greatness of Byapari's narrative resides not in linguistic flourishes but in its steadfast dedication to authentic truth. This sincerity urges readers to adopt a reformulated aesthetic perspective grounded in the realities of daily life rather than solely in sensory or intellectual gratification. In this context, Byapari's work closely corresponds with Sharan Kumar Limbale's argument that Dalit literature emphasises the exposure of social injustices rather than aesthetic enjoyment. Limbale contends that Dalit writing arises from deep personal anguish and shared adversity, dismissing the commodification of suffering as sophisticated art for privileged readers.

Byapari's autobiography transcends a simple account of survival amidst caste- and class-based deprivation, evolving into a narrative of a rebellious conscience shaped by unyielding battle. As Riya Mukerjee aptly observes, Manoranjan Byapari's autobiography interrogates the prevailing bhadrak narrative that characterizes Bengal as a 'casteless society' by documenting the myriad experiences of oppression and marginalization faced by Dalits. He articulates the pangs of pain, hatred, cruelty, and discrimination through this narrative, effectively using the medium of autobiography to describe the travails of his life, which otherwise would be difficult for him to express so frankly (Mukherjee).

Byapari's life is characterized by persistent movement across social margins, beginning with his early labour in tea stalls, transporting luggage at railway stations, and serving as a truck khalasi, followed by his participation in the Naxalite movement, imprisonment, and subsequent

occupation as a rickshaw puller. These experiences, gathered from a life of dispossession, enhance his moral consciousness, intensify his empathy, and cultivate a profound appreciation for human dignity. This experiential knowledge enhances his language and informs his literary perspective, allowing him to express a distinct historical awareness. His autobiography serves as a counter-narrative that reclaims the marginalized histories of the Namasudra community, converting individual pain into social remembrance, resistance, and affirmation.

References

1. Abraham, Joshil K., et al. *Dalit Literatures In India* Second Edition. 2018.
2. Byapari, Manoranjan. *Interrogating My Chandal Life: An autobiography of a Dalit* Translated by Sipra Mukherjee, Sage Publication India Pvt.Ltd, 2018.
3. Finkelhor, David. "Child Sexual Abuse: Challenges Facing Child Protection and Mental Health Professionals". *Childhood and Trauma: Separation, Abuse, War*, edited by Elisa beth Ullmann and Werner Hilweg, Ashgate Publishing, 1999, pp. 101-117.
4. Ingole, Prashant V. "Intersecting Dalit and Cultural Studies: De-Brahmanising the Disciplinary Space". *CASTE / A Global Journal on Social Exclusion*, vol. 1, no. 2, Oct. 2020, p. 91.
5. Jong, Peter J. de, and Charmaine Borg. "Self-Directed Disgust: Reciprocal Relationships with Sex and Sexual Dysfunction." *Routledge eBooks*, Informa, 2018, p. 97,
6. Mukherjee, Riya. "A Critical Study of the Bengali Dalit Autobiography with Reference to Manoranjan Byapari's *Ittibrite Chandal Jiban*". Dec. 2021.
7. Paunksnis, Runa Chakraborty. "Bengali Dalit Literature and the Politics of Recognition." *South Asia Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 5, Aug. 2021, p. 820,
8. Ramteke, Damodhar Govinda. "The Subaltern Writings in India and Overview of Dalit Literature." *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, vol. 13, no. 7, July 2025, p. 1823,
9. Ranganatha.B & Sunitha.V. Ganiger "Dalit Movement: Quest for Identity to Social Equality" *Shodhmanthan* 2019, Vol.X, Sp.Issue, P.76. ISSN:(P)0976-5255
10. <https://iep.utm.edu/epistemic-injustice/>

**Breaking the Silence: Emergence of Rational and Rebellious Dalit Women
in *Karukku*, *Sangati* and *Harum Scarum Saar* and other stories**

Swatilekha Kar

M.Phil. (English)

Assistant Professor (English)

KLS Gogte Institute of Technology

Belagavi, Karnataka

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representation of rationality, resistance, and emerging agency among Dalit women in the writings of Bama, focusing on *Karukku*, *Sangati*, and *Harum Scarum Saar* and *Other Stories*. Situated within the intersecting frameworks of Dalit studies and feminist discourse, the study challenges the stereotypical portrayal of Dalits as passive sufferers and highlights the everyday acts of defiance through which Dalit women negotiate oppressive caste and patriarchal structures.

The analysis reveals that Dalit women experience a dual marginalization—subjection to caste discrimination from dominant social groups and patriarchal control within their own communities. By depicting characters such as Paachiamma, Mariamma, Rakamma, and Vellaiamma Kizhavi, Bama illustrates how small acts of courage and dissent function as significant forms of social and psychological resistance. The autobiographical narrative voice in *Karukku* further exposes institutional discrimination within educational and religious spaces, thereby critiquing the hypocrisy of structures that claim to uphold equality and compassion.

The paper argues that Bama's works reframe Dalit women as conscious, articulate, and politically aware subjects whose resilience and courage challenge entrenched systems of inequality and open possibilities for social transformation.

Keywords: Dalit feminism, protest literature, resistance; subaltern voices, social justice.

In the acknowledgement section of *Sangati*, Bama points out:

My mind is crowded with many anecdotes; stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture, their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them; but to swim vigorously against the tide; about the self confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over the threatening adversities by laughing at and ridiculing them; about the passion to live life with vitality, truth and enjoyment. (ix)

If we analyse the noteworthy works of Bama, we will realize that it would be wrong to presume that Dalits are passive and subordinate individuals who silently endure all the pain and torture that are inflicted upon them. History has shown us that injustice and pain can only be endured to a certain level. When individuals are reduced to such derogatory position that they do not even have their basic fundamental rights, protest becomes inevitable. In *Harum Scarum Saar and other stories*, Bama introduces us to rebellious women who, instead of accepting misery and suffering as their fate, have asserted their individual views and expressed their reluctance to abide by oppressive norms which serve to increase their plight. Sometimes protest comes in the form of an organized rebellion against an individual who is presented to us as a symbol of power, influence and authority. In “Chilli Powder”, we find the courage and tenacity of Paachiamma, an ordinary dalit worker who refuses to bow down before the wealthy and powerful Gangamma. Gangamma, by virtue of her wealth and influence, is able to arouse fear in the hearts of dalit workers except Paachiamma. When Gangamma throws chilli powder into the eyes of Paachiamma for cutting grass from her field, all dalit workers are motivated by the latter to fight back against such inhuman atrocity. In *Sangati*, we find how a young girl like Maikaani who works in a match factory becomes ready to join other children of her age to protest against upper caste children when they call Bernath’s granddaughter ‘a paraiya’. Perhaps it is the realisation that they all belong to the

marginalized sections of Indian society that unites the dalits to protest against injustice and baseless social norms.

Unfortunately, dalit men are reluctant to provide a separate platform to the women of their community to express their views. At home, they can vent out their anger and frustration on their helpless wives and children because they have no other way to protest against the humiliation to which they are subjected in their workplaces. Thus, they feel that if dalit women are made aware of their rights and they resolve to protest against oppressive patriarchal norms, it would be impossible for them to maintain their supremacy in society. *Sangati* shows us how women are never allowed to express their views and opinion in meetings organized by village councils. They must be present as mute spectators who are ready to accept all the decisions taken by the male members. Even if dalit women try to express their views, their suggestions are dismissed as irrelevant. Whenever they stand up as witnesses in favour of an innocent individual who has been accused of a crime, they are abused in harsh terms. Both Anandamma and Susaiamma in *Sangati* are silenced by the male members of village council when they try to support Mariamma who is publicly humiliated due to a false charge brought against her by Kumarsami Aiyya. In fact, the way in which the leaders of the village council order the women to be excluded from important meetings reveal the reality that dalit men are perhaps afraid of the issues and facts which may be raised by the so-called ignorant women. Bama has candidly underlined the fear of dalit men to face the questions of their female counterparts.

Sometimes in dalit society, protest comes in the form of the courage of a lady who refuses to conform to social norms which have been laid down as models of acceptable conduct. In Hindu society, it is mandatory for a married woman to wear a mangalsutra for the long life and well-being of her husband. Marriage, as a social institution, is based upon mutual trust and understanding and both the husband and wife must have certain responsibilities toward

the family and also each other. However, it has always been observed that even if a husband refuses to execute his duties, a wife must always remain loyal to him and perform her duties. Even our sacred epics like *The Ramayana* has highlighted the message of selflessness and commitment that a lady is expected to follow. In *Sangati*, Bama shows us a courageous woman like Vellaiamma Kizhavi who goes to the extent of selling her mangalsutra when she is deserted by her husband Govindan. Unlike Sita who silently accepts the decision of her husband to abandon her in order to set an example in front of the subjects, Vellaiamma's decision seems to be as significant as Nora's protest in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. When Nora takes the decision to leave Torvald's house, she points out to her husband that before being a wife and a mother, she is an individual whose first duty is to herself- "That I don't believe anymore. I believe that first and foremost I am an individual, just as much as you are- or at least I'm going to be."¹

While most of the upper caste women silently endure domestic violence and put up a mask of contentment and perfect bliss, dalit women like Peechamma can go to the extent of appealing to the village council for a separation from her husband who never contributes towards the welfare of the family and squanders his income in drinks. For the well-being of her children, Peechamma marries for the second time. Taking into consideration the fact that dalit women are pushed to the margins of existence, such bold and courageous steps must be appreciated. Ponnuthayi also rejects the ideals associated with the institution of marriage. She resolves to come out of an unhappy marriage and pursue her own dreams. Despite their respectable position in society, upper caste women cannot show the courage of raising their voices against the oppression of their husbands. But dalit women who do not even have a chance to receive education in school turn out to be independent and assertive. Several noteworthy feminists including Simone de Beauvoir have highlighted the fact that progress

¹ Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. Trans. James Walter Mcfarland (New York: OUP, 1978) 84

can be made by women when they have the courage to take steps towards happy and secure future, often by seeking separation from their oppressive husbands.

In *Sangati*, protest also comes in the form of refusal to accept false accusations levied on dalit women. Not only are dalit women constrained to bear domestic violence but they are also the victims of lust of upper caste men in workplace. Even if an upper caste man commits a heinous offence, he can easily escape from punishment by virtue of his wealth and position in society. A dalit woman who shows the strength of fighting for justice is reduced to an object of public humiliation and sometimes she is also compelled to pay compensation. *Sangati* shows us how influential upper caste men like Kumarsami Aiyya can attempt to molest Mariamma and then circulate a fictitious story to malign her character. Contrary to our expectations that Mariamma will accept the false charge of misconduct brought against her, we find the brave girl fighting for justice. Mariamma's friends in *Sangati* makes her aware of the grim reality- "If you even try to tell people what actually happened, you'll find that it is you who will get the blame; it is you who will be called a whore." (20)

In the village council meeting, fingers are pointed at the innocent Mariamma and people express doubt as to whether it is possible for an upper caste man to even touch a dalit woman. Mariamma's trial reminds us of the struggle of Bhanwari Devi, a poor dalit porter from Rajasthan, who was gang-raped for protesting against the marriage of the nine-year old daughter of an influential member of the Gurjar community. When Bhanwari Devi was produced in court, the judge went to the extent of asking as to whether it was possible for upper caste men to even touch dalit women. While Mariamma is asked to pay a fine of one hundred rupees, Bhanwari Devi's family was ostracized, her son Mukesh was beaten up in college and she was threatened to withdraw her case in return for a small amount of money. Despite all attempts on the part of the criminals, Bhanwari Devi continued to fight for justice for almost twelve years till the story attracted the attention of people across the globe.

Often dalit women take recourse to verbal violence to escape the unbearable torture of their husbands. In *Sangati*, we find the quarrel between Rakamma and her husband Paakiraj. Rakamma constantly hurls abuses at her husband just to ensure that he leaves her alone and does not subject her to further humiliation. To common people, Rakamma's conduct may seem unacceptable and even indecent but the narrator realizes that if the lady had not behaved in such a manner, she would have been subjected to more intense form of torture- "But later, I realized that it was only after she screamed and shouted and behaved like that he let her go. I realized that she acted in that way because it was her only means of escape." (62)

Rakamma's speech which is charged with violence reminds us of Ammasi in Bama's short story "Annachi" who refused to offer his seat to his father's landlord. Though Ammasi is subjected to criticism, he sticks to his decision to address the landlord as elder brother. Paakiraj, Rakamma's husband, is completely taken aback to hear his wife abusing him in such derogatory terms. This also reminds us of another character, Puthiyamuthu. When his employer asks Puthiyamuthu as to what they should do after the latter has finished a series of household chores, the furious dalit servant replies that the landlord must summon his wife so that he can spend some enjoyable moments with her. It is significant that *Harum Scarum Saar and other stories* was initially called *Kisumbukkaran* which can be translated as 'rebellious prankster'. The kinds of protest which we find in the different stories included in this collection cannot be regarded as significant rebellion that would change the condition of the downtrodden sections of society. Rather the protests are simple in nature. Sometimes an ordinary dalit refuses to give special respect to an influential landlord. In other cases, poor dalits refuse to accept the sympathy of their cruel employers. Though none of the stories highlight a kind of protest which can be called revolutionary, they demonstrate the fact that being exposed to years of injustice have filled the dalits with anger and they have resolved to fight for their basic rights with confidence.

The most appreciable form of protest comes from the narrator in *Karukku* who decides to follow the instructions of her elder brother and empower herself through education. Being subjected to unjust discrimination in educational institution as well as workplace, she realizes that she can contribute towards the well-being of her community only after she becomes educated and independent. The narrator rightly observes- “Yet because I had the education, because I had the ability, I dared to speak up for myself; I didn’t care a toss about caste. Whatever the situation, I held my head high.” (20)

In *Karukku*, the narrator boldly protests against everything which seemed unjust to her. She expresses strong anger against the atrocities to which dalits are subjected. Her voice represents the voice of the educated and rational dalit who has the courage to fight for her rights. Whether it is discrimination in school, college, hostel and even in the Church, every prominent evil comes under her scathing attack. She points out in a logical manner the plight of the dalits:

How is it that people consider us too gross even to sit next to us when travelling?
They look at us with the same look they cast on someone suffering from a repulsive disease. Wherever we go, we suffer blows. And pain. Is there never to be any relief? It doesn’t seem to matter whether people are educated or not. They’ll go about filled with caste hatred. (24)

In *Karukku*, when the narrator appeals to her college authority to grant leave so that she can go home to attend the first communion of her brother and sister, the Principal and warden sister express their reluctance and even question the relevance of observing such ritual in the dalit community. The narrator displays outstanding courage by sticking to her decision:

The more they spoke, the more I felt a wild rage impelling me to go, come what may.
So I stood my ground obstinately. I managed to get my way at last by insisting that

there cannot be different rules for different castes, only the same rules for everyone.

(19)

The narrator joins the convent with the sole desire to help struggling students of her community. The corruption and hypocrisy which she observes within the convent fills her with rage. Instead of remaining silent, she candidly underlines her feelings:

But I understood, after I entered the order, that the convent I entered didn't even care to glance at poor children, and only wished to serve the children of the wealthy. In that convent they really do treat the people who suffer from poverty in one way, and those who have money in their pockets in a totally different way. (66)

Her views about nuns and priests can be considered to be highly critical as she observes how the so-called servants of God delivered lofty sermons about benevolence and humanity but in reality, supported those who were wealthy and powerful. In *Karukku*, the narrator points out:

There was no love to be found in the convent, among these people who declared all the time that God is loving. There was no love for the poor and the humble. They claimed that God's love is limitless, subject to no conditions. Yet inside the convent there were innumerable conditions about how you should be and who you were in order to deserve their love. When outsiders arrived, flaunting their wealth and education, they were treated with one sort of love; if they did not have these things, they were treated in quite a different way, and I am not sure that there was any love at all in this case. They shout themselves hoarse that God is just, they sing to this effect in their hymns. But it is injustice that dances like a demon in the convents, and within all the institutions that are run by these people. They say with melting hearts, *Our God*, is a forgiving God. But if you look within, they seem to go about always saying,

who is it, when and what is it, Hit him, Punish him. Their very words are barbed, like arrows. Nobody who gets in the way of their own conscience is let off easily. (93)

Dalits who are tortured and humiliated everywhere try to find solace by converting to Christianity which upholds the message of universal love and brotherhood. Jesus had always attached great importance to virtues like piety and it would be natural to assume that Christian priests and nuns would welcome people of all castes with open arms and shower their affection on them. However, after joining convent, the narrator is able to realize that the message of love and humanity preached by Christian priests and nuns have no significance in reality. Instead of lapsing into silence, Bama raises her voice of protest against the hypocrisy of Christian priests:

I learnt that God has always shown the greatest compassion for the oppressed. And Jesus, too associated himself mainly with the poor. Yet nobody had stressed this nor pointed it out. All those people who taught us, had taught us only that God is loving, kind, gentle, one who forgives sinners, patient, humble, obedient. Nobody had insisted that God is just, righteous, is angered by injustices, opposes falsehood, never countenances inequality. There is a great deal of difference between this Jesus and the Jesus who is made known through daily pieties. The oppressed are not taught him; but rather, are taught in an empty and meaningless way about humility, obedience, patience and greatness. (90)

For ages, people have silently endured the hypocrisy of authorities associated with the Church. Under a veil of benevolence, they have always been interested in advancing their personal interests. They have enjoyed patronage of the wealthy and influential classes. On one hand, they took great interest in making the masses aware of the values of justice, kindness and humanity. On the other hand, they maintained close association with affluent

families. This wide gulf between what they preach and what they practice in reality comes under the attack of the narrator in *Karukku*:

.....There seems to be one God within the Church and another outside. I was extremely bewildered by all these different versions of God. But they seemed to have no problem either with creating these different versions or with juggling smartly between all of them. You have to admit, it takes a kind of skill. (93)

Priests can be considered to be our spiritual guides, serving as link or intermediaries between the Omnipotent Almighty and the masses. Ironically, the narrator in *Karukku* shows us another side of this popular belief. Instead of providing solace and comfort, religion only serves as an instrument to misguide people:

In the name of God, they actually rob from the poor who struggle for their very livelihood. They teach them to shut their eyes when they pray with the deliberate intention that they should not open their eyes and see. They teach them to shackle their arms together and to prostrate themselves in prayer at full length on the ground so that they should never stand tall. What kind of piety can this be? They make themselves into Gods so that they can exploit others. So where has God gone? The so-called Gods walking here are the priests and nuns and their relations; no other. (94)

After joining a boarding school as a teacher, the narrator is filled with hope that she will be able to bring about significant changes in the lives of dalit students. She becomes a part of a school for destitute children but she realizes that it is impossible to change the mindset of her fellow teachers and students. The narrator observes that Christian priests and nuns deliberately differentiate between dalit and upper caste students. Special privileges were given to children from wealthy families:

Each class was full of children from wealthy families. They sat in rows, sleek and well-fed. All they had to do was to be light- skinned and arrive in cars.....the rich children would say, We don't want to sit next to these ones, they are dark skinned, they are poor, they are ugly, they don't wear nice clothes.... (47)

An educational institution must thrive on the principle of impartiality and equal opportunities must be provided to students for all-round personality development. But dalit students are never given any scope to develop their potential and teachers deliberately follow a policy of discrimination to undermine the confidence of dalit students. These students are made to feel there can be no possibility for improvement and they are destined to endure the pangs of poverty. One of the most prominent issues which provokes the anger of the narrator in *Karukku* is the partiality of self-centred teachers who ruin the confidence of dalit students:

Besides the usual lessons, they could have educated the dalit children in many matters, and made them aware of their situation in the world about them. But instead everything they said to the children, everything in the manner in which they directed them suggested, that this was the way it was meant to be for the dalits; that there was no possibility of change. And mainly because of this, those children seemed to accept everything as their fate. As I saw all this, I became very troubled in my mind. I was angry: I thought to myself, what sort of nuns are these, they claim that they are helping the poor and the needy. Yet this is how they are at times I confronted them and argued with them. (89)

Like the prominent characters in Bama's works, the only way for dalits is to assert their individuality by registering their protest against oppressive norms. As Bama rightly suggests in *Karukku*:

We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves that it is our fate; as if we have no true feeling. We must dare to stand up for change. We must crush all these institutions that use caste to bully us into submission, and demonstrate that among human beings there are none who are high or low. Those who have found their happiness by exploiting us are not going to let us go easily. It is. We who have to place them where they belong and bring about a changed and just society where all are equal. (25)

To regain their confidence and make constant efforts to move forward despite all obstacles is the message given by Bama to every member of her community. In *Karukku*, she points out:

Just as people throw sticks and stones to wound a wingless bird, many people have wounded me with their words and deeds. Yet I know I'm moving forward slowly, step by step. (104)

The uniqueness of Bama lies in the fact that she has succeeded in focussing upon the resilience of dalit women who, despite being deprived of quality education have refused to be regulated by baseless patriarchal and social norms. They are not scared to accept the fact that their bold steps might have adverse impact on their lives. Rather, they bravely assert their views with confidence to set appreciable examples and prove that they are not destined to a silence which bewildered us in Coetzee's *Foe*.

Works Cited:

Bama. *Karukku*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmström, Macmillan, 2000.

---. *Sangati*. Translated by Lakshmi Holmström, Oxford UP, 2005.

---. *Harum Scarum Saar and Other Stories*. Translated by N. Ravi Shanker, Women Unlimited, 2006.