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ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA: A CRITICAL SURVEY OF SELECTED ISSUES

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English Studies in India: A Critical Survey of Selected Issues

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Abstract – Effective teaching and learning of English has always seemed to be an evasive prospect in the Indian scenario attributable to the inconceivable complexities that characterize the socio-political and economic nature of the country. Additionally to the present, India's unique cultural and linguistic convolutions aggravate matters further posing challenges in English studies that have emerged as relentless and insurmountable from the time English was introduced because the medium of instruction in 1835. Although India succeeded in liberating itself from the foreign rule, the prominent position that English had acquired for itself globally by the center of the 20th century made it impractical and unreasonable to renounce the language at the time of independence. However, several crucial problems associated with English studies that existed during the colonial times persist till date, invalidating a gamut of solutions proposed to beat them, both in the pre and post-independence eras. These issues include the literature-language divide, the English-mother tongue/native language divide, canon formation, marginalisation et al. it's also been observed that the modern educational philosophies of the West fail to supply appropriate assistance in resolving the predicament as they rarely take under consideration the standard nature of Indian classes and situations. On the contrary they result in greater confusion, giving rise to factions of stakeholders sporting divergent opinions on these issues. the current work seeks to conduct a purely theoretical research into the history of English studies in India to critically survey the events, policies, the philosophical, social, political and other aspects and diverse assorted views connected with the teaching/learning of English in India. An attempt is additionally made to research whether this discordant viewpoints will be yoked together for the event of enhanced techniques and policies conducive to ground level improvements in the field. The aim of the research is thus to check the introduction and development of English studies in India critically so as to grasp the issues involved and suggest viable solutions to deal with these issues by attempting to harness conflicting perspectives.

Key Words – Political, Marginalization, Historical, International, Development, Contemporary, Cultural.

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INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this endeavour entail a recreation of the historical aspects of the arrival and presence of English as a subject matter of study in India. It explores whether the origin of up to date problems like the literature-language divide, the English-mother tongue/native language divide, marginalisation et al, lies in the policy-making of the colonisers. This is the launching-pad for further analysis of those prominent dilemmas associated with English studies in the country, which the researcher, as a lecturer of English, realizes have prevailed over nearly two centuries. The research strives to get fresh insights into this situation with a view to locate areas that need modifications in the teaching and learning of English for a favourable impact on the acquisition of this coveted language. Moreover, the discrepancies in the perspectives of stakeholders are contemplated upon to analyze the probabilities of converging them to fundamentally benefit this situation. Hence, the current research is

predicated on the hypothesis that a number of the foremost existing challenges in the study of English in India are often tackled by striking a balance between contradictory views held by veterans in the field. this work further concentrates on the developments that occurred in the status of the language, the policies associated with it as a subject matter of study and therefore the socio-economic and political impact of its presence in the country on the individual similarly because the nation for about two centuries.

IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH IN INDIAN CONTEXT

In India, though, English, a second/ foreign language, plays major role in almost every phase of living. But many Indian cultural conventions do not have any English equivalent. Even then, English is utilized in Indian culture in a very Indian because of convey going to people that understand the culture. Thus, as a result, Indian English is developed as a strong

variety that has somewhat absorbed Indian culture along with its linguistic setting. It includes people's behaviour, greetings, addresses to 1 other, dressing style, eating habits, and living quite the natives. As linguistic setting relies on the precise culture of the concerned place, that's why most of the greetings of Hindi language are age-bound or relation-bound whereas in Standard English these are time-bound. Similarly, the bulk Indian languages have some specific term for each relation where as in English some basic terms of major relations are found. Linguistic setting, supported Indian culture, is additionally found in various ways in published matrimonial advertisements, wedding invitation during which persuasion, poetic lines in Hindi, inclusion of cultural and spiritual terms, names in transliterated forms etc. are generally seen. In letters faith in God, showers of blessings, over-politeness, moralistic tone, and use of causal verbs etc. are frequently seen. Over politeness and over emphasis is observed in Indian English. Acknowledgements depict eulogizes, dedication and extreme submissiveness; whereas in obituaries specific cultural lexicon is utilized in various translated forms, code-mixing, in metaphoric and intense language. In Indian English literature and in other related writings all the characters, major likewise as minor, educated additionally as uneducated use English which isn't faithful actual functions and circumstances. Translated Indian terms are preferred to search out or create their pure English equivalents. This feature also adds distinct Indian flavour to the writings in Indian English. So, by this fashion it's quite evident that English has taken an innovative form and shape in Indian culture and its linguistic setting is additionally equally peculiar to the natives' English. Aside from that English employed by the native users is unable to satisfy Indian requirement, flavour and elegance. This will be one among the prominent reasons why Indian English is flourishing as a greenhorn, unique and robust kind of English. The forms of language are the top results of the impact of the native languages, culture, tradition and behavior etc. There are some kinds of English used around the world. These have their sub-varieties also. Indian English also has its sub-varieties with style of phonological, morphological, lexical, semantic & syntactic differences. The condition of English language is kind of unique and different in India. Because the results of the frequent use of English in a very very multi-lingual country, style of sorts have also flourished in India.

THE CULTURAL AND OTHER ISSUES AND ENGLISH STUDIES - INDIAN CONTEXT

The place that any language may be given in the educational context of a nation is influenced by nationalistic, economic, social and several other other concerns universally. The standard factors unique to India during this regard are its size and complexities, one amongst them being its vastly diverse multi-lingual set-up. Language is a crucial aspect of the character of any nation, but the dimension of the linguistic

diversity in the country is so enormous that it stipulates the existence of a link language as inevitable. Ironically, English looked as if it would serve the aim even 20 years after independence and its significance because the language of opportunity, teaching and upward front has not diminished till date. Given the Indian scenario, then, the proposal that two or more languages must be taught during school years, was contemplated upon since 1940.

However, the status of English, both in the country and in the world outside had changed with the passing decades, as emphasised by Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy, and therefore the need for the study of the language in India escalated over the years. As English continued to be the official language of the Centre and because the medium of university studies had always been English, not knowing the language was unthinkable in the decades after independence. Efforts that were taken for the spread of education and literacy were instrumental in making people responsive to the knowledge generated in the world outside. English would make better economic and professional prospects available in the western countries. The policy makers too were convinced of the importance of teaching English from the school level, if not earlier. It had been also true that better opportunities in the country were more easily availed of by those with an English educational background. However, education with English because the medium wasn't easily affordable for several, therefore the few fortunate ones consequently acquired an elite position in society, widening the gap between the English-speaking and non-English speaking population. The introduction of English as a second or third language in class was inconsequential due to the shortage of properly trained and proficient English teachers. Education through country medium, thus, remained a far coveted but inaccessible possibility for many commoners, at the same time the amount of Indians with a workable knowledge of the language increased, ironically. Describing further changes that occurred in the country and round the world, the year 1991 was marked by Liberalisation, a process which initiated the economic integration of India with the planet. Relaxation of government control over the commercial and manufacturing sectors allowed an open exchange of services, business and investment. The legacy of a people language that a people had left behind in India proved to be the country's greatest asset in the period after globalisation. The supply of an outsized number of talented young Indians educated through English people medium who conversed well in the language attracted the eye of foreign investors. Indian entrepreneurs jumped into competition with their foreign counterparts spreading their wings in western countries. In the field of education, the vast reserves of university educated and research scholars in the fields of science and technology made qualified English speaking individuals available to those countries who found it feasible to form their research and development base in India. The concept of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) that was brought in by the West provided countless job opportunities for all

English educated undergraduates and graduates who now failed to find it binding to pursue higher studies. A de-linking of education and employment was made possible by the appearance of the BPOs. English people language, a relic of the colonial rule that India desired to shed, had suddenly was a plus, for the country had one among the most important English-speaking population in the world.

THE ENGLISH VERNACULAR QUANDARY

The ever increasing significance of English on the international scene including the multi-lingual nature of India has kept the strife between English and indigenous languages perpetually unresolved. Considering that this was a language brought into the country by the colonizers, it'd are expected to own lost prominence in the post-independence era. However, as a results of the turn of events that led the US of America to emerge as a brilliant power soon after Britain was compelled to relinquish the bulk of its colonies and also because of the international status of English together with its nearly indispensable standing acquired by it as a link language during the liberty struggle, its existence on the Indian soil continued nearly unchallenged. However hindi as a national language, considering the bulk of the Hindi speaking states in the north. The foremost impassioned debate, however, centres round the effect that the presence of this language in the country has had on the native languages, especially in the field of education. But after this is often undoubtedly accepted that English plays a awfully vital role in the country.

THE LITERATURE-LANGUAGE DISPUTE

The perpetual dilemma of selecting between literature and language for effective teaching-learning of English in India has been a component of the ceaseless experimentation where inclinations oscillate from one extreme to the opposite, failing to yield any remarkable benefit. Undergoing a change from being the tongue of the colonisers in the past to being a language of international consequence in the present, English remains the foremost coveted of all languages in the Indian society. Unfortunately, it's observed that in spite of its presence in the country for over two centuries, by and huge, the Indian populace has been unsuccessful in mastering it. It's argued that, obviously, the explanations for this are myriad and sophisticated. One amongst the foremost serious ones entails decisions to present prominence to literature over language, or contrariwise, in the educational scenario which, in turn, are governed by political, religious, socio-economic and even philosophical influences. Learning in the Pathshalas also because the Madarssas was centred round religious teaching. The section of the society that claimed to be the proprietors of education had not only kept away other sections from learning but had also manipulated knowledge to suit their own benefits. Another problem was that the

medium of instruction was usually some classical (Indian) language like Sanskrit or Arabic which the person found difficult to deal with. European and western education, on the opposite hand, promoted the concepts of freedom, equality and fraternity and failed to appear to be overtly tied to religion. English was the language of the colonisers, the language of science, of latest thoughts and concepts and of all that represented progress. In the light of this, youngsters who had studied in England and returned to India felt convinced that English studies should be introduced here and therefore the religious nature of education should be modified to include western science and philosophy.

POLITICAL HUES: ENGLISH AND HEGEMONY

The excessive significance attributed to science and technology in today's world makes it very easy to overlook the pivotal, all-pervasive bearing of language on human life. Considered as an inherent aspect of living, language is taken as a right in individual moreover as social existence. However, no communication in the sort of linguistic expression in private or public spheres can claim to be empty intention; every instance of the employment of language conveys something overtly or covertly. Investigations into the use of language by individuals, social groups, organisations, communities and countries bring round light interesting power equations identified and explicated by psychological, philosophical, historical and political discourses of the 20th century. Needless to state, English emerges because the most prominent instrument influencing personal ideas likewise as collective ideologies and generating and disseminating knowledge together with creating plus modifying perspectives round the globe. In a country like India, where English has existed as a subject matter of study and a medium of instruction for nearly two centuries, this language perpetually retains a dynamic status in native socioeconomic and political spheres. It's rooted so firmly in the Indian soil that the language is employed as a stimulating device by political, economic and social agencies to fulfil their veiled aspirations similarly. An analysis of its function in establishing political hegemony in India in the recent past and present times additionally to its alleged hegemony over Indian languages highlights captivating occurrences of effort among social groups in the country.

CONCLUSION

A close look at the current situation brings forth a divided sentiment to the presence of English in India. The elite upper classes, that have an access to straightforward institutes for education in English, enjoy the privileges that the knowledge of the language offers to them; at the identical time they voice anti-English opinions and believe that the

language poses a threat to the native languages. the opposite factions of the society that are long bereft of the advantages of the language strive to send their children to English medium schools in the desire to partake of the resulting socio-economic advantages so as to boost their lot. There appears to be a duality in the attitude of the policy makers and also the upper classes in their questionable stance towards English that hints at a desire to safeguard this language, as a commodity, from the overall populace by limiting its advantages to a get few in the society. It is, by now obvious that country language has always been considered merely as a commodity and an instrument of betterment by Indians from colonial times, as an alternative there would be evidence of rampant acculturation and mass conversions if the aim of the colonisers and missionaries had been achieved. Additionally to the present, the acculturation caused by the trendy media of mass communication has emerged as more ubiquitous than the influence of English in the country has ever been. Although undoubtedly, education is the backbone of any community, the multilingual situation in India poses serious impediments in ensuring quality education for all. Several education committees, consistent Five-year plans taking cognizance of adjusting situations, lucid statements of national education policies have all been unsuccessful in equalising the dissemination of education throughout the country. Undeniably, the state has come an extended way since the time of independence, in the case of education, with the most recent commendable policy of Right to Education, but the horrendously large numbers that the country seeks to cater to exert grueling pressure on the prevailing resources.

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